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Katrina Kaif finally finds someone who talks more than her



STORY ON page 31

Are the US and North Korea on the brink of nuclear war?



(News Agencies) LONDON: Donald Trump has said he will launch "fire and fury like the world has never seen". North Korea has promised to get its revenge "a thousand fold" on the US for any attack. But is the world really on the brink of a Third World War? Experts say probably not, while pointing out that it is easy to see how we might get there. A general consensus is that the US President's statements are just bluster, (Contd on page 23)

Trump's New Immigration Bill Makes Sense

Hey, it works in Canada.



STORY ON page 24

The Real History of American Immigration

Trump's break with tradition may be good or bad, but it's definitely different.



(News Agencies) The United States is currently experiencing a "historic flow of unskilled immigration," warned Stephen Miller in a bruising news conference last week that saw the White House senior policy adviser harangue a CNN reporter over the famous Emma Lazarus poem on the base of the Statue of Liberty. Miller, who is also the chief wordsmith behind President Donald Trump's revanchist agenda, speaks with the conviction of a true believer. Unveiling the administration's new immigration proposal, Miller suggested a shift in who does, and who doesn't, earn a coveted

green card. "Does the applicant speak English? Can they support themselves and their families financially? Do they have a skill that will add to the U.S. economy? Are they being paid a high wage?" It's perfectly reasonable to revisit American immigration policy, which has remained mostly consistent for over 50 years and favors family reunification over skills-based quotas, unlike many other Western countries. But to claim that the current flow of "unskilled" immigrants into the United States is "historic"—or a break from precedent—is to betray history. (Contd on page 24)



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Using H1-B visas to displace US workers a mistake: John Chambers

(Agencies) NEW DELHI: John Chambers, the executive chairman at networking major Cisco, said taking people from India to the US on work visa due to labour arbitrage may be a mistake and, instead, companies should look to create jobs in both the countries.

You can't go in and take a whole bunch of H-1B visas and displace American workers for a lower cost. That is just a mistake," Chambers said on Wednesday. "The jobs which are being created, have to be

created in both the countries. It is not a win-lose (situation); both the countries can have dramatic job creation by working together." Chambers was talking at the launch of US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), the new avatar of US-India Business Council (USIBC). He said there are many examples of partnerships between two companies that have led to more jobs in both the US and India, and there is a need to communicate such instances

better, rather than rare cases of job losses that are an exception. That's an area where the new avatar of USIBC will be able to help by constant messaging etc., Chambers said. The relaunch of USIBC has been triggered by the board of the council voting to split from the US Chamber of Commerce in July this year. The new avatar, USISPF, is a non-profit corporation that will focus on stimulating business relations and enhancing strategic relationship between the two

countries. Chambers, who was the chairman of USIBC, and its president Mukesh Aghi will continue to lead the organisation in the same capacity. "We are not at all a lobbying organisation, we are a strategic partnership organisation, a forum focused on how both the countries win," Chambers said.

"If we do it right, businesses will be successful, citizens will be successful, and governments will be successful." Cisco, which has its second largest



operations in India, is a beneficiary of the H-1B visa programme. Chambers said Cisco didn't come to India for labour arbitrage. "We came here for talent and we are growing it rapidly."

US may lose its competitive edge due to H-1B clampdown



(Agencies) WASHINGTON: Clampdown on H-1B visa programme will make it difficult for the US IT sector to attract open talent from countries like India and America might lose its competitive edge, a top American think-tank has said.

As the Trump administration is carrying out a review of the nonimmigrant visas, the Center for Global Development (CGD) in a report said that H-1B visa, the most sought after by Indian IT professionals, is beneficial for both India and the US.

"It is really important to make sure that the I-T sectors from both countries are allowed to attract the right kind of people, because they really allow for innovation and growth in both the countries," Gaurav Khanna, fellow at the CGD and co-author of the research paper, said.

The report titled 'The IT Boom and Other Unintended Consequences of Chasing the American Dream' takes an in-depth look at how the H-1B visa programme affects both the US and Indian economies.

"Both the economies have really benefited from the H-1B programme," he told PTI.

"What our paper is really trying to stress, is that on average the US is better off because of the H-1B programme. So clamping

down on the H-1B programme will basically not allow the US IT sector to attract the open talent from places like India. The US might then lose its competitive edge in IT production," he warned, adding that IT companies might move to countries like Canada in the event of large scale clampdown on H-1B visas. Khanna said the research has shown that India has been a

beneficiary of brain-gain, rather than brain drain due to the visa programme. "If you think about what happens in India, you know the prospect of migrating to the US and earning such a high wage...it seemed they really encouraged certain students and workers to acquire skills that would be valued by the H-1B programme," he said.

The research, which examines the relationship between migration and the outsourcing of IT production to India since the early 2000s, found that US workers are on average, better off by about \$431 million or \$1,345 per additional migrant in 2010 because of the H-1B programme.

The study incorporates crucial mechanisms like innovation by businesses,

trade with other countries, and the choices made by students and workers to become computer scientists.

While there are some negative impacts for a subset of the US workers, the overall gains outweigh the losses as the combined incomes of the US and India both rise under the H-1B programme by about USD 17.3 billion or 0.36 per cent. And total IT output from both nations rose steadily under the H-1B regime by about 0.45 per cent in 2010, the CGD research said.

It also found out that better technology, as a by-product of this immigration of tech workers, increased the overall productivity of other sectors as well, and consumers of computer-related goods enjoyed better software and lower prices.

The study found a one

per cent decrease in price for US IT products and an 7.4 per cent fall in Indian IT products.

"The average worker in each country is better off because of immigration, and US native workers have made big gains because of the H-1B visa programme," Khanna said.

"Yes, there may be things that can be done to blunt distributional impacts that affect a subset of workers, but overall, this policy has been a net-positive for the US economy and workers," he asserted.

The research found out that those who migrated to the US acquired skills, technical know-how and established networks with US companies. After their visas expired, they returned with these acquired human capital

and technology and contributed to the growing tech-workforce in India.

"Together, the brain-gain to India under the H-1B programme outweighs any brain-drain," it said.

According to Khanna, the increase in IT sector productivity, because of the additional knowledge and skilled workers spurred by the H-1B visa programme, allowed India to eventually surpass the US in software exports. Over time, some IT production begins to be outsourced from the US to India. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise in specialised fields.

A young Master's with American-beating salary? You fit the new Trump immigration bill



(Agencies) Are you a 26-to-31 years of age? Do you hold a US-based doctorate? Can you roll your 'R's while speaking English the way Americans do? Do you have a job offer that promises you salary double the median in the US? If your answer to all these questions is 'yes', you eminently fit the eligibility criteria of the new immigration Bill US President Donald Trump has backed. If you have won a Nobel Prize or a medal in the Olympics, that would be a big help.

If the Congress passes the Bill, it will impose an immigration system based on points derived from education, English-language ability, salary, age, extraordinary achievement and business investment.

The new system will reduce the number of people granted legal residency each year in the US by 41 per cent in its first year and 50 per cent by its 10th year.

It will impact those who get in through family connection more than those who come to the US on job offers.

In 2014, 64 per cent of immigrants who got legal residency were relatives of US citizens or sponsored by family members. Those who got residency through employment were just 15 per cent. Below are the scores for each criterion in the proposed immigration system:

Age

Those in prime working age

get the most points while the children and the elderly get the least. Those aged 18-21 years get six points, 22-25 eight points, 26-30 10 points. Those aged 31-35 years get eight points, 36-40 six points, 41-45 four points and 46-50 two points. Those below 18 years and above 50 get no points.

English ability

Points will be awarded on the basis of a standardised English ability test. The 100th percentile score will get 12 points while less than a 60th percentile score gets no points. Six points for those in the 60th-80th percentile, 10 for those in 80th-90th percentile, and 11 for those with a 90th percentile.

Education

More points for a higher degree, and even more for a degree obtained in the US. One point is given for a US high school diploma or its foreign equivalent and five points for a foreign bachelor's degree. A US bachelor's degree earns six

points. Seven points are given for a foreign master's degree in science, technology, engineering or mathematics. A similar master's gets eight points. A foreign professional degree or doctorate gets 10 points while a US equivalent gets 13.

Salary

Five points go to those who have a job offer with a salary at least 150% of median household income in the state where they will be employed, eight points if the salary is 200% the median income, and 13 if it's 300% the median.

Extraordinary achievement

Someone who has won a Nobel prize or a comparable award gets 25 points. An individual medal in Olympic or similar sporting event get 15 points.

Investment

Six points will be awarded for an investment of \$1.35 million into a new commercial enterprise in the US. The points go up to 12 if the investment is \$1.8 million.



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Sikkim standoff

China is angry because India has changed the rules of the game

One, there is no evidence Beijing would not move the goalposts of its territorial claim further south if it were able to secure the Dokalam plateau



All the elements of drama in high places are there. Six thousand soldiers from the world's two largest countries are eyeball-to-eyeball, sometimes literally, on a remote chunk of Himalayan rock. The official discourse is becoming increasingly undiplomatic. The media on both sides is baying for blood. Amid all this the leaders of both countries are crossing paths in a far-off continent, trying to avoid discussing the crisis. One reason they aren't: neither has a formula for resolution besides the other side playing dead. Best then to wait, watch and keep your powder dry.

The real story may be elsewhere. India and China have some spectacular run-ins every few years. The present stand-off is dwarfed by the Sumdorong

Chu incident along the northern border of what is today called Arunachal Pradesh. That lasted from the summer of 1986 to the fall of 1987 and, at one point, China and India had mobilised over 100,000 soldiers between them. Not only did the two sides eventually agree to pull back, it paved the way for Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's historic state visit to China. What seems to decide whether a bump-in-the-Himalayan fog becomes a big fandango are the other untied threads running through the fabric of Sino-Indian relations — and that the pattern they weave keeps changing.

The question to ask about the present Dokalam standoff is to ask how this is different from previous such incidents. On one parameter, reassuringly, that

Dokalam does not differ from previous incidents is that none of the troops involved are using weapons. The soldiers are involved in a bit of push and shove but they are abiding closely by the existing border management agreements — meaning the two armies would look to Dabangg and not Rambo for their rules of engagement.

The differences arise elsewhere. One is that India is decisively intervening on behalf of Bhutan. The Chinese have long nibbled at Bhutan's borders without India doing too much about it. Atop the Dokalam plateau the Chinese army has been making paths, converting them into roads and then pouring concrete on them as part of a pattern of slowly encroaching on the Bhutanese claim area.

Standard Sun Tzu-meets-Chinese bulldozers stuff. The Indian military are quite clear this plateau matters to them. If China were to take it over, the tri-junction of the India-China-Bhutanese border would actually move southward several kilometres. In jawan-speak that would bring a swathe of Sikkim and North Bengal under long-range Chinese artillery fire.

What is more important is the strategic messaging.

One, there is no evidence Beijing would not move the goalposts of its territorial claim further south if it were able to secure the Dokalam plateau. As the last United States president, Barack Obama, said of the Chinese regime, "You also have to be pretty firm with them, because they will push as hard

as they can until they meet resistance. They're not sentimental...so simple appeals to international norms are insufficient." He conceded most of the South China Sea before he grasped this. The second message is in India's decision to stand up for its closest ally. Until now, Thimpu has buckled before Beijing in part because it was uncertain if India would have their back. Many "friends of India" have been eaten by geopolitical lions simply because they ran into trouble at a time when New Delhi had slipped into a bout of navel-gazing. In this case, the Narendra Modi government decided to block the Chinese military road-building team and say, "Bhutan's fight is our fight." Much of Beijing's outrage is its surprise that, in its eyes, India

Trump Embraces a Senseless Immigration Proposal

President Trump has endorsed legislation that would slash legal immigration by half, mainly by cutting the number of visas granted to relatives of citizens, while favoring people who speak English and have advanced degrees. The bill, which would do nothing to solve the country's immigration and economic challenges, is unlikely to become law. The only way to understand Mr. Trump's vocal support of an obvious turkey is as yet another attempt to energize his dwindling base of right-wing and nativist supporters.

The bill was introduced by two Republican senators, Tom Cotton of Arkansas and David Perdue of Georgia, who say it will protect American workers from competition from low-skilled foreign workers. Right now, the government issues more than a million green cards every year, most of them to relatives of citizens. A smaller number, 140,000, are provided on the basis of job skills.

The proposal would slash the total number of green cards issued by

41 percent in the first year and by 50 percent in the 10th year, with most of the cuts coming from family-based immigration. It would cap the number of refugees admitted every year and eliminate a program that provides green cards via lottery to people from countries that send few immigrants to the United States. The bill would not reduce employment-based green cards, but it would change how the recipients are selected by putting in place a points-based system that rewards people who speak English and have advanced degrees and work experience. The issue of immigration in America is volatile and complex and thus vulnerable to seductive promises. This bill falls into that category. Its central premise — that it would help American workers — is false. It's true that an influx of workers can cause short-term disruptions to the labor market, but the impact on the wages of native workers over a period of 10 years or more is "very small," according to a comprehensive National

Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine report published last year. Moreover, as studies have repeatedly shown, immigration boosts productivity and economic growth; restricting it would have the opposite effect. Growth is determined by the changes in productivity — how much each worker produces — and the size of the work force. Productivity in recent decades has been growing more slowly than in the past for reasons that economists do not fully understand. The labor force is also growing slowly as baby boomers retire. Restricting immigration would reinforce both trends. Mr. Trump and the senators behind this bill seem to believe that immigrants who are admitted to America because they have family ties possess few skills and are of little value to the country. That's simply not so. About 41 percent of legal immigrants, the large majority of whom are relatives of citizens, have at least a



bachelor's degree, according to a 2015 Pew Research Center report. Hostility to immigration was a pillar of Mr. Trump's presidential campaign, and he has surrounded himself with like-minded officials, so it's no surprise that he likes this bill. But it is a bridge too far for Republicans like Senators Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, which makes it unlikely to go anywhere. The right approach to immigration reform would be bipartisan and comprehensive. It would include stronger enforcement, better worker protections and a pathway

to citizenship for the country's 11 million unauthorized immigrants. A Quinnipiac poll released last week showed the president's job approval ratings at a new low, even among demographic groups that make up his base. About 61 percent of voters disapproved of the way Mr. Trump was doing his job, including half of whites without a college degree. Mr. Trump's recent messages opposing transgender people in the armed forces and encouraging aggressive behavior by the police have been seen as efforts to recapture that base. His support for this immigration bill is more of the same.

Raja Mandala: Doklam's unintended consequence

If China makes no room for compromise, India will be forced to think about coping with its power, burying illusions of Asian solidarity

Whatever the eventual outcome in Doklam, the current stand-off is bound to significantly alter Indian perceptions of China. For one, the political goodwill in India towards China that was constructed over the last three decades will be increasingly difficult to sustain in the coming years. For another, India, which long resisted the idea of balancing China, is likely to move inevitably in that direction.

It took a lot of bold moves, including those by Atal Bihari Vajpayee as the foreign minister in the late 1970s and Rajiv Gandhi as the prime minister in the late 1980s, for the Indian elite to overcome the sense of Chinese betrayal in 1962. While leaders like Vajpayee and Rajiv Gandhi understood the imperatives of normalising relations with China, there was entrenched resistance in the political class and in the bureaucracy, armed forces and the security agencies that would take many years to overcome. Indian business too has been deeply fearful of engaging China.

The slow but definitive normalisation of relations was aided immensely by the pragmatism in Beijing, especially that of Deng Xiaoping, whose emphasis was on creating a peaceful external environment for the economic modernisation of China. But as China's power grew rapidly, Deng's successors have abandoned that pragmatism in favour of assertiveness. The current generation of leaders in Beijing believes China can now shape its external environment rather than merely adapt to it. As the newly predominant power in Asia, China may now see no reason to defer to Indian sensitivities.

The signals of China's new approach to India were evident since 2008 when China opposed the nuclear exemption for India at the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Thanks to strong support to India from then-US President George W. Bush, China backed off. Meanwhile, tensions on the border began to rise as the PLA improved the military logistics in Tibet. China's embrace with Pakistan has grown tighter and Beijing's penetration of South Asia deeper over the last decade.

On its part, the UPA government in Delhi downplayed the differences with Beijing and underlined the prospects for collaboration with China in the quest for a multipolar world. The Narendra Modi government had a taste of Chinese pressures in September 2014 when PLA's incursions into Ladakh coincided with President Xi's visit to India. Modi's followed his success in defusing this crisis by a strong effort to expand economic ties on a practical basis. But the Chinese actions — brazen opposition to India's membership to the NSG, the reluctance to support international sanctions against known terrorists in Pakistan, and most recently the aggressive posture in the Doklam crisis — have dashed hopes for a positive turn in bilateral ties.

If Modi, as the strongest leader since Rajiv Gandhi, presented a rare opportunity to reconstruct Sino-Indian relations, Xi seems utterly uninterested. Sensible statecraft must, however, try and temper the pessimism of analytics with optimism about political agency. Hence, the unprecedented restraint in Delhi's language and its patient calls for a dialogue to resolve the Doklam crisis in the face of Chinese threats and demands for unilateral Indian concessions.

India sees no reason to pick up a needless quarrel with a neighbour and rising power like China. But Beijing might be terribly wrong in presuming that Delhi would simply fold up under pressure. Pushed to a corner, India has every incentive to simply dig in. If China sees itself as an irresistible force today, India could well turn out to be that immovable object. There will be no happy ending for this confrontation.

China appears to have been carried away by the success of its recent coercive diplomacy in East Asia and the South China Sea. Unlike China's East Asian neighbours, India has the capacity to absorb pressures from Beijing. With limited economic interdependence with China, Delhi can bear the costs of a severed commercial relationship. If India could turn its back on the dominant powers of the West for many decades during the Cold War, it could do that with China again.

China is also wrong to believe that asymmetry in power potential will automatically lead to surrender. China could learn from Pakistan's refusal to submit to the widening strategic gap with India. Beijing's haughty and unpleasant diplomacy in the current crisis will eventually lead to the conviction in Delhi that strategic defiance of China must prevail over the temptations for appeasement.

One of the consequences of power asymmetry is the pressure on the weaker power to turn to balancing strategies. Until now, India has deeply resisted walking down that road in the expectation that a reasonable accommodation of interests with China is possible. If China makes it clear there is no room for compromises, India will have to turn to both internal and external balancing of China.

A gathering crisis: the need for groundwater regulation

A new regulatory regime for groundwater, that provides for equitable use, is urgently needed. The water crisis India faces is of such a magnitude that urgent measures are necessary to address it. Yet, while the crisis is often discussed, law and policy measures to address it remain insufficient. This is partly due to the fact that the primary source of domestic water and irrigation is groundwater but the media and policymakers still and often focus on surface water. This needs to change as water tables have been falling rapidly in many parts of the country, indicating that use generally exceeds replenishment.

One of the underlying reasons for excessive use of groundwater is the legal framework governing access to the resource. This was first introduced in the mid-19th century when judges decided that the easiest way to regulate this 'invisible' substance was to give landowners what amounts to a right to access groundwater found under their land, even if in the process they also used water found under their neighbours' land. Over the following decades, this led to a framework whereby landowners see groundwater as their own and as a resource they can exploit without considering the need to protect and replenish it since there are no immediate consequences for over-exploiting it. Access to a source of groundwater has progressively become a source of power and economic gain. The latter has become increasingly visible in recent decades with the propagation of mechanical pumps, which allows big landowners to sell water to others. The Union government recognised the need to modernise the regulatory framework for accessing groundwater soon after massive expansion in mechanical pumping led to the realisation that recharge could not keep pace with use. The measures proposed were in keeping with the policy paradigm of the early 1970s when a model Bill was first introduced. It focussed on adding some State-level control over new, additional uses of groundwater but did not address the iniquitous regime giving landowners unlimited control over groundwater. This was only taken up by around a dozen States from the late 1990s onwards. The States that now have groundwater legislation based on the model Bill conceptualised in 1970 have on the whole failed to manage to address the problem of falling water tables due to increasing use. In addition, there is no provision in the existing legal regime to protect and conserve groundwater at the aquifer level. Further, since the legal regime fails to give gram sabhas and panchayats a prevailing say in the regulation of what is essentially a local resource, the present framework remains mostly top-down and is incapable of addressing local situations adequately.

Over the past decade, the situation has become increasingly dire not only in States where water tables are falling but also in those that are less affected by quantity concerns. Indeed, the quality of the water pumped is increasingly becoming cause for concern; thus the worry is about accessing a sufficient amount of groundwater that is not harmful to health. The present legal regime has clearly failed to address the growing multiple crises of groundwater. This has been officially recognised since at least the beginning of this decade, first in the Planning Commission and more recently by the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation.



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Indian Law Is Oddly Lenient Towards Those Accused Of Stalking For The First Time

Somak Ghoshal

In less than a day after being arrested for stalking, Vikas Barala, son of Haryana BJP Chief Subhash Barala, and his friend Ashish Kumar managed to walk out of a police station in Chandigarh having secured bail. It was a loophole in the existing law against stalking, amended in 2013, that made it possible for the accused to go out scot-free.

The two men had chased complainant Varnika Kundu's car in an SUV on Saturday night for seven kilometres, repeatedly trying to cut and corner her. Driving skills apart, Kundu had the presence of mind to call 100 as well as inform her parents of her ordeal, even as the nightmare was unfolding. By the time, she was finally intercepted by Barala and his friend, the police had reached the spot. They caught the duo, trying to open the door of

Kundu's car, presumably with the intention to pull her out of it.

"My hands shaking, my back spasming from fear, half in tears, half bewildered, because I didn't know if I'd make it home tonight. Who knew when, or if, the cops would show up," Kundu later wrote on Facebook, as she recounted the night of horror. "I'm lucky, it seems, to not be the daughter of a common man, because what chance would they have against such VIPs?" she added in an afterthought. "I'm also lucky, because I'm not lying raped and murdered in a ditch somewhere." Being a top-ranking IAS officer's daughter may have influenced the police to give Kundu's case a fair hearing but it didn't shield her from censure from other quarters. As Rituparna Chatterjee of HuffPost India wrote yesterday, the finger of blame was predictably pointed at the woman by the

moral police.

"Why was she out driving at midnight? Why was she unescorted? Was she drunk? ... Is she familiar with the stalker? Why is there a photo of her with her alleged stalker in her Facebook album?" A barrage of questions with no relevance to the facts of the case were hurled at her. To her credit, Kundu fielded such offensives with courage and maturity, refusing to bow down to these shameful attempts at character assassination.

It's another matter though that the police, while filing her complaint, didn't consider the crime worthy of invoking sections of the Indian Penal Code that would have made it a non-bailable offence. While Barala and Kumar were charged under Section 354D (stalking) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and 185 of the Motor Vehicle Act (driving by a drunken person or by a person under the influence

of drugs), they did not have the sections for kidnapping or attempt to do so slapped on them. This, in spite of Kundu's claim that they had tried to open the door of her car and pull her out.

Senior advocate Rajwinder Singh Bains called out the "police's failure" to file non-bailable charges. "The intention here is to be seen, and going by the woman's account it was absolutely to kidnap her, molest her or even rape her," he told The Indian Express. "If you chase a woman's car for seven kilometres, block her way repeatedly, try to forcibly open the doors of her car in the middle of the night, what is the inference to be made out?" he added.

He's not alone in expressing such doubts. Other criminal lawyers have also pointed out the police could have, at the least, booked the accused under IPC Sections 365 and 511, which deal with any attempt to kidnap. The police,

accused of pussyfooting for the fear of political repercussions given the "high profile" offenders involved, said they felt it necessary to seek legal opinion before putting such non-bailable charges. As new sections may be added to the report when the investigation proceeds, there is still hope that some of these offences will be included in due course. It's not unreasonable to wonder why stalking, which had often led to serious crimes, is not, by itself, a non-bailable offence. It has recently resulted in several tragedies, including the horrific stabbing of a woman in the national capital in broad daylight by a jilted man and the hacking of a techie in Chennai to death. According to the National Crime Records Bureau data for 2015, 1,124 people from the Union Territory of Delhi complained of stalking under IPC 354D — which accounts for 18% of

all stalking cases in the country. Delhi alone contributes to 97% of all such complaints from all the Union Territories. These numbers aren't shocking for a culture that normalises stalking as the flip side of romance. Be it in movies or TV soaps or popular fiction, the glorification of a lovesick hero trying to win over the woman he fancies by criminally offensive behaviour is a well-established trope. Indian law, too, seems to be in a dilemma about the way it wants to address stalking. Because according to it, stalking is and isn't a bailable offence. As the Economic Times reported, "As things stand today, the first offence of stalking is 'bailable' — implying the accused need not be produced before a court for seeking bail but can walk to freedom from a police station itself."

(Contd on page 23)

Chandigarh stalking: The case follows a familiar script

One of the reasons why stalking cases continue to increase in India is because women, unlike the lady in Chandigarh, do not come forward to reports such cases; the targets are often picked for their vulnerability.



Last week, a young woman was driving back from work. Two drunken men stalked her but she managed to alert the police and file an FIR. The two were arrested but got bail within a day. Does this sequence of events seem unusual? It's not. There have been so many episodes with similar scripts that it did

not surprise us. However, the Chandigarh stalking case will, hopefully, not end tamely.

The victim is the daughter of a senior IAS officer (who has promised to pursue it) and one of the accused, Vikas Barala, is the son of Haryana BJP chief Subhash Barala, making the case one tailor-made

to generate strong public interest.

But first things first: A person can be booked for stalking under Section 354D of the Indian Penal Code if he follows a woman and contacts or attempts to contact her to foster personal interaction repeatedly, despite a clear indication of

disinterest by her. The first offence is bailable and that is what helped the accused get away.

What the Chandigarh police failed to do (under pressure or otherwise) is not adding Section 365 (kidnapping) and 511 (attempting to commit offences punishable with imprisonment for life or other imprisonment) in the FIR registered against the duo, even as the woman in her Facebook post had alleged an attempt to kidnap. Moreover, the police now claim that there was no CCTV footage available that can be used against the accused.

The BJP has not pulled up the father of the errant son either: Not for his son's hooliganism or for the public shaming of the girl they are now

indulging in, using the usual tropes: She had a drink or two and she was according to them, horror of all horrors, out late at night. Haven't we heard these excuses earlier too? The BJP's silence is deafening.

Stalking has been on the rise in India. Though the National Crime Records Bureau did not report data for Section 354D in 2013, it said 346 FIRs were pending investigation by the police in the beginning of 2014. Thereafter, 4,699 stalking cases were registered in that year, and 6,266 FIRs were registered in 2015. This number is just

the tip of the iceberg, say experts. One of the reasons why stalking cases continue to increase in India is because women, unlike the lady in

Chandigarh, do not come forward to report such cases; the targets are often picked for their vulnerability. While arrests are a deterrent, many get bail right away.

According to NCRB data, over 80% of the people accused under the legal section are given bail before even the chargesheet is filed.

The conviction rate for stalking cases continues to fall across India. According to a report in HT, in 2015, 26% of stalking cases ended in a conviction, which is even lower than the previous year when only 35% of cases ended in a conviction. Unless, this is reversed and police are allowed to function minus political pressure, such incidents

How battle-ready is India for a war against China or Pakistan?

The report that the country's Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has submitted to the Parliament about the Indian army has some significantly disturbing findings. Despite all its bravery, our army is battling with a drastic shortfall of necessary ammunition.



There is bad news for those Facebook warriors eager for a war with China and Pakistan. The report that the country's Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has submitted to Parliament about the Indian army has some significantly disturbing findings. Despite all its bravery, our army is battling with a drastic shortfall of necessary ammunition.

The report is a follow-up to the conclusions of May 2015. Its objective was to evaluate the progress that has been made over the last three years. The CAG report on ammunition management reveals that the situation in September 2016 has not changed very much since

March 2013.

The reason? Our ordnance factories have not improved their output or quality and the procurement process continues to run on the old pattern. The wishlist of weaponry that the army headquarters wanted to acquire which was on the government's files had not been fulfilled even till January 2017.

The CAG report also says that of the 170 kinds of ammunition in 2013, just 27% was ready for 20 days of intense fighting, while in September 2016, 80% ammunition was below the required levels. The situation has improved only marginally in the months that followed. The government has given the rights

for procurement to the vice-chief of the army staff in the event of an emergency. With this, the risk has reduced but it hasn't entirely vanished.

In this situation the question that comes to one's mind is whether the government has set a standard where it should have a minimum level of arsenal and associated ammunition? The ministry of defence had devised a roadmap in 2013 according to which it had to procure 20 days of ammunition that was necessary to win a small-scale war, by 2015. It was also decided that these supplies would be increased to 40 days by 2019 so that we can prepare for bigger battles. Both these plans are hanging fire.

Even the best marksman and commando can forget his craft without adequate practice. According to this report, the army has had to cut down on its training drills in light of the shortage of essential resources. The shortfall in resources required for training is between 77% and 88%. Can you imagine any country winning a war without the requisite ammunition and training?

The situation continues to be so bad despite facing the

repercussions of such shortfalls during the war with China in 1962. Even then, our soldiers were neither equipped with the requisite weapons, nor maps that are essential in the dangerous mountainous terrain.

We may have won the Kargil war in 1999, but at what cost? At the end of Operation Vijay, the shoulders of the Indian nation-state were drooping with the burden of 537 martyrs. Even during this war the shortfall of essential ammunition had been revealed. When the initial group of soldiers tried to scale the high peaks, they didn't have the requisite clothes and shoes required for snow-bound terrain. This has been the sorry picture of our military affairs from 1962 to 1999. Who should be held accountable for this mess?

With utmost humility, I hold the nation's political class responsible for this. The manner in which the Bofors ghost was invoked and then used to pursue selfish political goals for years together instilled terror in Delhi's political corridors. Politicians began to be reluctant to buy the ammunition essential for the army and an issue critical to the nation's security was pushed into

the background.

The time has come when our politicians should stop the mud-slinging and create a consensus on subjects of national interest. Just because our soldiers are not afraid of making the greatest sacrifice, none of us have a right to push them into the jaws of death. On July 26 this year, in the memory of Operation Vijay, the people organised a number of events and sang patriotic songs. But how many of those participating in this group were perturbed over the findings of the CAG report?

The country's foreign and military policy should be guided by facts, not emotions. When we chose a government, we should also allow it to work. The government in Delhi these days displays adequate sensitivity towards our soldiers on international borders. You may recall that Prime Minister Narendra Modi spent last Diwali with the soldiers guarding our borders. The defence ministry is being led by the sharp and astute Arun Jaitley. We sincerely hope that the duo gets rid of this old malaise afflicting the country.

ASEAN at 50: The challenge of cohesion

ASEAN today has ten members and ten dialogue partners including India and China. It has Matured into a 50 year old adult. It is also the silver jubilee year for India-ASEAN. And ASEAN strives for cohesion as the big powers indulge in shadow boxing

Some 100 km from Bangkok in Thailand, Bangsaen today is a tourist hub with several resorts, shops and 7/11 convenience stores. But in 1967 it was relatively isolated. In early August that year, five foreign ministers negotiated an important document in this beach town at the residence of erstwhile Prime Minister Field Marshall Plaek Pibulsonggram. The humour, rounds of golf and sports shirt diplomacy paved the way for the Bangkok Declaration for the foundation of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

S. Rajaratnam, the first foreign minister of Singapore at the inaugural session of ASEAN said, "We want to ensure a stable Southeast Asia, not a balkanised Southeast Asia."

ASEAN today has ten members and ten dialogue partners including India and

China. It has Matured into a 50 year old adult. It is also the silver jubilee year for India-ASEAN. And ASEAN strives for cohesion as the big powers indulge in shadow boxing.

Aimed at regional integration, ASEAN was based on three pillars: political-security, economics and socio-cultural ties. As set out in the ASEAN declaration, one of the aims and purposes of the grouping is to "promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter". But this is challenged today by lack of internal cohesion and arm twisting by China. The annual \$5 trillion shipping lanes of the South China Sea have seen conflicting claims and building of artificial islands by Beijing on

territory claimed by it, but disputed by Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei and the non-ASEAN Taiwan. Smaller countries like Laos and Cambodia are being enticed though cheque book diplomacy. Critics like Philippines which challenged China's maritime expansion in international court of law, under current President Duterte have since warmed up to Beijing in exchange for billions of dollars in investments or aid.

At a seminar organised by Strategic Studies Centre, Thailand on ASEAN and the world in Chonburi, Xu Nanfeng, (retired) major general and vice chairman of the China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CISS), when asked about his country's rejection of an international tribunal ruling under the United Nations Convention for Laws of the Seas (UNCLOS) in the Philippines



arbitration case, said, "We are very glad to see that the Philippines government has come back on the right track of consultations and negotiations on South China Sea." The message was clear – we will talk about upholding international norms on paper but negotiate with countries directly concerned and ASEAN while rejecting international rulings.

Meanwhile, from 2002 to now,

ASEAN member states that profess the desire to not become part of any military alliance, have watered down their statements on China's expansionist footprints in the South China Sea. Amid internal differences and Vietnam taking a hard stand within ASEAN that the draft code of conduct be legally binding, no assurances have been forthcoming on the same from Beijing.

(Contd on page 23)

If Doklam is Chinese territory, why has Beijing been negotiating with Bhutan on this for a decade?

The simple reason why India is not swayed by the war rhetoric being whipped up by Chinese media and is handling the situation quietly is owing to its close diplomatic ties with Bhutan

(Insider Bureau) The Doklam stand-off, now into its eighth week, has been characterised by jingoistic war rhetoric from the Chinese official English media and patient-yet-firm Indian diplomacy.

Many an armchair strategist has misconstrued India's calm demeanour to convey that Narendra Modi is in a tight spot and trying to wriggle out from a perceived position of weakness. This perception is perhaps diametrically opposite from the situation on ground at the strategic Doklam plateau as well as the mood of the deep state in New Delhi. The Modi government's hand has also been significantly strengthened by political support across party lines as expressed during the short-duration discussion in the Rajya Sabha on August 3. What needs to be singled out from that debate is that Ghulam Nabi Azad, the Congress's Leader in the Rajya Sabha, ticked off party MP Rajiv Shukla who wanted India to attend the One Belt One Road Forum, by dismissing it as Shukla's personal view. The message from the Rajya Sabha that day was that India stands

united on the Doklam stand-off and will not allow the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) to unilaterally change the border alignment at the India-China-Bhutan trijunction. This is in accordance with the latest 2012 agreement signed by the Special Representatives on boundary talks and firmly reiterated by Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval in his meeting with his Chinese counterpart State Councillor Yang Jiechi on the sidelines of the BRICS NSAs summit in Beijing last month. The reason why India is not swayed by war rhetoric and is handling the situation quietly is due to its close diplomatic ties with Bhutan. The fact is that the Indian army and the Bhutanese army work in close operational coordination with a division-strength Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) sitting in Thimpu to train the troops of its closest ally.

So while India has no intention of letting down its guard in the trijunction area and ending up exposing the vulnerable Silliguri corridor, the Chinese English media has been threatening military operations in two weeks time to evict Indian and

Bhutanese troops from the so-called Chinese territory. This begets a simple question: If Doklam is Chinese territory then why has Beijing been negotiating with Bhutan on the same for the past decade? While New Delhi has gone on record stating that the issue needs to be resolved diplomatically, the verbal aggression from China could have a negative impact on the bilateral trade with the Indian public mood becoming increasingly resentful of the war rhetoric. Bilateral trade worth \$ 71.482 billion is heavily skewed towards China with India's trade deficit a touch more than \$ 51 billion. Since Mao Zedong's time, Beijing has advocated parallel diplomacy to encourage the China-India bilateral relationship. In his memoirs, former Chinese foreign minister Huang Hua wrote that Mao in the 1970s wanted bilateral trade and boundary resolution with India to go on separate tracks and not impinge on each other.

The war rhetoric from Beijing will complicate this parallel diplomacy. China watchers dismiss this verbal aggression as part of Chinese information

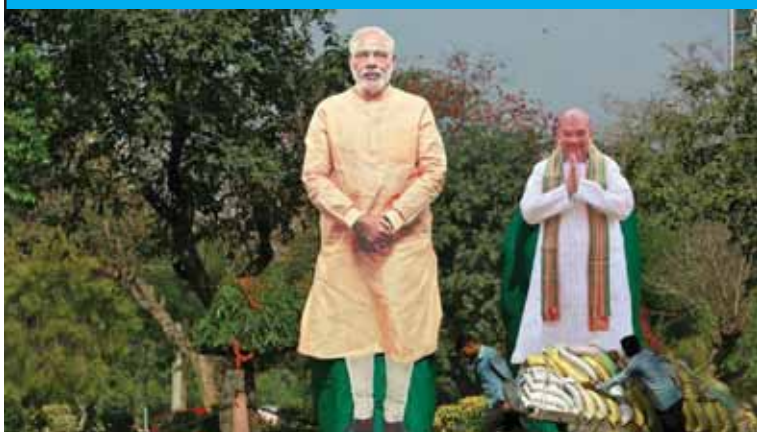


wfare as it does not match with the passive military deployment on ground in Tibet. Even though border patrols on both sides are alert, there is nothing untoward happening at Doklam with troops from both sides at a safe distance. While hawks on the Chinese side favour escalation by

the PLA, intruding into eight mutually identified disputed areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), such a move will further isolate Beijing globally after its aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea. This does not augur well for a country that aspires to be numero uno on the global front.

BJP is working overtime while the Opposition hibernates

Having by and large conquered north India, the BJP is eyeing Odisha and West Bengal, and thereafter the southern states. India's map is getting saffronised with the BJP increasing its footprints in state after state. For this, the Congress and other regional parties have none but themselves to blame



(Insider Bureau) With less than two years to go for the 2019 general elections in India, the Opposition continues to be in complete disarray, refusing to move at a time when the BJP's national president Amit Shah is on a 95-day hectic tour of many states across the country. As Shah rightly says, "My mission is to galvanise the cadre to improve the 2014 tally of 282 (the best ever won by any party since 1984) and not strengthen the

Shankersinh Vaghela quitting the Congress, 11 MLAs in Gujarat cross-voting in favour of NDA's presidential nominee Ram Nath Kovind, the collapse of the grand alliance in Bihar, and the recent defections from the SP and BSP much before Shah reached Uttar Pradesh. India's map is getting saffronised with the BJP increasing its footprints in state after state. The 'Congress Mukt Bharat' project that the BJP had aggressively launched in

Opposition." While his visits are creating tremors across the country, the Opposition continues to hibernate. A spate of incidents should have by now rung the alarm bells — senior leader

2014 is by and large complete as its main competitor at the national level has shrunk to barely half a dozen states.

Having by and large conquered north India, the BJP is eyeing Odisha and West Bengal, and thereafter the southern states. It is steadfastly moving on according to its blueprint inked in Odisha in April to make the BJP a pan-India party — from panchayat to Parliament. And on its radar are now the forces that have dominated regional politics — the SP, BSP, BJD, RJD and Trinamool Congress.

Perhaps the Congress and other regional parties have none but themselves to blame. While Shah is busy strengthening the already robust party, telling cadre not to get complacent as the Opposition was weak, the Congress and other regional parties have yet to start working on an electoral strategy or alliance to checkmate Narendra Modi's onward march.

There would have been some

murmurs had the Congress started mobilising the Opposition for the 2019 polls as it cannot defeat the BJP alone. This is also because the grand old party doesn't hold the same level of secrecy as that of the Sangh parivar. For example, the media has now come to know that the BJP high command had closed door meetings with about four dozen UP leaders before clearing the name of Yogi Adityanath as chief minister.

Either the Opposition is pinning its hope on a miracle or has surrendered already. Perhaps the Congress could at least improve its electoral prospects by projecting a young leadership in states ruled by the BJP. They have an enormous pool of young talent and the party must empower them. The revival of the Congress throughout India cannot be done from Delhi. The party will need home grown leaders to take on the regional satraps of the BJP.

Two types of Rs 500 notes? Congress calls it 'scam of the century', disrupts RS

The Congress' Kabil Sibal who raised the issue in Parliament said, "we have today discovered the reason why the government did demonetisation."



(Insider Bureau) The Rajya Sabha saw four adjournments within its first hour of proceedings on Tuesday as the Congress, with support from the Trinamool Congress and the Janata Dal (United), created a ruckus over the printing of two

kinds of 500 and 2000-rupee notes, calling it the "biggest scam of this century".

Congress. Yadav said no country in the world has different sized currency notes. "One is big, one is small," he said.

Slogan-shouting Congress members trooped into the well even as Leader of the House and finance minister Arun Jaitley said the opposition party has been raising "frivolous" issues without giving notices to stall Zero Hour proceedings.

Other members, including Trinamool's Derek O'Brien also displayed the new 500 rupee notes issued after demonetisation to show the different sizes. He first offered to submit the notes to Jaitley for scrutiny and then walked up to him to explain to him the difference. Jaitley said there is no provision in the rules that anyone could "flash any paper and say it is point of order".

JD(U)'s Sharad Yadav, who has been reportedly uneasy since his party aligned with the BJP to form a government in Bihar, sided with the opposition and showed enlarged copies of differently sized 500 rupee notes.

"There is a misuse of zero hour which is going on," said Jaitley.

"I can give signed copies" of the notes, he said as treasury benches countered his contention which was earlier raised by Kapil Sibal of the

Raising the issue through a point of order, Sibal said different sizes of the new high denomination currency was

being printed — "one for the ruling party (members) and one for the others".

"We have today discovered the reason why the government did demonetisation (of old 500 and 1000 rupee notes in November last year)," he said.

Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad (Cong) said "this is the biggest scam of this century." As law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and minister of state for parliamentary affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi countered,

Azad said two types of notes are being printed. "The government has no right to remain in office for even five minutes," he said. Deputy chairman PJ Kurien said even if there are two types of notes, it cannot be a point of order. "You raise the issue in a different form." He said the issue cannot be taken up through a point of order and the members have to give separate notice. Pramod Tiwari (Cong) said notice has been given, to which Kurien said the chairman will examine them.

Justice Dipak Misra To Become The Next Chief Justice Of India

(Insider Bureau) NEW DELHI — Justice Dipak Misra will take over as the next Chief Justice of India. The incumbent Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar will demit office on August 27. According to reports, last month CJI Khehar had nominated him for the top judicial post. Misra was born on October 3, 1953. Justice Misra has practiced in Constitutional, Civil, Criminal, Revenue, Service and Sales Tax matters in the Orissa High Court and the Service Tribunal. He has also worked as an Additional Judge in the Orissa High Court. He has also been a judge in the Madhya Pradesh High Court on 03rd March, 1997. He became permanent Judge on December 19, 1997. Justice Misra became Chief Justice of Delhi High Court on 24th May, 2010 and got promoted as Judge in the Supreme Court of India on

Supreme Court seeks Centre's reply on validity of special status to J-K

(Insider Bureau) The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought the Centre's response on a plea against a Delhi high court order which had rejected a petition challenging validity of Article 370 of the Constitution giving special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

A bench headed by Chief Justice JS Khehar issued the notice to the Centre and sought its reply within four weeks.

On April 11, the Delhi High Court had rejected the plea challenging the validity

of Article 370, saying nothing survives in it as the Supreme Court has already dismissed a petition on the issue.

The petitioner in high court, Kumari Vijayalakshmi Jha, claimed that the issue raised before the high court was different from the matter which was put before the apex court.

She had contended that Article 370 was a temporary provision that had lapsed with the dissolution of the state's Constituent Assembly in 1957. The petition had said

the continuance of the temporary provision of Article 370 even after dissolution of the state's Constituent Assembly and its Constitution which has never got the assent of the President of India or Parliament or the Government of India, "amounts to fraud on the basic structure of our Constitution". In July 2014, the Supreme Court had dismissed a plea challenging the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir and had asked the petitioner to move the high court.



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Reliance JioPhone: Blurring the lines between feature phones and smartphones



A device like Reliance JioPhone could very well redefine the meaning of smartphones. It's time we look at the phones based on their capabilities, the 'smart' tasks they can perform.

(News Agencies) Most of us completed the transition from feature phones to smartphones years ago and now take things such as high-speed 4G connectivity, apps like Facebook and WhatsApp, and digital wallets for granted, courtesy smartphones. We are now looking at the integration of biometrics, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality and Augmented

Reality as the next evolution of these mobile devices. But amid all this, we are forgetting one important thing - the prevalent digital divide. Although India is one of the biggest smartphone markets in the world, a large population is still deprived of mobile data connectivity. According to research agency CounterPoint analyst Parv Sharma, the feature phone

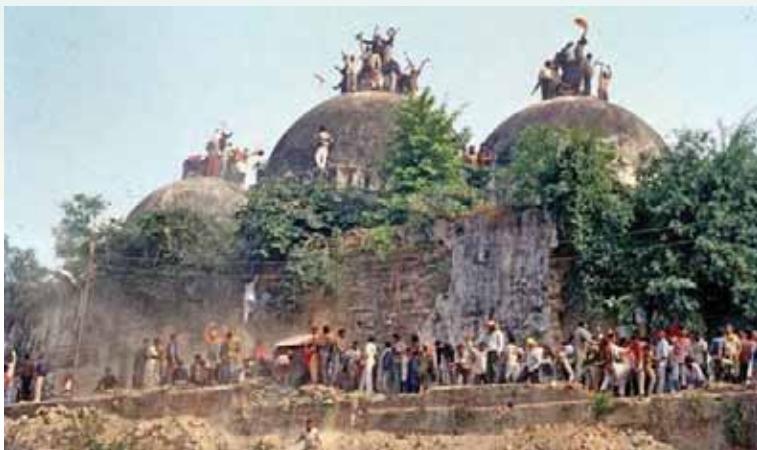
shipment in India in the calendar year 2016 was at 149 million units. The agency in one of its recent studies has also pointed out that migration from feature phones to smartphones has slowed down. Overall, the Indian mobile handset market remained flat whereas the smartphone market saw a modest growth of 4% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2017. One of the reasons behind slow migration from feature phones to smartphones has been the lack of availability of good-quality entry-level 4G VoLTE smartphones. Yes, we have 4G smartphones for as low as Rs 3,000, but the experience is far

from being on par with a decent budget smartphone. If you ask me, I'd not recommend buying any entry-level smartphone from the current lot in the market. That being said, I don't really think prices of these entry-level smartphones are coming down to the level of feature phones anytime soon. This is where phones like the JioPhone come into the picture. Reliance JioPhone is actually a 'smart' phone that has been packaged in a feature phone form factor. Reliance claims the JioPhone features 4G VoLTE support along with free voice calls for life, voice-based browser/digital assistant, preloaded Jio apps like

JioCinema, and NFC support for digital payments. Moreover, Reliance Jio is offering unlimited data packs with the JioPhone. Then there's an "effectively zero" price, which means basically you deposit Rs 1,500 with Reliance for three years. Devices like the JioPhone could very well be the elusive intermediary between feature phones and smartphones. Perhaps, it's also time we redefine the smartphones. After all, we cannot limit our understanding of a 'smart' phone to the ones that run on Android or iOS operating system. We should now look at the phones based on their capabilities, 'smart' tasks they're capable of performing.

Babri dispute: Shia Waqf Board says mosque can come up at a distance

In affidavit to SC, Shia Wakf Board challenges its Sunni counterparts position as one of the parties to the case, insisting that the mosque was a Shia mosque



(Insider Bureau) A mosque can be built in a Muslim-dominated area at a reasonable distance from the "most revered place of birth of Ram" in Ayodhya, the Shia wakf board told the Supreme Court on Tuesday.

The affidavit submitted by the Uttar Pradesh Shia board takes a position opposite to that of the Sunni board that claims ownership of the disputed site and rejects Hindu groups' claims to the spot, highlighting differences within the Muslim community over the contentious issue.

"To bring a quietus to the issue, masjid (mosque) can be located in a Muslim-dominated area at a reasonable distance from the most revered place of birth of Ram," said the 30-page affidavit.

Proximity of "place of worships should be avoided in as much as both denominations using loudspeakers tend to disturb religious performance of each other often leading to conflicts and acrimony", it said.

The board also told the court the mosque site was its property and only it was entitled to hold negotiations for an amicable settlement of the dispute. The document comes three days before the Supreme Court begins hearing challenges to an Allahabad high court verdict on the land dispute in the case.

"The Sunni board has no stake in the case since the mosque was a Shia property," it said of the Mughal-era mosque that was demolished by a Hindu mob in 1992.

Many Hindus believe that god Ram was born where Babur, the

first Mughal emperor, built the mosque.

The disputed 2.7-acre piece of land remains India's most potent religious flashpoint. More than 3,000 people were killed in the communal violence that followed mosque's demolition.

"A property's status is known by its creator - whether Shai/Sunni and Babri masjid was built by one Mir Baqi, a Shia," the affidavit said.

An inscription in the mosque said it was built by Babur's commander Mir Baqi in 1528-29 on the orders of the Mughal emperor but some dismiss it as a piece of fiction.

The Allahabad high court said not less than 1/3rd of the property should go to Muslims. Muslims meant Shia waqf since the court "rejected the claim of Sunni waqf on the Babri masjid", said the affidavit, which came after the board late July decided to stake claim to the disputed site. The board also requested the court to appoint a committee to resolve the decades-long dispute. The court recently constituted a three-judge bench to hear petitions against the Allahabad high court verdict that divided the land between Ram Lalla, Nirmohi Akhada and the Sunni wakf board.

As Nitish, BJP join hands, poll strategist Prashant Kishor makes quiet exit

Kishor had been made advisor to CM, in the rank of a cabinet minister, soon after the formation of the GA government in November 2015, 'to give wings to the development of Bihar', through Bihar Vikas Mission..



(Insider Bureau) Poll strategist Prashant Kishor, who was engaged by JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar for the November 2015 Bihar assembly election which the RJD-JD(U)-Congress grand alliance won by a big margin, has ceased to be advisor to the Bihar chief minister. Kishore's tenure was deemed to have automatically ended with the premature fall of the Grand Alliance government last week, when Kumar resigned as CM over the RJD failure to 'come clean' on CBI's corruption charge on deputy CM Tejashwi Prasad Yadav, and formation of a new JD(U)-BJP-LJP government. Kishor had been made advisor to CM, in the rank of a cabinet minister, soon after the formation of the GA government in November 2015, 'to give wings to the development of Bihar', through a 'special purpose vehicle called the Bihar Vikas Mission (BVM). The Mission's immediate goal was to work towards executing Nitish's saat nishchay or seven-point agenda - economic programming specifically geared for youth; job reservations and empowerment for women; electricity, drinking water and toilets to each home; laying pucca streets through habitations across the state; and expanding economic opportunity through education. Kishor's task, as advisor to CM and BVM governing board functionary, was to devise a development blueprint in sync with Nitish's electoral promises. However, Kishor's appointment, in January 2016, did not go well with the BJP, now a coalition partner in the government, which had taken the position that the move had served to lower the morale of the officials in the state administration by encouraging "outside influence". The BJP had also blamed Kishor's presence in the BVM governing body as the reason behind the the voluntary retirement sought by the then principal secretary, department of panchayati raj, Sudhir Kumar Rakesh, more than a year before his scheduled retirement in 2017.

A Rajya Sabha seat is wasted on members like Tendulkar and Rekha

The office is a chance for prominent citizens to make a difference; and only those who have an interest in the running of the country should accept the nomination.

(News Agencies)Article 80(3) of the Constitution authorises the President of India to nominate (on the advice of the Government) 12 members to the Rajya Sabha. These members are people from outside the realm of politics and elections. These are people who have excelled in their respective fields, and whose expertise and vision can help shape legislation in the country. They are not expected to have stood for or won elections, but can contribute to legislation that can benefit from their perspective.

It is therefore disappointing that some of the current nominated members have done

hardly anything to prove their value to the House. When celebrated cricketer Sachin Tendulkar (who has been a member of the House since 2012) showed up in Parliament last week, it was such a rare occurrence that it became news in itself. Mr Tendulkar has, in his five years as member, participated in no debates, introduced no bills, and his attendance in the house is a measly 7%. Actor Rekha is another nominated member with a dismal record. Also a member since 2012, her attendance record is even worse than Mr. Tendulkar, at 5%. She has asked

no questions, introduced no bills, and taken part in no debates in all these years. This is not to say that all nominated members are the same. KTS Tulsi has asked the most number of questions – 134 – and participated in the most number of debates – 54 – out of all nominated members. Even Olympic medal winning boxer Mary Kom, who was nominated in 2016, has already participated in three debates and has a 61% attendance record.

It is a devaluation of a Rajya Sabha seat to nominate members such as Mr. Tendulkar and Ms. Rekha; who seem to have no interest in the running of the

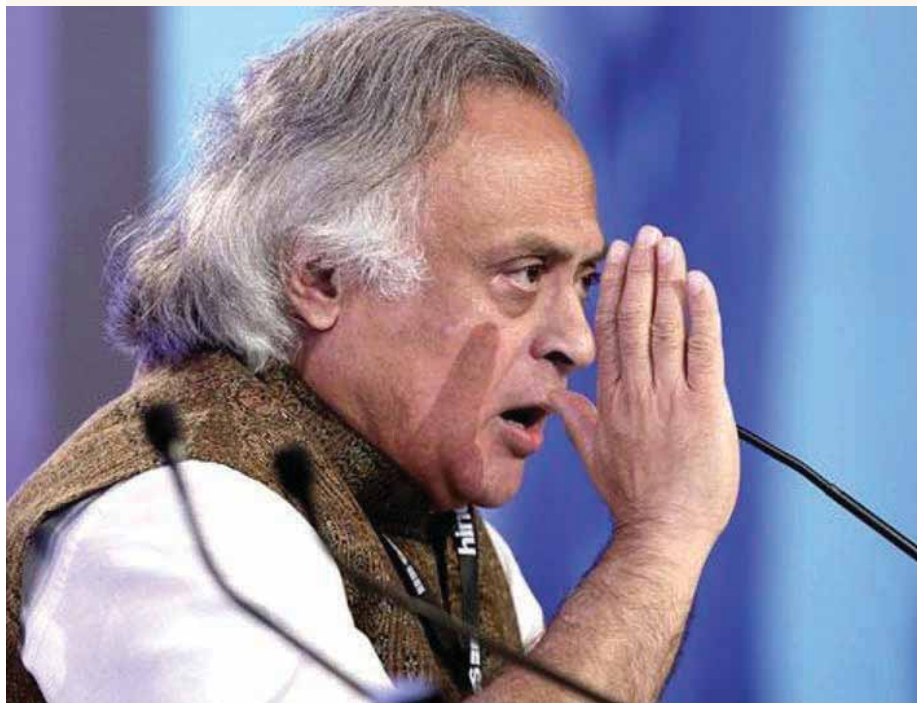


House. It would have been better for them to have refused the membership, instead of accepting it and contributing next to nothing. The office is a chance

for prominent citizens to make a difference; and only those who have an interest in the running of the country should accept the nomination.

'Sultanate gone, but we behave like sultans': Jairam Ramesh admits Congress in deep crisis

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said it was wrong for the Congress party to think that anti-incumbency will work automatically against the Modi-led government in the states being ruled by the BJP in the elections.



(News Agencies)The Congress is facing an "existential crisis", senior party leader Jairam Ramesh on Monday said, pitching for "a collective effort" by party leaders to "overcome" the challenges it faced from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah.

Ramesh also said that business as usual approach will not work against Modi and Shah and advocated for a flexibility in approach to make Congress relevant.

"Yes, the Congress party is facing a very serious crisis," Ramesh told PTI in an interview.

He said the Congress had faced "electoral crisis" from

1996 to 2004 when it was out of power. The party had also faced "electoral crisis" in 1977 when it lost the elections held soon after the emergency. "But today, I would say that the Congress is facing an existential crisis. It is not an electoral crisis. The party really is in deep crisis," he said, when asked whether the threat of "poaching" of MLAs posed by the BJP in Gujarat had forced the party to transport its MLAs to Karnataka to ensure party leader Ahmed Patel's victory in the Rajya Sabha polls.

He, however, justified the Gujarat Congress's decision to send 44 of its MLAs to a resort in party-ruled Karnataka on July 29 to fend off the alleged

"We have to understand we are up against Mr Modi, Mr Shah. And they think differently, they act differently, and if we are not flexible in our approach, we will become irrelevant, frankly," the Congress leader said. He said the Congress party must also recognise that India has changed. "Old slogans don't work, old formulas don't work, old mantras don't work. India has changed, the Congress party has to change," he said.

The former union minister hoped that party vice-president Rahul Gandhi would end the uncertainty over his taking over as the Congress president to make the party ready for crucial

"poaching" attempts by BJP, saying the saffron party had also "transported" MLAs in the past.

He said it was wrong for the Congress party to think that anti-incumbency will work automatically against the Modi-led government in the states being ruled by the BJP in the elections.

electoral battles in key states in 2018 and the Lok Sabha polls scheduled a year later.

"I think in all probability, Rahul Gandhi will take charge (as Congress president) before the end of 2017," he said.

The senior leader lamented that he had been proved wrong in the past about his prediction about Rahul's assuming charge of the top party job.

"I thought it will happen in 2015, it didn't happen. I thought it will happen in 2016, it didn't happen. So I am the wrong person to ask this question. I feel that it may happen before the end of 2017," Ramesh said.

He said he had "no" indication about appointment of Rahul Gandhi as Congress president.

"I have only expectation. That's all. In 2018 and 2019 you will be busy with elections. State elections, national elections...and this type of thing...uncertainty is not good," and urged the Gandhi scion to "finish it off."

Asked if there is anyone in the Congress party to give a strong challenge to Modi in 2019 elections, Ramesh said, "I have always maintained that it is the collective strength of the Congress that will overcome Mr Modi not some individual magic wand".

"It has to be a collective effort," he said.

Ramesh took a potshots at

party leaders who still behave as if the party is still in power.

"The sultanate has gone, but we behave as if we are sultans still. We have to completely redo the way of thinking, the way of acting, the way of projecting, the way of communicating.

"I think there is a lot of goodwill for the Congress, a lot of support for the Congress but people want to see a new Congress. They don't want to see old mantras, old slogans. We must recognise this is a big challenge. Huge challenge for us," he said.

He said Nitish Kumar's return to the Indian fold was a big setback for anti-BJP coalition in the country, describing it as a "completely betrayal of the mandate" given to the Mahagathbandhan by the people of Bihar. Ramesh, who shares a personal rapport with Kumar, said, "personally, I was aghast, astonished, deeply disappointed, but we have to move on and we don't have time."

Ramesh, representing Karnataka in the Rajya Sabha, expressed hope that the "revival" of Congress will happen in Karnataka next year as it had happened 40 years ago in 1978 in Chikmagalur Lok Sabha seat in the state which gave political rebirth to Indira Gandhi who faced defeat in Rae Bareilly in the elections held after the Emergency.

Trump's Trade Pullout Roils Rural America

After the U.S. withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, other nations launch 27 separate negotiations to undercut U.S. exporters.

(News Agencies)EAGLE GROVE, Iowa—On a cloud-swept landscape dotted with grain elevators, a meat producer called Prestage Farms is building a 700,000-square-foot processing plant. The gleaming new factory is both the great hope of Wright County, which voted by a 2-1 margin for Donald Trump, and the victim of one of Trump's first policy moves, his decision to pull out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

For much of industrial America, the TPP was a suspect deal, the successor to the North American Free Trade Agreement, which some argue led to a massive offshoring of U.S. jobs to Mexico. But for the already struggling agricultural sector, the sprawling 12-nation TPP, covering 40 percent of the world's economy, was a lifeline. It was a chance to erase punishing tariffs that restricted the United States—the onetime “breadbasket of the world”—

from selling its meats, grains and dairy products to massive importers of foodstuffs such as Japan and Vietnam. The decision to pull out of the trade deal has become a double hit on places like Eagle Grove. The promised bump of \$10 billion in agricultural output over 15 years, based on estimates by the U.S. International Trade Commission, won't materialize. But Trump's decision to withdraw from the pact also cleared the way for rival exporters such as Australia, New Zealand and the European Union to negotiate even lower tariffs with importing nations, creating potentially greater competitive advantages over U.S. exports.

A POLITICO analysis found that the 11 other TPP countries are now involved in a whopping 27 separate trade negotiations with each other, other major trading powers in the region like China and massive blocs like the EU. Those efforts range from

exploratory conversations to deals already signed and awaiting ratification. Seven of the most significant deals for U.S. farmers were either launched or concluded in the five months since the United States withdrew from the TPP.

“I'm scared to death,” said Ron Prestage, whose North Carolina-based family pork and poultry business made its huge investment in the plant near Eagle Grove in part to reap expected gains from the TPP. “I don't guess I've gone beyond the point of no return on the new plant, but we did already start digging our wells and started moving dirt.”

He and other agricultural businesspeople and workers have reason for concern.

On July 6, the EU, which already exports as much pork to Japan as the United States does, announced political agreement on a new deal that would give European pork farmers an



advantage of up to \$2 per pound over U.S. exporters under certain circumstances—a move which, if unchecked, is all but certain to create a widening gap between EU exports and those from the United States.

European wine producers, who sold more than \$1 billion to Japan between 2014 and 2016, would also see a 15 percent tariff on exports to Japan disappear while U.S. exporters would continue to face that duty at the border. For other products, the deal essentially mirrors the rates negotiated under the TPP, which the United States has surrendered, giving the EU a clear advantage over U.S.

farmers. The EU's deal is all the more noteworthy because American farmers were relying on the TPP—to which the EU was not a member—to give them an advantage over European competitors. But in a further rebuke to the United States, Tokyo decided within a matter of weeks to offer the European nations virtually the same agricultural access to its market that United States trade officials had spent two excruciating years extracting through near-monthly meetings with their Japanese counterparts on the sidelines of the broader TPP negotiations; the United States is now left out.

Cooking food with human poop instead of charcoal? Yes, it's possible

A Kenyan startup has successfully turned human waste into an environment-friendly and viable fuel source.

(News Agencies) Anybody whose ever had a barbecue party in their backyard would know just how costly charcoal is. Given the fact that most fuels are non-renewable and



scarce, their rising prices shouldn't be a wonder. Even now, in Indian villages, gobar gas is the common fuel source and it's quite cheap, because it's readily available. Researchers across the world have been looking for alternative sources of fuel, and a startup in Kenya has actually made great strides in this regard. Sanivation, a social enterprise operating in East Africa, has combined Kenya's biggest human waste issue into an affordable cooking-fuel. Yes, your poop can be treated and turned into a form of charcoal you can cook with! According to the New York Post, Sanivation is creating charcoal briquettes out of human faeces that apparently burn longer than charcoal or firewood. The poop charcoal also creates less smoke and has no smell. The company “collects sludge from around the Rift Valley region” and transforms it into charcoal: the sludge is sundried for two-three weeks, then heated in a kiln, and mixed with sawdust and molasses. This gets rid of the harmful gases and volatile matters. Not only is this system safe, but also cheap. A kilo of this poop charcoal costs a mere 50 cents (Rs 64), making this a very viable and eco-friendly fuel source. Sanivation is producing two tonnes per month, but hope to be able to increase production up to 10 tonnes per month by the end of 2017. And we dearly hope they succeed, and share their methods throughout the world. You might have thought turning man's trash into treasure was impossible, but this company is proving the world wrong, while saving the planet!

The bigger, the better: Chinese restaurant offers discounts as per women's bra size

The Trendy Shrimp restaurant has come under fire for its adverts showing a line-up of cartoon women dressed in under garments with the slogan “The whole city is looking for BREASTS”.



(News Agencies) A 5% discount on your meal or a 65% discount? That depends on your bra size. A Chinese restaurant in Hangzhou, the main city of coastal Zhejiang, has come under fire for its adverts showing a line-up of cartoon women dressed in under garments with the slogan “The whole city is looking for BREASTS”.

The restaurant called The Trendy Shrimp offers discounts on the basis of women's bra cup size, with greater offers available to those with bigger sizes. According to a BBC report quoting the Qianjiang Evening Post, the posters have now been removed after complaints from locals who said it was distasteful, calling it “vulgar

advertising” and “discriminatory towards women”.

The restaurant general manager however defends their sales strategy. “Once the promotion started, customer numbers rose by about 20%,” he said, adding that “some of the girls we met were very proud - they had nothing to hide”.

But this isn't the first time that a Chinese establishment has offered perks to customers on the basis of their appearance. In 2015, a restaurant in China's Henan province offered free meals to “beautiful clients” judged by the staff of a plastic surgery clinic.

No country for civilians: Pakistan's democracy is at its military's mercy

Nawaz Sharif's unceremonious exit has once again exposed the fragility of Pakistan's democracy and will severely limit India's options to resolve bilateral issues through civilian diplomacy.

prime ministers can do. Not even Sharif, whose nine years in office make him the country's longest-serving PM, even though all his three tenures were cut short.

"In Nawaz Sharif, you at least had a politician who wanted to improve relations with India," says G Parthasarathy, former Indian high commissioner to Islamabad. Commendable as his good intentions were, they were not backed by a real appreciation of the limits of his power.

Sharif, ironically, was pulled out of the heartland of Pakistan's Punjab province and built up by General Zia ul-Haq to take on the charismatic Benazir Bhutto. Instead, he became the military's deadliest foe. And this rivalry saw General Headquarters Rawalpindi scuppering both his celebrated peace outreaches to Indian prime ministers, Vajpayee in Lahore in 1999 and Modi,

once again in Lahore, in December 2015. If it was the Northern Light Infantry hiking up the Kargil heights in 1999, it was four heavily armed Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists shinning up a tree over the Pathankot air base on January 2 last year, just a week after PM Modi had attended the wedding of Sharif's granddaughter in Lahore on December 25, 2015. "Sharif's ouster doesn't have any specific implications for India," says Tilak Devasher, former special secretary, cabinet secretariat. "It is the army that determines Pakistan's India policy, as also its Afghan, security and nuclear policies. So long as this persists, there is little that elected PMs, even those with a heavy mandate from Punjab, can do to make a substantive difference in bilateral ties." The ministry of external affairs has been silent on the July 28 verdict against Sharif. One official called it "an internal

matter of Pakistan". The peace process with Pakistan has been stalled for so long — nearly 18 months since the Pathankot attack — that the country has practically dropped off the to-do list in South Block. Jadhav's death sentence has sparked off fresh acrimony. In April, foreign minister Sushma Swaraj issued a warning over Jadhav's execution. "I would caution the Pakistani government to consider the consequences for our bilateral relationship if they proceed on this matter," she said. An International Court of Justice verdict in May has so far stayed the execution. Last month, Pakistan refused another request for consular access to Jadhav, the 18th over the past year. India has hit back by freezing visas issued to Pakistani nationals, from over 20,000 issued last year, the number is believed to be in single digits so far this year.

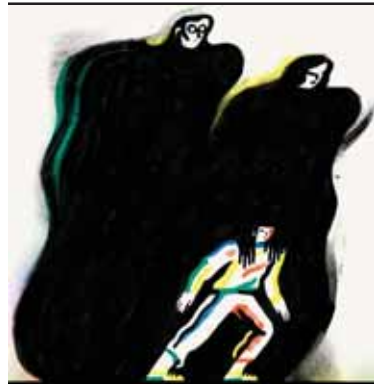


(News Agencies) On July 27, just a day before Pakistan's Supreme Court ejected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, India's minister of state for external affairs General VK Singh (retired), while speaking in Parliament, listed four reasons that had set back bilateral ties between India and Pakistan - the Pathankot terror attack, cross-border terrorism, ceasefire violations by Pakistani forces and the death penalty handed down to alleged Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav. Left unsaid was the common thread binding all four reasons - the Pakistan army. India believes the Pakistan army runs 'the infrastructure of terror' that recruits and trains terrorists to carry out attacks — as in Pathankot and Uri in 2016 — and provokes firing on the LoC

to facilitate their infiltration. This deadly incendiary cocktail of factors and a Pakistani military court's April 10 death sentence to Jadhav have scorched India-Pakistan ties.

In June, when PM Narendra Modi met Sharif at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Astana, Kazakhstan - their first meeting since December 2015, the two leaders were warm and cordial, enquired about each other's families, but that was it. No formal meeting was scheduled and the two sat at separate tables.

Sharif's ouster, which many in the Indian establishment have been privately calling a 'judicial execution' and 'soft coup', has reiterated an old axiom: in Pakistan, the military calls the shots and there is little civilian



(News Agencies) BEIJING — My generation of urban Chinese, born in the 1980s and 1990s under the one-child policy, were long labeled "little emperors," a term used to characterize us as narcissistic and weak-willed children spoiled by parental attention and newfound material comfort. It was an image that we rejected: In reality, as I used to joke with friends, our lives of academic grind and adolescent boredom felt closer to that of an overworked county clerk than a privileged little brat. Gradually, as single-child families became the norm, the term fell out of use. But as young people are venturing into the real world and confronting economic and social challenges with a complexity unknown to our parents, many of us are starting to wonder whether the

China's 'Giant Infants'

"little emperor" label had been more accurate than we thought.

Many of my peers, finding themselves overwhelmed by the trials of adulthood, have begun to reflect critically on how middle-class kids are raised in urban China. Perhaps what were considered markers of my generation's privilege — intensive parenting, rigorous education and consumerist culture — are in fact our bane, making us self-centered and emotionally isolated, struggling to find independence and fulfillment in a fast-changing society.

The evidence is hard to miss: the Chinese student overseas who calls home every day sobbing; the fashionable young woman who screams at a mortified boyfriend in public; the top-performing university student who stops going to class and loses himself in video games. In the latest dating show taking television by storm, contestants appear onstage flanked by their parents, who grill suitors before their children are allowed to meet them.

Chinese people have "giant infant" syndrome, says Wu Zhihong, a psychiatrist and author of a best-selling book called "A Country of Giant Infants" who lists symptoms that call to mind a grown-up "little emperor." In Mr. Wu's view, social problems from littering in public places to codependency in romantic relationships have their roots in China's family-centered culture and its new levels of oppression that stunt individual psychological growth.

His analysis struck a chord with Chinese millennials. Their enthusiastic responses alarmed state censors and got the book banned early this year, apparently for its damning portrayal of what it calls the Chinese "national character."

Mr. Wu's attack on the family resonated for good reasons. Despite having been the bedrock of Chinese culture for millenniums, family values have changed in the past 30 years, as the country has become wealthier and more capitalist. The focus is now less on the young's respect for their elders

than on parents' unrelenting devotion to their offspring. Urban Chinese parents are involved in their children's lives in ways that would make "tiger mothers" from earlier times gasp.

Mothers and fathers have expanded their influence on their children's lives beyond school, into career, marriage, housing purchase and child-rearing. It is driven in part by necessity: the rollback of the socialist welfare system and the shortage of sought-after social benefits, like good schools, obliged families to pool their resources to help the young. But this ethos deprives children of the chance to develop social skills and the sense of self-sufficiency associated with adulthood. A 2013 study by Australian scholars showed that compared with older cohorts with siblings, members of China's one-child generation are more prone to traits like risk aversion and pessimism. These are reflected, for instance, in their preference for stable jobs and their difficulty in adjusting to work environments. According to

recent career surveys, college graduates have consistently ranked government jobs as their top choice, yet they frequently complain of the stress and boredom, as well as the difficulty of navigating interpersonal relations. One-quarter quit their first job within a year.

"People born in the '80s and '90s, having always had their life mapped out by parents, have trouble switching from their child identity into that of a working professional," wrote Miao Lijuan, a business commentator, in an essay dissecting millennials' work experience in a journal on corporate culture. "They had to go through psychological weaning after starting work." If helicopter parenting hinders the socialization of the young, the effect is compounded by its narrow focus. While Chinese middle-class parents tirelessly push their children to work hard and master society's hidden rules, they pay far less attention to emotional qualities like empathy.

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When parents are short on time and money, kids struggle in school

(News Agencies) At the Government Girls Senior Secondary School of Sangam Vihar, some families say they know the secret of academic success: school management

Chandrashekhar (who doesn't use a surname) is not alone in feeling insecure and ignorant when confronting his kids' education. Like many parents of kids at government schools,

consist, in Delhi, of 12 parents, the school principal, a representative nominated by the local MLA, a social worker, and a teacher who runs the group. Together, they help solve both large problems about matters such as school infrastructure and smaller problems faced by individual students, teachers or parents.

In taking advantage of the management committee at the school — known locally as the pahadi school — Devi and Sanu hit on the same insight: that their kids' success would be driven by a sense of personal investment from their parents and accountability from themselves.

"Every time a parent asks how the student is doing, they do better," says Sanu. "As SMC members, we have a direct channel with their teachers, too. So kids know that we are not only reliant on their words to know how they are performing. I can easily ask their teachers." Both Sanu and Devi agreed that getting to

know teachers cultivates in their children a certain sort of productive "fear".

Where Sanu and Devi are assertive, Chandrashekhar is diffident. "My kids are more educated than me now," he says. "How do I help them out at home? All I do is ask them once in a while how they are doing at school, if they have done their homework. That is all."

Yet Chandrashekhar's son, Arvind, who is in Class 9 at Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya, says he benefits from personal attention from his father. "When my father asks me about school, it makes me feel like he cares. It matters what I do and how I perform in school. I think I work extra hard on the days he asks."

Saransh Vaswani, the co founder of Saajha, a not for profit organisation that works to enable parents to participate in the learning of their children and the School Management Committees, confirms that frequent interactions between

parents and students are crucial — no matter how educated the parents are.

"It's okay if you are not literate," he says. "You could interact with your child while you are cooking, talk to them about shapes and colours. We have even given parents and students simple worksheets to fill out together. Simple things like, match the 'ba' with 'batak'."

But like Chandrashekhar, his wife, Vimala Devi, and his other child, Jyoti, 21, also work long hours at intensive jobs, leaving them with only so much time and energy to interact with the Nikki and Arvind afterward. Vimala Devi and Jyoti each work at a garment factory in Okhla. Vimala Devi makes Rs. 6,000 a month; Jyoti makes Rs. 7,000. They work from 8am until 8pm most days, leaving Nikki to do household chores in addition to their schoolwork. "I come back late from work. I don't even have time to ask about her studies sometimes," says Vimala Devi of Nikki.



committees. "My kids are now more responsible, because they know I can talk to their teachers," says Mahindra Devi, a committee member whose daughters are studying in Class 7 and 9.

Banwari Lal Sanu, another member, agrees. His daughter, Khushboo, used to be "a little irresponsible" and "get distracted easily". But after Sanu joined the committee, Khushboo scored a 98 in her Class 12 board exam for economics. She's now pursuing a Bachelors of Commerce degree at Delhi University's School of Open Learning.

Not all parents, however, feel the same way. Chandrashekhar, whose daughter, Nikki, is in Class 12, appreciates going to committee meetings when he is invited, but also feels somewhat unwelcome. He says he'd never thought about joining himself. "How do I just walk up to them and ask them to make me a part of the committee? I was not even aware of the procedures."

Chandrashekhar makes as little as Rs.3,000 to Rs. 7,000 a month working at a factory; Sanu, conversely, obtained a BA, runs a mechanical garage with a few employees, and makes Rs. 50,000 a month. According to some teachers, experts and parents themselves, the poorer the parents, the less likely they are to join school management committees and advocate for their family.

Poverty hinders the schooling of Delhi's children in blunt ways, such as forcing them to drop out and take a job, but it also puts them at a disadvantage in subtler respects too, decreasing the involvement and interest of parents while distracting and discouraging their kids. The story of Chandrashekhar's family exemplifies the multiplicity of challenges posed by poverty to getting a good education in Delhi.

School management committees are supposed to exist at every school in India. First established by the 2009 Right to Education Act, they're meant to



Bob Mueller Is Using a Grand Jury. Here's What It Means.

(News Agencies) Thursday's news that Special Counsel Robert Mueller is tapping a grand jury as part of his ongoing investigation jolted Washington and sent pundits to the airwaves, seeking to explain what this latest twist in the Russia story might tell us about President Donald Trump's ultimate fate. There's no doubt this move is significant: It means Mueller believes there is sufficient evidence a crime was committed to warrant a criminal investigation. But people are leaping to conclusions that the public evidence doesn't yet support. Only a grand jury can issue an indictment, which is the only way that someone can be charged with committing a felony pursuant to the U.S. Constitution. Merely impaneling a grand jury does not mean that Mueller will ultimately seek an indictment, although most grand jury investigations do result in someone being indicted. When a prosecutor does seek an indictment, one is almost always returned by the grand jury—hence the old saw that a grand jury would “indict a ham sandwich” if asked.

A grand jury, which consists of 16 to 23 people, is an important tool that allows prosecutors to issue subpoenas that require people to produce documents and other evidence. Subpoenas can also be used to compel people to testify under oath before the grand jury. You can expect Mueller and his team to issue many subpoenas in the months ahead.

Because grand jury subpoenas are an important prosecutorial tool, typically a grand jury is impaneled at the very beginning of an investigation, not at the end. Indictments are usually sought at the very end of an investigation, after all of the witnesses are questioned and all of the documents are obtained. So despite all the punditry on cable news, there's no suggestion here that Mueller is closing in on any particular target, such as the president. In all likelihood, he's just getting started.

It is possible, though, that as a starting point Mueller will eventually seek an indictment of a lower-level figure in or around Trump's campaign. Sometimes, when prosecutors are facing obstacles in obtaining evidence, they seek an indictment of one individual or a group of individuals prior to completing

their investigation, if they believe that those individuals might cooperate with the government and provide evidence. Otherwise, decisions about who to charge are left to the very end of the investigation.

The work that grand juries do is secret, which means that grand jurors—who are ordinary citizens chosen at random and vetted by the federal district court—cannot share what is happening before the grand jury. Federal rules also prevent prosecutors from disclosing what happens before the grand jury. But those same rules permit witnesses to disclose what happened, and people who receive grand jury subpoenas are usually not prohibited from disclosing their contents. That means that we will likely continue to hear media reports about witnesses and documents sought by Mueller and his team, as we did on Thursday.

One quirk of grand juries could be significant. When a witness testifies under oath before the grand jury, no one else is permitted to be present other than the prosecutor and the grand jurors. The witness is not even allowed to have a lawyer

present, and the normal rules of evidence that limit questioning in a trial do not apply. For that reason, when witnesses receive a grand jury subpoena, their lawyer often asks the prosecutor to agree to permit the witness to be interviewed by the prosecutor and an FBI agent with the lawyer present. The FBI agent's presence would make it a crime to lie during the interview—creating the risk of Trump or one of his associates committing a crime through their words—but the lawyer would be present and could assist the witness.

That said, interviews are not typically transcribed, even though the FBI agent prepares a report memorializing the interview. For that reason, when it is important for a prosecutor to pin down a witness's testimony, the prosecutor will insist that the witness testify under oath before the grand jury. For example, President Bill Clinton testified before a grand jury in the investigation by independent counsel Kenneth Starr—who later accused Clinton of providing “perjurious, false and misleading testimony,” leading to his impeachment by the Republican-



led House of Representatives.

As for Trump, we're probably a long way from learning whether he's broken any laws, although he very well may be in Mueller's sights. The fact that a grand jury has been impaneled does not affect whether Mueller will be fired, as the president has threatened to do, and it does not in any way restrict the bounds of his investigation.

That said, as a practical matter, the existence of a grand jury investigation confirms that Mueller is conducting a criminal investigation, not merely a counterintelligence investigation. It's possible that the existence of a federal criminal investigation might increase the political cost of firing Mueller. Republican senators have already warned there will be “hell to pay” if Trump fires Attorney General Jeff Sessions, whose recusal from the Russia investigation has enraged and frustrated the president, so that he can hire a

more pliant attorney general.

That said, Thursday's news is not surprising. Mueller has already hired 16 prosecutors—some of the most accomplished investigators ever assembled on one team. These are people with deep skills and experience in prosecuting cases on money laundering, campaign finance violations and foreign bribery, as well as a sophisticated understanding of how to handle sprawling, complex investigations like this one. If any crimes were committed, they're likely to find out.

The evidence in the public domain was already enough to warrant an investigation, which is why Mueller was appointed in the first place. Now, the existence of a grand jury confirms what many of us presumed, which is that Mueller is conducting a wide-ranging criminal investigation. What we don't know is what, if anything, it will uncover.

Don't Let The Emerging Media Narrative About Adityanath's Softer Side Distract From The Corrosiveness Of His Politics

If his politics is rooted in communal hatred, we need to not get distracted by anything else.

(News Agencies) As the reality of Yogi Adityanath's elevation as the new chief minister of Uttar Pradesh settles in, reports in a section of the media seem to be shifting towards the next inevitable step: an attempt to “normalise” the Hindu hardliner as an individual who's not a religious bigot, especially in his dealing with people in his daily life.

Several newspapers have since carried stories of ordinary Muslims employed at the Gorakhnath Math in Gorakhpur, run by Adityanath, who have confessed to have been his beneficiaries. From the first engineer of the institution to the caretaker of its finances to the handler of the 400-odd cows living on the premises under the loving care of the Yogi, these Muslims praise their employer's fairness. Not only is Adityanath a just employer, who doesn't discriminate on the basis of caste or religion, he is also a “green activist” and an animal-lover, we are told. A roster of his frugal lifestyle, shorn of luxuries such as a television, is detailed to portray his austere habits. The portrait that is pieced together with such trivia is in striking contrast to the image of a divisive, rabble-rousing public leader who has no qualms about spewing the most toxic communal venom in service of his politics. Do these, reportedly moderate, aspects of Adityanath's

personality make him any less culpable of inciting public sentiments of communal disharmony? If that's the assumption, we are then looking at a classic case of non-sequitur. Firstly, his personal conduct is irrelevant — what matters is his message and his politics. Secondly, an Islamophobic person may well employ Muslims in positions inferior to themselves — in fact, such a decision would fit in with their contempt for the community. By the same logic, coexistence with fellow Muslims, or a passing tolerance of them, does not necessarily indicate a mindset that treats them as social equal.

Stories of Adityanath's faithful Muslim workers and kind nature, while possibly being an indicator of his behaviour as a private individual, don't erase the damaging public remarks he has made on his way to becoming the chief minister of the state. Nor does his supposed personal magnanimity even out the sharpness of his divisive rhetoric.

Sample some of his statements: “If one Hindu girl is converted, we will convert 100 Muslim girls”; “Mother Teresa was a part of a conspiracy to evangelise India”; or “there is no difference in the language between Shah Rukh Khan and Hafiz Saeed”.

A man who has campaigned and won

the elections of the strength of such divisive beliefs has to be taken at face value, in spite of attempts to add new spins and twist to his perceived popular image.

The tradition for changing narratives, which demand that even candidates accused of serious offences be given the benefit of the doubt if they are elected to public office until proven guilty, is long and hallowed.

In India, we have the example of a sitting prime minister whose reign as the chief minister of a state saw one of the worst violations of human rights under his jurisdiction in 2002. More recently, in the US, there were attempts to “normalise” Donald J Trump, an allegedly habitual sex offender with a dodgy tax record, after he won the presidential elections against all odds. Trump's threat of building the wall between Mexico and the US and his Muslim ban were projected to be empty boasts of a right-wing politician that would never be executed by a leader holding a public office. We know now how that turned out.

It may be too early to say what Yogi Adityanath would unleash on UP during his rule, but never too late to point out that being kind to a handful of Muslims subservient to him or a love for animals should not detract us from the corrosiveness of Adityanath's politics, which has won him high political office.

Is The Islamic 'Triple Talaq' Really That Different From How Modern Couples Split?



(News Agencies) When you decide to find release from each other, as modern man and wife, you must first suffer. Like conjoined twins who wish for freedom. And like them one of you will fare worse. You may have heard of the wisdom, 'Marriage is a lot of work'? It appears that only women ever say that, but it does not mean men are off the hook — they too will endure the 'work'. Marital struggle is a team effort. The couple marinates in a mild toxin for years before seeking flight.

Whatever form it takes, it appears that the hardship of separation is sacred. It is through this misery that the

society, oddly, is reassured that marriage is important, and that women have equal rights. Suffering is the uniform civil code of the sophisticated divorce. So, is that what the complaint against the instantaneous Islamic triple talaq is really, stripped of all the nonsense? That it is too easy? That a Muslim man, instead of undergoing three stages of divorce over a period of time, has the option of executing the three stages all at once? And that the 'triple talaq' can be issued long-distance, in the form of a WhatsApp message even?

No, the humanitarians say. It is not about ease as much as

how easy it is for a man to discard a woman. But that is not true, the clerics point out. A woman has equal rights to issue triple talaq. Muslim men file for divorce on frivolous grounds, some people allege. For instance, as a recent newspaper article reports, a man divorced his wife for switching off the fan when he was asleep in the room. But then, courts hear numerous divorce pleas from non-Muslims couples who wish to separate because of a partner's diet or accent or snoring. Many of these reasons, in reality, may not be as frivolous as they seem. Also, the clerics say, there is considerable psychological pressure on the members of the community not to avail of this facility. When it comes to wishing complex suffering on couples that want to separate, the world is secular.

Many of the people, if not all, who are angered by triple talaq and are exhibiting heartwarming love for the welfare of Muslim women are Hindu nationalists, who had also demonstrated

considerable love for Ugandan women when Arvind Kejriwal's government was bothering them. Also, many Muslim women who support triple talaq, claiming it is a part of their heritage, are urbane women who are unlikely to face such a form of divorce. But, despite the political nature of the noise, it is hard to ignore the fact that a majority of Indians find this form of divorce disgusting because of its simplicity.

But then how is the break-up of a modern urbane non-marital relationship, which is not very different from a marriage, conducted today? Men and women spend years together, share a bond that is probably deeper than most marriages, and separate without disturbing the Indian State. There are fond goodbyes and bitter accusations, of course. Some of them do end from great distances, with no reasons given. They do end on WhatsApp, too. "Sorry, Sorry, Sorry"? Maybe not, but probably, "It's not working

out". Certainly, "Let's be friends." It appears that many modern relationships do end with some form of instantaneous 'triple talaq'.

Some may argue that the Islamic triple talaq empowers a man to discard a young impoverished woman, a social underdog, while in a facile modern break-up the woman may not be at such a disadvantage. This is based on a presumption that long non-marital relationships are the preserve of the upper classes alone? That would be naïve. Today, it is prevalent across social classes in India. It is probable that every year hundreds of thousands of young women are discarded with greater ease than in the ritual of triple talaq, where the man has to at least pay compensation and face the frowns of his society. The Indian State and society are ill-equipped to handle contemporary cultural forces that are sweeping across the social layers.

Why Beef Politics Is Far More Dangerous Than The Historic Wrongs Of Ayodhya



(News Agencies) A court recently framed criminal conspiracy charges against BJP leaders L K Advani, M M Joshi, Uma Bharti and nine others in the 1992 Babri masjid demolition case. It's been fifteen years and the CBI has blown hot and cold on the case over the years. What a difference a decade or two makes. Once these leaders were described as hardliners and firebrands. Now in the age of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, they have been turned by Modi-Shah skeptics into the conscience of the party. They are the party elders who can speak truth to power. They are the the Bhismas of the party suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune at the hands of the younger Turks. The ironclad monopoly over power enjoyed by Modi has made many almost nostalgic for the old days when Atal Behari Vajpayee's yin balanced Advani's yang or vice versa. Though Advani is often considered Modi's mentor, the

one who supposedly helped save his job in 2002 when Vajpayee had apparently said "Modi has to go," now his blogs and loaded statements rankle Modi on occasion. But he can inflict little damage. The criminal conspiracy charges, so many years after 2002, are against toothless tigers. Narendra Modi has not reacted to the charges and he does not need to. The grumpy old men of the BJP are of little use to him. He can pay lip service to them but he does not need their approval.

The new generation has taken over. The India where Advani was regarded as too hardline to be PM has shifted. Now a Yogi Adityanath is the CM in Uttar Pradesh. And as if to assert that change, Adityanath promptly went and offered prayers at the makeshift Ram temple in Ayodhya the day after the conspiracy charges were framed. Adityanath also attended the birthday celebrations of Nritya Gopal Das, the chairman of the

Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas, who is one of the 12 against whom the conspiracy charges were filed. As CM, Adityanath feels no need to stay away from being at least publicly visible with someone being probed in a criminal conspiracy.

It sends a powerful signal that courts can do whatever they want to do as they plough through the backlog of cases languishing in the judicial system but the ground has shifted. The court is dealing with past. Adityanath is reshaping the future.

In a column about Modi's India, Swapan Dasgupta writes that a senior BJP leader had told him that Modi had not come to manage India, he had come to change it. Some who backed him thought that the transformation would be economic. He would make the trains run on time, empower efficient bureaucrats and administer a dose of tough love to a fractious democracy and also show the door to a smug entitled liberal elite. But it did not quite work according to that blueprint. With the GDP down and Gau Desh Prem index up, we are truly in a Modi-fied India. The Ayodhya temple feels less important now in some ways because the horizon has expanded. What is one temple in one hot and dusty town when a government can do something far more ambitious? For example, it can, in the name of animal

cruelty, make cattle slaughter so onerous that it becomes too difficult and indeed too dangerous. From the kar sevaks we have moved to gau sevaks. While the kar sevaks made Ayodhya their karma bhoomi, the gau sevaks have no such geographical restriction. And now a Rajasthan High Court judge, not any attention-hungry firebrand from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, suggests the cow be made a national animal and cow slaughter be punished by a life sentence.

If we had grown up being taught that our diversity was our strength and that there was unity in diversity now we are being taught that the diversity is the reason India is not a superpower. The new India project, perhaps the transformation that the senior BJP leader was talking about, sees strength in majoritarian homogeneity. Minorities exist in that homogeneous India but they are served notice that they are under scrutiny for "anti-national" tendencies. And that does not need them to raise secession slogans. Anti-nationalism can be served up on a plate these days.

As Mamata Banerjee colourfully says "What I eat and what I wear is my personal choice. But I have no authority to stick a Lucoplaster on the mouths of others." But that authority is being wrested by

vigilantes of all kinds armed with weapons far more lethal than "lucoplaster".

This is now a country where fake rumours circulate on Whatsapp and keep communal tensions bubbling, where incendiary stories with photoshopped pictures carry more weight than the newspaper front page. "I cannot, from my lifetime, recall a period when Muslims were suspected en masse of being unpatriotic and required to explain themselves. The sins of the few have been visited on us all," writes Naseeruddin Shan. He says while once Hindus and Muslims in states like Bengal, Maharashtra and Kerala were often "indistinguishable" from each other, now there is a visible increase in both saffron scarves and tilaks and hijabs and topis. Rules like the new ones about animal slaughter will feed right into that communal divide even if that was not the intent. That's why on one side we have vigilantes raiding trucks, hotel kitchens and ransacking someone else's refrigerator. On the other side we have beef festivals and public killing of animals. This was not always the case. Vimal Sumbly remembers how little beef was consumed in Kashmir. Sumbly writes that "not many Kashmiri Muslims eat beef and not many Kashmiri Hindus eat pork, as it was never a part of their culture."

Why The Farmers' Protests Could Be The Beginning Of A Turning Point For The BJP



(News Agencies) The ongoing farmers' protests in several states across India's geographical diversity is the first major non-sectarian mass movement confronting the Narendra Modi government. Unless handled adroitly, the stir has the potential to throw up a major challenge to the Bharatiya Janata Party and Modi's political dominance. The ruling establishment must accept that being on a perpetual promissory mode is fraught with dangers. Since he launched the high voltage prime ministerial campaign in 2013, Modi remained in perpetual dream-merchant mode, promising endless undertakings. Inability to deliver such pledges is now beginning to catch up for the first time. The political crisis confronting the government has been compounded by the first evidence of a fissure between it and the Reserve Bank of India. The statement of RBI Governor Urjit Patel on Wednesday that loan waivers add to the risk of fiscal slippage, shrinks dramatically Modi's negotiating space. Though Patel voiced skepticism earlier in the wake of the loan waiver announcement by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, his latest observation couldn't have come at a more inopportune time.

In a polity where discourse is greatly shaped by television, cries of anguish, duly orchestrated by channels, resonate deep and wide. Since it came to power, this government encouraged a style of news coverage that promotes sentimental nationalism. Death of Indian soldiers and its aftermath are routinely covered by TV as spectacle. Mothers and widows of the deceased are interviewed probingly and a loop is created of their wailings.

his form of TV news is now ricocheting on the BJP as channels depict women wailing for their 'shaheed' sons and husbands. The self-created pressure of labelling the dead farmers does not spare even Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who called them martyrs. Of what cause and in protest of whose

government?

Farmers are not the 'other' that can be demonised by militarist or muscular nationalism. Farmers are not human-rights activists or 'sickularists' who are constantly arraigned as anti-nationals. Farmers are not members of a religious minority who allegedly do not ascribe to the dominant culture of the nation. They are not foreign-funded NGOs who disrupt government by expressing empathy with the downtrodden and agitating people.

Farmers are also not gathering to seek repealing of laws which give security and armed forces the right to quash the fundamental rights of the

people. Farmers are instead intended to be the main beneficiaries of an egalitarian order that Modi proclaims as his credo. Farmers—big, medium and small—are the custodians of our granaries and must be applauded for continuing to stick on, despite the odds stacked against them.

The opposition, which, till the other day, was derided by BJP spokespersons as a bunglers' club is suddenly accused of having the capacity to destabilise the nation. Attempts to prevent Rahul Gandhi from reaching the troubled spots, Mandsaur now and Saharanpur a few days earlier, are akin to putting a person on life-support systems. It is up to the scion or other opposition leaders to capitalise on the political opening that the farmers have provided.

A few weeks ago when TV channels were hosting 'events' to mark three years of the Modi government, Janata Dal (U) leader KC Tyagi, a weather-beaten politician from the yore, was asked about why the opposition parties had failed to build a single mass agitation or

movement, even on an issue like demonetisation, which had a paralysing effect on the lives of ordinary people. He replied that rare is the case that a jan andolan can be imposed from the above; it must always emerge from below. Thereafter, it is up to the vipaksh, whether they can capitalise on it or not.

In the last few days a beginning has been made and the Modi government has been demonstrated as being fallible like any establishment. The present phase of farmers agitation may peter out over the next few days or spread like wildfire. But even if the BJP government succeeds in dousing the flames by offering sops, such a move would prove that the party is likely to negotiate in the face of serious challenge.

Compared to the tough, 'no dialogue' stance on contentious political issues, this will be a comedown and demonstrate that beneath his tough exterior, Modi too can be forced to grant an extra quarter. The farmers' strife in Madhya Pradesh should be all the more worrying for Modi and his party because the state

did not have poor monsoons last year. Instead, it was blessed with a bumper crop. Madhya Pradesh is also not a poor state and has registered high agricultural growth over the past several years. The agitating farmers are not the poorest in the state. Yet, it is estimated that in the past one year, every five hours one farmer committed suicide in the state due to distress stemming from accumulated loans and the glut in the market. The government has to give serious thought why, in state after state, bumper production is proving itself to be a bane for farmers.

Indian agricultural policy has focused on effective means to increase crop yield and not on addressing farmers' livelihood concerns. The government's fiscal health has been its principal worry, not the farmers' balance sheets. The policy of announcing loan waivers periodically is faulty, to say the least. Deeper analysis is required to comprehend why farmers require loans in the first place and then examine reasons for repeated default.

NPA crisis: The rise and fall of Bhushan Steel into the great Indian debt trap

Bhushan Steel's spiralling journey from an expanding steel mill to one of India's biggest loan defaulters reveals how risky corporate gambles have hobbled our banks.

(News Agencies) In May 2008, Neeraj Singal, managing director of Bhushan Steel Ltd, threw a birthday party. It had been a good year; company profits were up, world steel prices at a record high and order books bulging. Tabloids splashed photographs of the party attended by industrialists and film stars Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor who took the stage in a black sequined bodice and danced to pulsating Bollywood music.

The celebrations mirrored the playful arrogance among big businesses in India, enriched by the opening up of mining, power and infrastructure sectors. Meanwhile, the western world was about to plunge into a crippling credit crisis triggered in the United States.

For the Singals, one of India's largest steel producers, this was a time of frenetic expansion of their steel plant in Odisha, while their quest for coal and ore took them as far as Australia.

The golden run ended in July this year in a bankruptcy courtroom where a lawyer for State Bank of India (SBI) said Bhushan Steel had failed to repay loans worth thousands of crores. The company's total debts stand at Rs. 46,062 crore; about the same as India's budgetary outlay on school education in 2017. According to media reports, the company is under investigation from the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO).

"The banks need to get their money back," the SBI lawyer said. "Is the company able to pay the debt or not pay the debt?"

Bhushan Steel is part of the "NPA crisis", shorthand for Rs 8-lakh crore worth of loan defaults or Non-Performing Assets, that have choked India's banking system and pushed lending, the lifeblood of the economy, to its lowest point in 20 years.

Company promoters blame these defaults



on a global recession, poor regulation and sheer bad luck. But the dramatic rise and fall of Bhushan Steel reveals the NPA crisis is equally about public sector banks backing risky bets of promoters accustomed to growing their businesses on borrowed money.

And when these businesses floundered, banks threw good money after bad, often through third-party transactions. In the ongoing court case of Bhushan Steel and Syndicate Bank, the Central Bureau of Investigation alleges in a First Information Report (No. RC AC1 2014A0004, August 1 2014), a bank official purportedly demanded bribes to ignore defaults.

Nittin Johari, Director Finance at Bhushan

Steel, declined to comment on any ongoing investigations, but said the company had not broken any laws.

In 1987, Brij Bhushan Singal and his sons - Neeraj and Sanjay - acquired an ailing steel factory in Sahibabad, at a time when steel was dominated by state-owned companies.

The group grew quickly by importing sophisticated Japanese machinery to make steel for India's nascent automobile industry.

But "Bhushan Steel's control over availability, quality and cost of input steel was very limited," Neeraj Singal explained in the company's 2009-10 annual report. So in 2003, they decided to build an integrated steel plant in Odisha.

This was a time of great optimism for the steel sector. Banks were eager to lend to a company with an impressive order book of clients like Maruti Suzuki, Mahindra and Mahindra, and Tata Motors. "Banks were getting into project finance for the first time," a lender seeking anonymity to speak freely. "If anyone questioned a project's viability, bosses would say - India will always need cars, or there are millions of Indians who still don't have electricity." Plant construction in Odisha began in 2005, and the company was promised a ready supply of iron-ore and coal needed to make steel. The first phase of construction was complete by 2009-10.

China standoff: Defence ministry wants extra Rs 20,000 crore budget to be battle-ready

The Ministry of Defence has sought an additional Rs 20,000 crore from the Centre to meet its capital and revenue budget needs.

The demand for additional money comes at a time when the face-off between Indian and Chinese troops in Doklam in Bhutan has entered the 8th week and the borders with Pakistan remain unusually active.

In 2017, the Government had

allocated Rs 2,74,113 crore - about 1.62 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product - for defence sector. The annual allocation for defence in 2017 was just 6 per cent more than the previous years.

"Of the initial annual allocation about 50 per cent of Capital and more than one third of the Revenue budget has already been spent," Defence Ministry sources told India Today.

A few weeks earlier, the Defence

Ministry had allowed the Vice-Chief of Army Staff to make emergency purchases of ammunition, mines and spares that are considered crucial for war fighting. Delegating financial powers to the army was done to cut the red-tape and speed up purchases.

The Indian Army is required to be battle-ready to fight a 10-day short intense war. There are, however, gaps and Comptroller and Auditor General

(CAG) of India too have raised the issue of shortage of ammunition and spares.

Early this year the custom duty exemption for imports made by the Defence Ministry was removed. "The ministry have had to pay large amount as customs duty," a source said. The decision to remove the custom duty exemption was taken to give a level playing field to domestic defence manufacturers.

Ragtag opposition and TINA: The 2 factors that will keep Modi invincible through 2019

BJP president Amit Shah is looking for ways to increase party's tally in various states. Shah is also working on an anti-incumbency back-up plan on many seats for the 2019 polls.

After "Congress-Mukt Bharat", BJP now seems to have got the heft to take on regional parties such as RJD, BJD and TMC. A fragmented opposition — especially after Nitish Kumar-led JDU walked into the NDA camp — has made Shah's work a lot easier. He has also followed the policy of poaching leaders from Congress as well as regional parties in states where BJP is weak. He has courted regional parties to the NDA fold in states where BJP has little political presence, like in Tamil Nadu. Shah has also followed the practice of denying ticket to sitting lawmakers to beat anti-incumbency against them. BJP

is aware that many of its Lok Sabha MPs, who are political lightweights, may not win in 2019. Moreover, BJP reached near saturation point in states like UP (71/80 seats), Rajasthan (25/25), Gujarat (26/26) and Bihar (31/40) and may lose some seats in 2019. The party would also face some anti-incumbency in states like Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh where it has been in power for 15 years. Shah, who has undertaken an all-India tour to reach out to prospective voters in untapped territories, has not shied away from visiting the stronghold of opponents of BJP, be it Telangana, Bengal or Odisha. The party is hopeful that these states will bring more seats to the BJP kitty in 2019. However, the party will have to guard against some pressing issues, especially those relating

to farmers. Farmers across the country are unhappy, with Madhya Pradesh being the latest example. They have agitated against BJP-led Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra governments. Also, the NDA government at the Centre will have to keep a close watch on the employment level. The performance of the Narendra Modi government on the good governance front will also be a factor. The success of a host of schemes, launched by the NDA dispensation, would play a major role in influencing the electorate, who cutting across caste lines voted for Modi in 2014. As things stand today, a weak opposition is Modi's biggest strength and he is likely to benefit from the TINA (there is no alternative) factor the most, with other positives contributing towards making him virtually unassailable.

11 days, 2 resorts: Ahmed Patel's big Rajya Sabha victory may have cost the Congress several lakhs

The grand old party decided to fly 44 of its Gujarat MLAs to Karnataka, a Congress-ruled state, and shepherded them to a luxury resort in Bengaluru. Ahmed Patel has won the Rajya Sabha seat from Gujarat, but to secure that one seat, the Congress, it seems, may have spent lakhs of rupees. The Eagleton luxury resort, where the 44 Congress MLAs were housed, charges Rs 7,000 approx. per night for a room. The Congress MLAs stayed at the luxury resort for 10 days. If two MLAs shared a room, the cost of their stay at the resort would come to an estimated Rs 15.5 lakh, which excludes the money spent on food and beverages. The accommodation cost doubles to an estimated Rs 30 lakh if one MLA occupied one room. The 44 Gujarat MLAs returned to Ahmedabad on August 7, a day before the crucial Rajya Sabha election. Moments after they landed at the airport, the MLAs were whisked away to a luxury resort in Anand. The MLAs stayed at the luxury Neejanand Resort in Anand district for a night, whose per day tariff is Rs 6,500 approx. Considering, two MLAs shared the room, the total accommodation cost comes to Rs 1.43 lakh approx, which excludes charges on food and beverages. The spending on accommodation will be twice as much (Rs 3 lakh approx.) if each MLA occupied a single room. Coming to air tickets, a ticket from Ahmedabad to Bengaluru costs roughly Rs 4,000 per person. For 44 Gujarat Congress MLAs, this would come to Rs 1.8 lakh approx. Considering the ticket cost to be the same for a flight back to Ahmedabad from Bengaluru, the total round-fare cost would be an estimated Rs 3.6 lakh.

India's Barefoot Lawyers

Bogribail residents grow rice and trees: cashew, banana, coconut and mango. Ravi Gouda said the dust has hindered the flowering of the trees, damaging the harvests. It also has contaminated the villages' open wells.

And the dust does who-knows-what to the lungs of the 250 people who live there. We will never know the extent of harm, since no one can afford to travel to, let alone see, a specialist. One building closest to the plant is a nursery school.

Until recently, Bogribail had been asking IRB and government officials for compensation for these problems, and had gotten nothing. Villagers did not ask IRB or the government to stop or diminish the pollution, because they didn't know that the factory's practices violated numerous regulations.

Then Maruti Gouda took the case.

He's the opposite of a superlawyer. (He's also no relation to Ravi Gouda; many

people in the area have that family name.) He is 29 and not a lawyer at all, actually — he attended college but didn't graduate. Like his father and most of the people in his nearby village, he's a clam harvester.

Since 2014, though, his employer has been Namati, a nonprofit organization that works in several Asian and African countries and the United States to democratize law. Around the world, four billion people lack basic access to justice, said Vivek Maru, the American lawyer who founded the group in 2011. (Disclosure: Namati gets some funding from the Open Society Foundations and had early support from its Justice Initiative, where my husband works.)

The movement has taken a cue from the rise of community health workers, one of the most important developments in global health. India, Ethiopia, Ghana and other countries are training thousands and thousands of villagers to provide basic medical care where doctors are scarce — a practice that began in

China's Cultural Revolution, when rural peasants were trained to give health care and teach preventive health practices.

China called them barefoot doctors. Now Maruti Gouda is a barefoot lawyer (sometimes actually barefoot).

"We can always teach them the law," said his boss, Mahabaleshwar Hegde. "We can't teach them to be from here."

Even in countries like India that have good laws, law is often merely poetry, ignored in the real world. Lawyers are too expensive to be a widespread solution. But lay people with a few weeks of training are not expensive. Namati's paralegals in Africa and Asia make about \$200 per month.

"Law starts out as a total abstraction, or even a threat," said Maru. "But you can understand what it says, use it to solve a problem you face, and use it to shape institutions."

Community paralegals have a long tradition across the globe: they were crucial in South Africa's anti-apartheid movement, for example. Today, Namati convenes a Global Legal Empowerment Network, with more than 1,000 member

organizations, most of them tiny. They help vulnerable people understand, use — and then change — their countries' laws.

In India, Namati's paralegals, in collaboration with an Indian research organization, the Center for Policy Research, focus on environmental justice in four states. Hegde, who has a doctorate in marine biology, supervises four paralegals in Karnataka, where the issues are mainly coastal.

Which brings us back to Maruti Gouda. He and the other paralegals got three months of training, covering local environmental issues, how they affect people, what the law says, and how government institutions work.

They can't go to court, of course. Instead, they teach people how to press administrative offices for their legal rights. In workshops, they explain the law. Maruti Gouda learned about Bogribail's problems last year when he was in a nearby village conducting a workshop about the law governing management of solid waste, after an upstream landfill contaminated

the water.

In the cases they undertake, the paralegals assemble briefs just as lawyers do. Maruti Gouda visited Bogribail numerous times to understand the dust and its effects, and to teach residents the laws and regulations about pollution. He helped them collect photos and other evidence. He held discussions about remedies. The most active residents, like Ravi Gouda, became community partners.

Maruti Gouda searched government records — finding, for example, that the company's government-issued license to emit pollution had expired in June 2016, and had not been renewed. Even if it had, however, the license required the plant to control noise and dust by building a high wall and sprinkler system, while also planting a border of trees. In addition, the company was required to keep its stonecrusher units 500 meters from houses. The plant was violating all these rules.

Sikkim standoff China is angry because India has changed the rules of the game

It is not only India which has suddenly begun drawing its friends closer. In recent years Beijing has aligned itself even more closely with Pakistan, effectively giving Islamabad a veto over anything dealing with India. New Delhi, on the other hand, has been quietly forging linkages with the likes of Japan and, more nascently, Germany to counter Chinese grand strategy. While everyone pops a blood vessel about carriers and defence budgets, the real weapons in all this is finance, infrastructure building and the diplomatic equivalent of baby-kissing and glad-handing. If one thinks Modi travels a lot, Xi Jinping began travelling a week after assuming the Chinese presidency

and spent the equivalent of five months of his first four years overseas.

The Doklam stand-off is now into its fourth week. Perhaps just to fill the time, the Chinese government has grumbled about India helping Bhutan and the Dalai Lama visiting Arunachal Pradesh. The Chinese media has vented on every outstanding source of friction from India's opposition the Belt-Road Initiative to India's defence ties with the United States. The 1962 war has inevitably been raised. Presumably, if Doklam drags on into the winter, the invasion of north Bihar by a Tang dynasty expeditionary force may also come up.

What is really happening here is that

two large nations, thanks to expanding chests, are changing the size and cut of their suits every few years. China, already the world's number two economy, still cannot fully make up its mind how to function, talking about a "pacific" rise to power one day and then being short-sightedly aggressive with all its neighbours the next. India is much further down the power curve but has done a better job in leveraging relations with the existing global rulers. Curiously, the two seem to be rubbing up against each other more over third countries than they are against each other directly.

Pakistan is becoming both a source of strength and weakness as China shifts

from being that troubled country's friendly neighbour to its legal guardian. Bhutan is probably more than surprised to find thousands of Indian troops arriving to support territorial claims most of its citizens are barely aware of. New Delhi and Beijing need to recognise that they are both different countries today from what they were even five years ago, let alone 1962, and will be different countries again five years hence. Assuming neither really wants a genuine dust-up, then a franker, more frequent and deeper sharing of minds about the world is needed to keep the worst of the relationship to pushing, shoving and wild-eyed news anchors.

Indian Law Is Oddly Lenient Towards Those Accused Of Stalking For The First Time

However, "any subsequent offence of stalking is 'non-bailable', meaning court will have discretion to grant an accused bail".

The Justice Verma Committee, which had submitted recommendations to change the laws related to sexual violence against women after the gangrape and death of a young woman in Delhi in 2012,

wanted stalking to remain a non-bailable offence. The UPA-II government accepted this suggestion and it was also ratified by a Parliamentary Standing Committee.

But just before an ordinance was introduced to have this amendment passed in Parliament in 2013, then home minister Sushil Kumar Shinde and some members of the opposition,

like the Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal and JD(U), opposed it, claiming it would be misused against men. This reaction was far from surprising. A year later, Mulayam Singh Yadav, then chief of the Samajwadi Party, went on record to defend rape as "a mistake" that boys make. The same boy-will-be-boys

mentality seems to be working behind the move to excuse the first instance of stalking as not serious enough to be made a non-bailable offence. Thanks to such patriarchal indulgence, Vikas Barala and hundreds like him, from across the cross-section of society, are able to walk out of police stations in India every day after putting a woman through living hell.

ASEAN at 50: The challenge of cohesion

In his treatise titled India's Tryst with Asia, ambassador K. Kesavapany, eminent Singaporean diplomat-scholar wrote of China, "Once it is highly developed, it is unlikely to be like Japan, an economic giant and political pigmy. Rather, it is possible that China would aspire to be a co-hegemon with the US (which leaves open the question of) whether the US would be willing to share global domination with it."

The US is still engaged with the region but Obama's Asia rebalance has been replaced with Donald Trump's unpredictability. The view is that America's interest in the region is more to do with deal making than maintaining global order. But the US and Japan continue their strategic alignment from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. It is not just the US-Japan power dynamics, but also Chinese ambitions that are challenged with the rise of India.

The trilateral tango of US-Japan-India during the Malabar exercise has significant symbolism. Unlike in the past, India no longer shies away from making statements on flash points in the region – competing territorial claims at sea and North Korean nuke ambitions. India's strong reservations to the One Belt One Road project that China has been hard selling to ASEAN among others is well known. In its 11th May statement on staying away from the Belt and Road Initiative Forum, the Indian foreign ministry said, 'Connectivity initiatives must follow principles of financial responsibility to avoid projects that would create unsustainable debt burden for

communities.' 'Connectivity projects must be pursued in a manner that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity,' it added. Addressing the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore in July, foreign secretary S Jaishankar underlined, "In this changing landscape, few would dispute that the evolving India-China relationship has a direct implication for ASEAN, for the larger Asia Pacific, and perhaps even globally. We are all aware by now of the complexity inherent in the rise of two major powers near simultaneously, that too in close

proximity." The ongoing troops standoff at the Doklam tri-junction underlines the serious differences existing in the multi-dimensional India-China relationship today. With ASEAN hoping to hammer out a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership with six of its FTA partners including India and China, the jury is out on whether differences can be prevented from escalating into disputes between the economic giants. Former national security advisor Shiv Shankar Menon cautions that India needs ASEAN as an interlocutor in the region today. "ASEAN countries will

behave with both India-China as realists. Every country looks at disputes from own point of view if sovereignty and integrity is concerned, or if you see an opportunity that arises out of complex issues. We should know what they are doing, but not be there to bring someone down, rather do what is in our own interest," says Menon. In the post Cold War era, ASEAN ushered in economic growth that was sustained through the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the 2008 economic recession. But moving forward, as ASEAN looks to take the next leap forward, the competing power engines could spur its growth or pull it in different directions.

Are the US and North Korea on the brink of nuclear war?

although many emphasise the fact that bluster has an unfortunate history of leading to war.

The new escalation is the latest in an ongoing ratcheting up of tensions between Pyongyang and Washington, and came after a report that claimed North Korea had developed nuclear weapons small enough that they could be flown all the way to the US mainland and detonated there. After that came what prominent arms control expert Jeffrey Lewis has described a "carnival of bellicosity".

Trump's "fire and fury" statement is unprecedented in US relations with North Korea and markedly similar to the kind of rhetoric that emerges from Pyongyang. North Korea

appeared to call the US leader's bluff within hours of his statement, announcing it was exploring the possibility of attacking Guam, a US pacific territory that among other things houses strategic bombers. Crucially, this statement appears to have been formulated in response to the US flying two B1-B bombers over the Korean Peninsula on Monday, a repeat of a similar operation carried out in July — and therefore not in response to Trump's warning. Rex Tillerson, the President's foreign policy chief, moved to calm the situation and advised the US public not to worry. The message of de-escalation appears not to have influenced Trump, however, who woke up and tweeted that the US

nuclear arsenal was "more powerful than ever before" — though adding that he hoped never to use it. Nevertheless, the US leader's shift to outright belligerence towards North Korea has given rise to widespread fears around the prospect of a major global nuclear conflict, the fallout from which would inevitably see the destruction of large parts of the world. No, probably not, according to experts contacted by The Independent. Trump's comments offer a significant and meaningful change in the rhetoric being exchanged between North Korea and the US — but they appear to be just rhetoric, for now. "The first thing I would say is that I'm not sure that Trump's comments change the

fundamental calculus on the Korean peninsula, in the North or in the South," said James Hannah, assistant head of the Asia programme at Chatham House. "What's obviously changed is the Trump factor and he has in a way emulated the North Korea bellicosity approach." Even the President's voice is just one among many — albeit that of the Commander in Chief — in the White House, and is by far the most aggressive. Rex Tillerson said there was no "imminent threat" and that "Americans should sleep well at night", while explaining that the President had adopted such a confrontational tone because this was language that Kim Jong-Un could understand. That does not mean there was not reason to be concerned.

Why Trump's New Immigration Bill Makes Sense

Since President Donald Trump on Wednesday endorsed the immigration bill proposed by Senators Tom Cotton and David Perdue, various politicians of all stripes have condemned it. They've accused the bill of being undemocratic, un-American and economically unsound. Many have confidently asserted that more immigrants are always better than fewer.

This rush to judgment is way over the top, and largely uninformed. The current immigration system is desperately in need of reform, and a careful examination of the proposal shows that not only would it likely create substantial economic gains for the country in the long term, it would also eliminate elements of our current policy that are hard to defend.

First, some background: Despite the dramatic economic changes that the United States experienced in recent decades, the regulation of legal immigration still operates under a system devised back in 1965. This system, which lets in about 1 million legal immigrants a year, favors foreign relatives of current residents—without regard to qualifications. About two-thirds of all legal immigrants enter under these family preferences. Only about 15 percent enter

under so-called employment preferences, typically granted to persons who are “priority workers” or embody other types of desirable skills. The exact rules that determine whether a worker qualifies to be part of this 15 percent are unclear to those uninitiated in the intricacies of immigration law.

This is where the Cotton-Perdue proposal, also known as the RAISE Act, comes in. They propose two major shifts in existing policy. One tries to address the question of how many immigrants should come into the country. The other answers the question of which applicants we should let in—through a complete rewrite of the rules for skill-based immigration. The rule changes for skill-based immigration should not be controversial. If nothing else, the proposal introduces much-needed transparency in identifying which types of workers we seek. The Cotton-Perdue bill would divvy up the 140,000 visas now assigned to the employment preferences by using a point system similar to those adopted and used for several decades in other countries, including Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In rough terms, those point systems essentially grade visa applicants on the basis of

personal characteristics, such as education, occupation and age; add up the points, and grant an entry visa to those who “pass the test.”

The Cotton-Perdue bill contains an extremely detailed formula for granting points. The bill gives more points to those who are young. More points to those who are proficient in English as measured by the score in an actual exam. More points to those with professional degrees or degrees in science and technology. And more points to those who have won prizes that signal exceptional ability in specific areas. An Olympic medal, for example, will get you 15 points; a Nobel Prize, 25.

In short, the bill provides a clear and transparent framework for determining which types of workers we believe to be most beneficial. And I suspect that most Americans would view the Cotton-Perdue approach as common sense. Do many of us really believe that America would benefit more by letting in a sociology professor in her 50s than by letting in a young woman with an advanced degree in computer science?

And why exactly is this type of merit-based visa allocation such a good thing from an economic perspective? Despite all the disagreement that economists

have over the details of the economic impact of immigration, there is little, if any, disagreement about the fact that high-skill immigration benefits the United States far more than low-skill immigration.

High-skill immigrants are more complementary to America's existing productive infrastructure. High-skill immigrants pay more in taxes and receive fewer services. Exceptional high-skill immigrants will introduce knowledge and abilities that we will learn from, making us more productive, and expanding the frontier of what is economically possible in our country. And high-skill immigration, unlike low-skill immigration, will reduce, rather than increase, income inequality. In fact, the people who will lose out the most from the Cotton-Perdue proposal are the high-skill workers in STEM fields, both native and foreign-born, who are here already. They will now have to compete with many more qualified workers for available jobs. But there is no need to believe any of these arguments to see the pros of high-skill immigration. Whether we like it or not, there is already a global market for high-skill immigrants, with various countries adopting policies designed to persuade

the potential migrant to move there. Just look at the policies that other immigrant-receiving countries pursue. Many already have point systems to filter the applicant pool, or they have put other policies into place that do the same thing, like the “blue card” in the European Union, giving preference to high-skill applicants. All these countries know something that the United States, to its detriment, has ignored for several decades: High-skill immigration is economically more profitable.

In fact, the Cotton-Perdue proposal is so pragmatic that it essentially predicts its own demise. Given the strong emotions that permeate and dominate the immigration debate, it is unlikely that anything as logical, rational and economically sensible could possibly become law.

The other part of the Cotton-Perdue proposal is bound to be much more controversial, as it involves a cut in the number of legal immigrants admitted through the family preference system. As it stands, the system entitles immigrants in the United States to bring in their relatives. This entitlement extends not only to relatives like spouses and minor children, but also to adult family members, such as the immigrant's parents and siblings.

The Real History of American Immigration

The great immigration wave that delivered some 40 million newcomers to the United States between 1830 and 1940 was comprised largely of unskilled workers with minimal English-language proficiency. For every third- or fourth-generation white ethnic family, there is a stunning success story, but in the aggregate, their ancestors experienced little economic mobility in their own lifetimes. Many of them had little interest in even being American; they came to earn money and return home. The proposed shift to a skills-based system might be good for the country; it might be bad. It's the prevailing system in Canada and Australia, two countries that aren't known for their hostility to immigrants. But on one important point, Miller is clearly wrong: Trump's plan would signal a dramatic break with American history and tradition. Americans often think of their history as uniquely providential. But we have always existed in a wider global context. The 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a seismic economic reordering in which

people, capital and ideas flowed within and between national borders. The same forces that drove European and Asian migration to the United States—the rise of commercial agriculture and the attendant trend of land consolidation, industrialization and growing international trade—also generated massive waves of internal migration from rural to urban areas and immigration to magnet countries like Brazil, Britain and Canada. The United States was a major part of a much larger story.

Migration patterns varied widely both between and within countries, but for the most part, immigrants to the United States between 1830 and 1940 hailed from areas undergoing fast economic change. The poorest peasants tended not to embark for America, lacking the financial wherewithal to make the journey. Instead, it was more often the displaced landowner or semi-skilled journeyman or artisan—someone who had already made the intermediary migration from countryside to town, and who had at least a modicum of exposure

to small-city life—who made the journey. Studies of Italian immigrants in early 20th-century Rochester, Utica and Kansas City reveal a population of families that owned small homesteads in the old country, rather than day laborers or the very destitute. The same trend was evident in other cities and among other immigrant populations.

Yet if they weren't the poorest of the poor, most immigrants were not skilled or educated. In San Francisco in the 1880s, Irish immigrants were five times as likely to be unskilled as the city's broader population. In Detroit, German immigrants were almost twice as likely to be unskilled workers as their native-born neighbors. In Pittsburgh in 1900, fewer than 10 percent of Polish immigrants and just 18 percent of Italian immigrants were skilled workers.

We like to think of America as the kind of place where an unskilled but industrious newcomer can quickly climb the economic ladder. And sometimes it is. But those cases were few and far between a century ago.

Most of the country's first-generation white ethnics arrived as unskilled factory and farm laborers and remained as such in their lifetimes. In Poughkeepsie, three-quarters of Irish immigrants remained unskilled workers until retirement or death. In his famous study of Boston, the historian Stephen Thernstrom found that just 13 percent of working-class residents born in the 1850s—many of them immigrants—clawed their way into the middle class; among those born in the first decade of the twentieth century, only 14 percent. These trends were the norm.

Even the most model of “model minority” groups—Eastern European Jews who arrived in the United States between the 1880s and early 1920s—were principally engaged in the unskilled needle trades or as small business owners. Stereotypes notwithstanding, in the 1940s just 24 percent of Jewish men in New York—first and second generation, alike—claimed a college- or graduate-level education. In 1957, that

figure climbed to 28.5 percent, and, by 1970, it was 36.4 percent—well above similar educational achievement levels for Protestants and Catholics, but still far short of a majority. While 75 percent of Jewish men in that decade qualified as “white collar,” most were small business owners; only 14 percent worked in licensed professions like law, medicine or insurance.

In the same way that immigration to the United States was part of a global phenomenon, it was also usually an economic strategy. Leaving aside groups like Eastern and Central European Jews, and the Irish, who had compelling economic and political reasons to make a permanent journey, a large portion of immigrants to the United States were “birds of flight”—temporary residents who came to America to work, stock up money and return home, usually with dreams of buying a farm or shop in their native countries. Over half of all southern Italians came and went. So did 64 percent of Hungarians, 59 percent of Slovaks and 40 percent of Germans.



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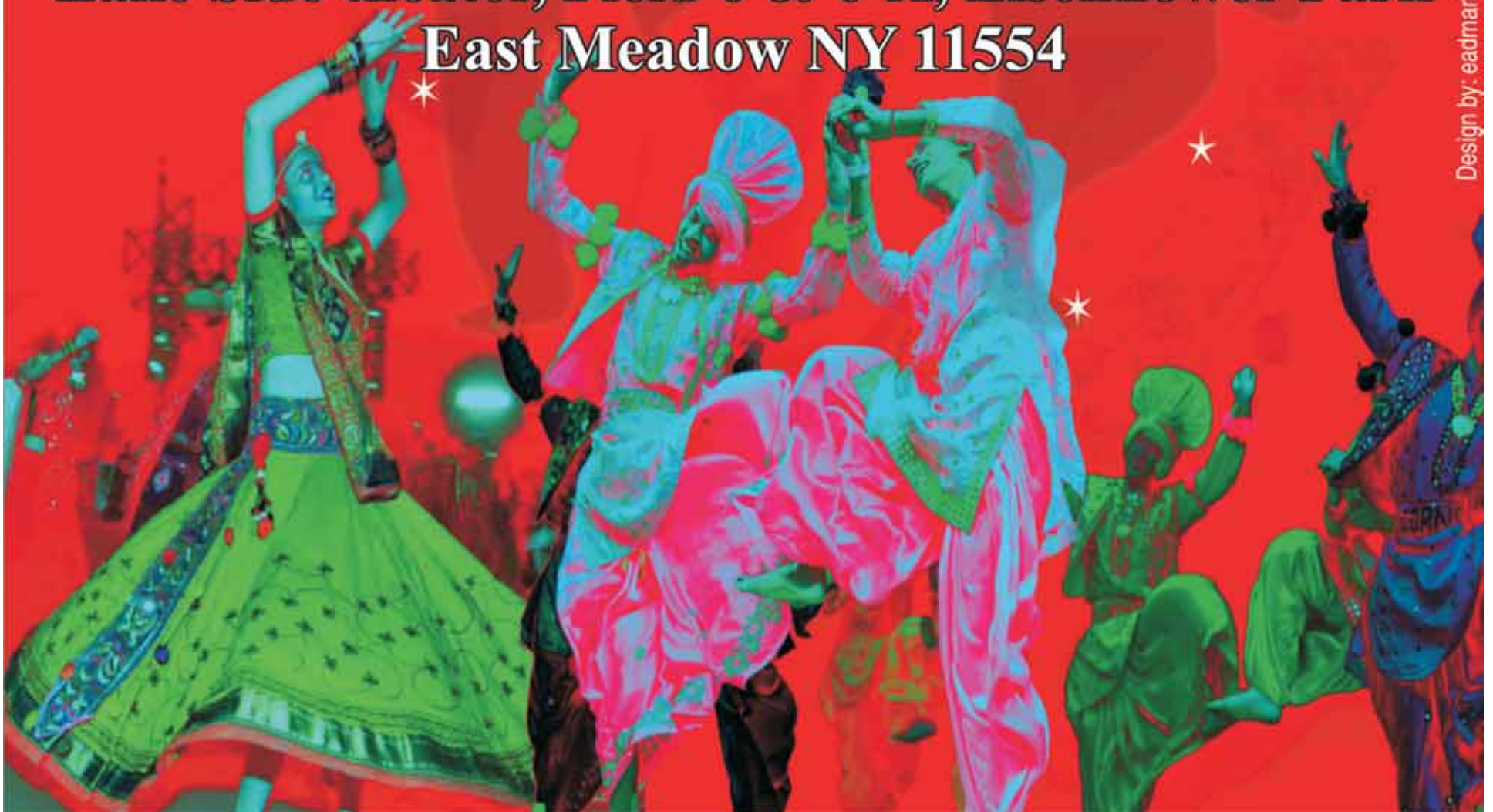
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Feeling depressed? Here's how your Instagram posts will reflect that

Your photos can accurately depict your state of mind. So, if you are feeling depressed, chances are your Instagram posts feature darker filters like Inkwel and fewer images of people.



(News Agencies) When you're feeling blue, your photos turn bluer too. And more gray and dark as well, with fewer faces shown. In other words, just like people can signal their sadness by body language and behaviour (think deep sighs and slumped shoulders), depression reveals itself in social media images. That's the conclusion of new research showing that computers, applying machine learning, can successfully detect depressed people from clues in their Instagram photos. The computer's detection rate of 70% is more reliable than the 42% success rate of general-practice doctors diagnosing depression in-person. Earlier research suggested that too much time on social media could

make you feel depressed. Another study delved on whether posting pictures on Instagram helped adolescents fight depression.

"This points toward a new method for early screening of depression and other emerging mental illnesses," said co-author Chris Danforth from the University of Vermont. "This algorithm can sometimes detect depression before a clinical diagnosis is made."

The scientists asked volunteers, recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk, to share their Instagram feed as well as their mental health history. From 166 people, they collected 43,950 photos. The study was designed so that about half of the participants

reported having been clinically depressed in the last three years.

Then they analyzed these photos, using insights from well-established psychology research, about people's preferences for brightness, colour, and shading. "Pixel analysis of the photos in our data-set revealed that depressed individuals tended to post photos that were on average, bluer, darker and grayer than those posted by healthy individuals," Danforth and Reese write in a blog post to accompany their new study.

They also found that healthy individuals chose Instagram filters like Valencia that gave their photos a warmer and brighter tone. Among depressed

people, the most popular filter was Inkwel, making the photo black-and-white. "In other words, people suffering from depression were more likely to favour a filter that literally drained all the colour out the images they wanted to share," the scientists write. Faces in photos also turned out to provide signals about depression. The researchers found that depressed people were more likely than healthy people to post a photo with people's faces, but

these photos had fewer faces on average than the healthy people's Instagram feeds. "Fewer faces may be an oblique indicator that depressed users interact in smaller settings," Danforth and Andrew Reece of Harvard University noted, which corresponds to other research linking depression to reduced social interaction — or it could be that depressed people take many self-portraits. "This 'sad-selfie' hypothesis remains untested," they wrote.

Here Are 5 Simple Reasons Why I Don't Drink Alcohol



(News Agencies) Here are some questions that come my way regularly: "Why do you not drink?"; "Is it for religious reasons?"; "You are missing out on all the fun!"; "A night out is not fun if you remember it the next day"; "How can you live in London for almost 10 years and not drink!"; "You need alcohol to drop all inhibitions and have a good time"; "Research now suggests that you should drink wine every day."

My responses are worded differently based on my reflections at that moment.

1. "Research suggests that you should drink wine every day."

I can show you extensive research supporting both

drinking and not drinking alcohol, and the positive and negative implications of both choices. I will not comment on the medical and health implications of alcohol because the medical establishment itself doesn't seem to agree on it. The only thing that remains true and in accordance with Bharatiya scriptures is that anything in excess can only be detrimental to our body.

2. "Is it for religious reasons?"

One conversation can change your life. I have had several such a conversations with Brni. Nidhi Chaitanya ji of Chinmaya Mission. One such conversation with Nidhi ji was when I was just 13. We

were inside a jewellery shop while my parents were shopping, and I was discussing the changes I was seeing in my friends. Very tactfully, Nidhi ji made me arrive at the conclusion myself that if the nature of alcohol is intoxication then even to the smallest extent, why should I let anything control my mind? Religion is a means of gaining mastery over our minds. Bharatiya scriptures compare mind to a monkey. Why would I feed alcohol to the monkey, when I am trying to tame it? As if I don't face enough challenges already in trying to tame the mind! Thank you

Nidhi ji for letting my Guru Swami Chinmayananda be, through you, the moral compass of my life to date. And, thank you also for not spoon feeding me but empowering me to make my own choices.

3. "Everyone drinks! You can't network and socialise if you don't go along with the London pub culture."

So why would I drink? Peer pressure? I have somehow always attracted friends who love me for being myself and have never pressured me to drink. Of course, the option to drink was just not there for me, so I never let myself feel any pressure either. I was never going to do it and I think they knew. Thanks to the wonderful friends in my life.

The jobs I have held have involved networking, glamorous night outs, fashion awards and parties. But how would I build a relationship, business or personal, if I am not 100 % alert and can't find any other common ground to communicate and bond? And if I do, then why do I need that drink in my hand?

4. "A night out is not fun if you remember it the next day."

If I have a fun night, why would I not want to remember it? I want to capture every memory of it and cherish it! And I think my closest friends can give enough evidence that I can be absolutely crazy and fun, though on my terms.

I really don't need alcohol or anything similar to be fun, because if I need something external to be anything, it is not natural to me. It is not me.

5. "You need to have a drink to sing in that karaoke."

I don't need to have a drink to sing in that karaoke, to race down the Millennium Bridge, to build that crazy memory I will be telling the kids. I can do all the crazy things that people do and be even more innovative with it without alcohol. To truly drop my inhibitions, I don't need alcohol, I need vivek (discrimination) and vairagya (detachment). Being a part of the Bharatiya culture lineage, the Chinmayananda lineage, how can my standards not be the highest!

Having said that, I wouldn't dare judge any of my friends for drinking or making choices that I wouldn't make. Each one is on their own journey. Different strokes for different folks. And I love them all for who they are.

Too much age gap may take a toll on your marriage, finds study

The findings suggest that marriages with large age gaps are less resilient in the face of economic setbacks as compared to those in which the age difference between spouses is not much.



(News Agencies)Age may be no bar for most when it comes to love and matrimony, but a new study suggests that the contentment in such unions fades away over time. The findings also suggest that marriages with large age gaps are less resilient in the face of economic downturns as compared to those in which the spouses are of the same age. Research from University of Colorado at Boulder, US, revealed that men reported

greater marital satisfaction when paired with a younger spouse, especially in the early years of marriage. Study author Terra McKinnish said that men who have younger wives are the most satisfied and men who are married to older wives are the least satisfied. "Women are also particularly dissatisfied when they're married to older husbands and particularly satisfied if they're married to younger husbands," McKinnish

added. That initial satisfaction erodes rapidly, however, after 6-10 years of marriage for the couples with a big age gap between the partners, say researchers. "Over time, the people who are married to a much older or younger spouse tend to have larger declines in marital satisfaction over time compared to those who are married to spouses who are similar in age," McKinnish noted. One mechanism for this decline

could be how the age difference between spouses affects the couple's ability to respond to economic setbacks, such as a job loss, McKinnish said. The nationally representative sample was initially comprised of 7,682 households containing 19,914 individuals. The participants were re-surveyed every year with questions that measured various aspects of life satisfaction. The results

suggested that when similarly-aged couples are more in sync on life decisions that affect both partners (having children; general spending habits) and thus, may be better equipped to adjust to a negative financial shock. The research appears online in the Journal of Population Economics.

Quirky positions and scheduled orgasms 7 awesome things about married sex *Simultaneous orgasms, expertly scheduling your sessions and no more sexually transmitted diseases – read on to know about the benefits of married sex.*



(Insider Bureau) Getting married is like trading in the adoration of many for the sarcasm of one - Mae West (1893- 1980), American actress
We keep hearing marriage jokes at family gatherings, parties, on WhatsApp, basically everywhere. But for a moment let's talk about one of the things where marriage trumps the rest – married sex!
Married sex means that you get the sex without going through the painful process of overpriced drinks, cheesy pick up lines and high heels. In other words, all those on Tinder and other dating apps should be jealous of married couples and their sex lives! Why, you ask? Read on and find out:
1. Expert knowledge on each other's bodies
You know where your hands should go and where they shouldn't. Your better half knows what you prefer in bed, and what you'd rather avoid.
2. Scheduled sex
Expert knowledge about each other also means that you can schedule

when you want to have sex even at the last minute and actually do it!
A quickie when you feel like it lets you get intimate and at the same time not waste a full 45 minutes for the act, especially when you need to get up early for office the next morning! Sex right after the matinee show on Sunday? Done! Don't be late!
3. Funny sex
There's no need to be afraid again while having sex! Trying and miserably failing at a new sex position

or farting by mistake during all that twisting and turning can be a secret joke between the both of you for the next few weeks.

4. One honey, so no worry
One of the best things about married sex? You won't be thinking does he/she really like me? Will they call back? Should I leave in the morning?
5. Say no to STDs!
Say goodbye to herpes, crabs and other deadly and familiar venereal diseases.
6. Arriving on time
We're not saying this will happen every time, but at least the more you sleep with your partner, you get better at recognizing each other's timing and pace and hence you orgasm together more often.
7. You keep getting better
Don't they say practice makes perfect? Well, then you can certainly get better since you're having sex with the same person!



Erotica: Here's how to give meaning to your sex life after marriage

According to psychotherapist and couples' sex expert Esther Perel, sex in the early stages of a relationship is often spontaneous, after marriage it becomes more of a 'creative enterprise.'



(News Agencies) According to a recent study, exciting sex doesn't end when you take your vows, rather that is when a new chapter in your sexual history begins to take shape. According to psychotherapist and couples' sex expert Esther Perel, sex in the early stages of a relationship is often spontaneous, after marriage it becomes more of a 'creative enterprise,' but that's no bad thing, reports the Independent. Many couples believe it's essential to try and rekindle the flame or recapture the magic of when they first got together, but Perel believes that's an error, even though "the romantic ideology is tenacious, but the fact of the matter is ,it's impossible to recreate the feelings you both had when first getting to know each other, so it's a waste of time trying." Instead, one should focus on the positives brought about by being in a stable, committed relationship. She even added that you must give meaning to sex. Rather than hoping spontaneous sex will just happen, you must consider both your marriage and sex life as something that demands focus and attention. If you know what turns you on and off, you can use that knowledge to shape your sex life and be in control and see the magic take over.

14 Years of Koi Mil Gaya

Was Rishi Kapoor offered the role of Hrithik Roshan's father?



(Insider Bureau) The 2003 film Koi... Mil Gaya will always be counted among the most iconic films in the Hindi film industry. Right from introducing the Indian audience to cutting-edge special effects to melodious songs, the film was a hit with everyone. Actor Hrithik Roshan (Rohit Mehra) played the role of a mentally-challenged guy with

who are friends with Hrithik, too gained instant fame upon the film's release.

The film was not only a big hit at the box-office, but critics too showered praises upon Hrithik for his terrific acting. As the film completes 14 years of its release on August 8, here are seven lesser-known facts about the film: 1. The popular character of the film, Jaadu, was played by Indravadan Purohit. Dressed in the costume, with an animatronic headgear, he couldn't see anything and had to rely on instructions to move around. Purohit died in 2014.

2. Actor Rishi Kapoor was initially approached to play the role of Hrithik's father by director Rakesh Roshan. Rishi, who had mentioned the whole episode in

his recently-released autobiography, wrote that the two had a fallout after Rishi saw the role as a 'bad career move' and refused to do it. Finally, Rakesh himself starred in the film.

3. The character of Jaadu became so wildly popular, that a spin-off TV series was aired in India with him in the lead. It was called J Bole Toh Jaadoo.

4. Hrithik's character undergoes a physical transformation in the film, and it was not possible for him to gain and lose weight so quickly. The problem was solved with baggy clothes that hid his real proportions. A special hairstyle further made his face look thinner.

5. We all know the ending of the film where Jaadu leaves and gives Rohit his special powers.

But did you know that the makers earlier had shot a different ending? In the alternate ending, the alien took away all the powers with him. 6. The film was believed to be 'inspired' from the 1982 Hollywood flick E.T. the Extra Terrestrial, in which a lonely boy befriends an extraterrestrial being, nicknamed ET, who is stranded on earth, and how the boy and his friends help him go back to his home. 7. Actor Hrithik Roshan, like his character in the film, had himself faced a lot of bullying as a child. The 43-year old had a major stammering problem, and has confessed that his childhood days were "like hell". The scene in which some bullies break Rohit's bicycle is said to be inspired from a real-life incident in Hrithik's life.

Jab Harry Met Sejal movie review

Shah Rukh Khan spearheads this banal show with Anushka in tow

It's a big disappointment to see Shah Rukh Khan returning to his comfort zone and yet not performing on top of his powers. Here's our movie review of Jab Harry Met Sejal. Rating: 2/5.



Jab Harry Met Sejal
Cast: Shah Rukh Khan, Anushka Sharma

Director: Imtiaz Ali
Rating: 2/5

There is a montage in Imtiaz Ali's earlier film Love Aaj Kal in which Saif Ali Khan keeps crossing the same path, but his smile looks more forced everytime. Despite a career that is looking up, his inner frustration gets the better of him and eventually he begins to merge into the crowd. This was Imtiaz Ali's way of showing the importance of love and the right partner in life.

Well, Shah Rukh Khan's Harinder Singh aka Harry starts where Sai leaves. The frustration that this tour guide in Amsterdam carries within him is palpable but never truly explored. Frequently in and out of relationships, he isn't someone who wants to be taken seriously. There are ample hints that he is running away

from something. Sejal Jhaveri (Anushka Sharma) is one of his clients who stays behind her tour group to find her lost engagement ring. A talkative Gujarati girl, she has probably lived a sheltered existence that has restricted her from really living, like Heer from Rockstar. Slowly and steadily, she finds her Jordan in Harry, whom she calls 'Hairy'. Apparently, this is how highly educated Gujarati girls from well-to-do families talk.

Sejal has confidence issues and they can get problematic. For example, she thinks it's fine if a goon kidnaps her and tries to take advantage of her, for such a person will find her worthy of his attention. She actually says, "Unko toh at least 'waisi' lagungi naa main." By 'waisi' she means 'hot'.

Sejal's immaturity attracts Harry, who, then and there, decides to be her protector. He says, "Tum

us type ki ladki ho hi nahi." Nobody cares to explain the other type as if that's the most understood term in Imtiaz Ali-Shah Rukh Khan universe.

The slow build-up provides Shah Rukh Khan sufficient time to showcase his typical 'loverboy' skills. He keeps on switching his expressions between "I am angry till you say something cute" and "Tum nahi jaanti Sejal, kuch kuch hota hai".

There's a back-story too, but that's as irrelevant as trying to find depth in this film. A rehash of Imtiaz Ali's past films, Jab Harry Met Sejal forces scenes and dialogues in so that a song could follow. Why not directly play the song? After all, it's the music that offers some respite from this drag-fest.

On second thoughts, it's not even a typical Imtiaz Ali film. Where is that self-realisation of the characters who want to run away from the burden of love? At most, it's a stretched out meet-cute that then melds into a

search for a goddamn ring. From the title to its climax, everything screams 'been there, done that.'

And there is a terrible angle involving Chandan Roy Sanyal and his gang of unfunny migrants. Don't want to spoil your fun, but this twist will also remind you of Love Aaj Kal. Shah Rukh Khan gets our hopes high in the beginning when we witness dimensions of his character, but that eventful moment doesn't last long and he gets back to playing to the gallery. He makes sure nobody misses those folded hands and slightly slanted forehead. Talk about the burden of being a superstar!

Anushka Sharma, on the other hand, is even more clueless. She desperately tries to look cutely silly whenever she is not

mouthed dialogues like "Main waisi ladki nahi hoon jo apni engagement tod degi."

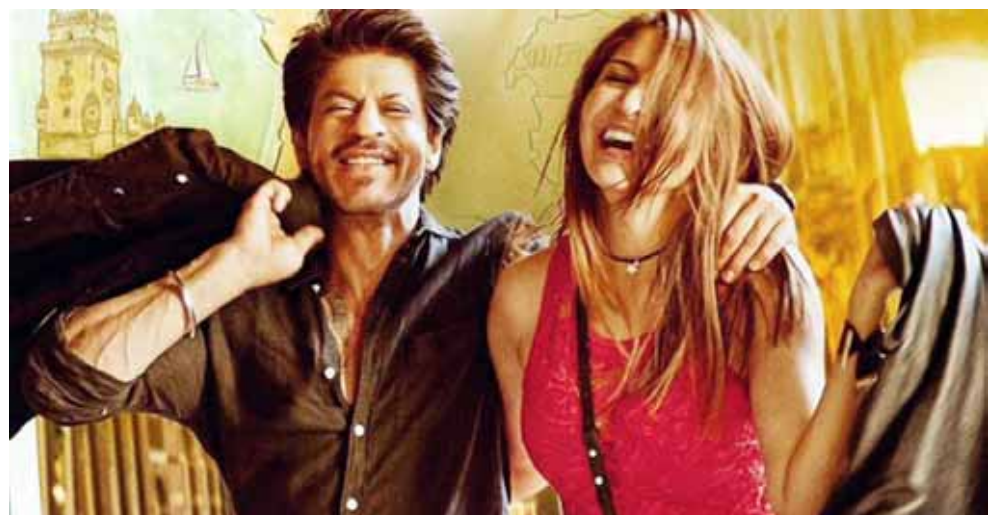
At one point, she actually says, "Lonely feel nahi karna hai," and thank god for that. Otherwise how would we understand her subtle signs!

That was a joke. Nothing is subtle here.

Jab Harry Met Sejal is absolutely banal with some hummable tunes. It's a big disappointment to see Shah Rukh Khan returning to his comfort zone and yet not performing at the top of his powers.

Pritam's songs can do some patchwork, but nothing can rescue this 143-minute of lethargic storytelling.

I haven't found what I was seeking, looks like you won't either.



5 years of Gangs of Wasseypur

Only Anurag knew what he was making, says Pankaj Tripathi



(News Agencies) Directed by Anurag Kashyap, Gangs of Wasseypur that released in 2012 in two parts, attained a cult status over the years. As the film

completes five years of its release on August 8, we talk to actor Pankaj Tripathi, who acted in both the parts, about his experience of working with the filmmaker. The gangster film series, Gangs of Wasseypur, which completes five years of its release today, can be counted among the biggest sleeper hits in the Hindi film industry. Directed by Anurag Kashyap, and starring actors such as Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Piyush Mishra, Huma Qureshi and Tigra Mishra, the storyline was applauded for its emotional rawness and its attempt at going beyond the conventional Hindi film sensibilities. Actor Pankaj Tripathi, recalling his experience of working with Anurag in both the films, says, "We actors didn't even know how the film was shot. The only thing we were aware of was the story. Only Anurag (Kashyap), the captain of the ship, knew what he was crafting. All of us would just do what he asked us to." Pankaj played the role of Sultan Qureshi, a butcher and henchman, whose only agenda was to kill Sardar Khan (the role played by Manoj Bajpayee) and his sons. The actor tells how the cast initially had difficulty grasping the raw language spoken in the rural area, where the story was set. "The language, though tough to speak, was learnt by everyone. The set,

too, had an aura of its own. We never expected the film to turn out this way," he says. Ask Pankaj what was the toughest part during the shoot, and he says, "Since I play a butcher, most of my scenes were in an actual butcherhouse, and that also in a manual one. I belong to a Pandit family, and the sight of so much blood and the smell made all the actors vomit. It was really scary. Every person present there turned into a pure vegetarian for the next few months!"

Remo D'Souza: Salman Khan has not put my film on hold

Choreographer - turned - filmmaker Remo D'Souza says actor Salman Khan has not shifted his focus away from Remo's directorial.



(News Agencies) Filmmaker Remo D'Souza has denied reports that actor Salman Khan, who is reportedly working in Remo's film, has put the project on hold because the actor is not prepared for it. Some recent reports have suggested that Salman feels he is not ready to take up the role of a father who is a dancer, and that a younger actor will be better suited for the part. "I have also been reading these reports. I am also getting to know this through various newspapers. I have no

idea why all this is being written. He (Salman) is in Abu Dhabi and I am here working on the film. The film is very much on and he has not put the film in the back burner," says Remo. There was also a strong buzz around the film's title, with some reports claiming that it will be named Go Daddy, while others suggested that the film will be called Dancing Dad. However, Remo says, "The title of the film has not been decided yet. I don't know from where these names

are coming up. I cannot divulge too many details about what stage of production the film is in." D'Souza, who has earlier directed the dance film franchise ABCD: Any Body Can Dance, had earlier said that he will make sure that Salman will dance in this film like he has never danced in any of his other films. "You will see Salman dancing like never before. The challenge is for me to make him dance in a new way. The preparations and rehearsals have started," Remo said.

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan Pregnant With Her Second Child



(News Agencies) Aishwarya Rai Bachchan Pregnant With Her Second Child . News is in the air that Aishwarya Rai Bachchan being pregnant again, has been going on from the time she made her red carpet appearance at Cannes Film Festival last year.

But, you know how there are too many unwanted things and rumours that surround celebrity couples when it comes to babies or just their life, in general. So we want to tell you that it is just a rumour. The rumours of Aishwarya being pregnant with her second child has sent fans into a frenzy and we've all been waiting for a quote in confirmation, which has come from none other than her husband himself.

This Viral Punjabi Song Glorifies Rule-Breaking Jatt Prisoners In Jail

(News Agencies) One would think that being in jail, or having someone in it, would be a matter of distress, unhappiness, and sadness for most of us. But not for the makers of a new Punjabi viral song Jail by Mankirt Aulakh.

'Don't question a Jatt's reach and influence,' is the song's proud theme. Why? Because Jatts have access to phones and even Facebook while in jail, and the very guards who are meant to keep them incarcerated will watch benevolently as the great Jatt prisoner browses his newsfeed and makes phone calls to his buddies on the outside. Not just this, these all-powerful Jatts are the pride of the jails they're imprisoned in.

Released on August 3, Jail has already racked up an impressive 4.5 million views on Youtube at the time of writing this article. Set in what seems to be a Canadian jail, the song is an ode to gangsters, gun culture, violence and corruption among cops. Throw in a bunch of brawny black men playing

criminals and you have racism serving as the cute umbrella in this Molotov cocktail of stereotypes.

The song might make any reasonable person flinch with its pomp and unbridled pride in lawlessness, but the team behind it has had several skirmishes with the law itself. In March this year, the singer, Mankirt Aulakh, the singer, was booked by the Haryana Police for his alleged involvement in a 2015 land-grabbing case. It also features Ranjit Dara Aujla, an Indian-Canadian former president of the British Columbia Kabaddi Federation who is wanted in a drug-smuggling case in India. Aujla has denied the charges and called them politically motivated. Justifying the song's glorification of corruption, lyricist Inder Pandori told Hindustan Times, "I used to have friends who were lodged in jails, and I would visit them. Whatever I have written is in the public domain, as everyone knows that gangsters are using phones inside prisons and updating their social networking sites."



This is shocking. Ranbir Kapoor just called Sanjay Dutt a fraud

Ranbir Kapoor is currently busy with the Sanjay Dutt biopic and he said that they were portraying a very fraud man on screen.

(News Agencies) A lot is being spoken about the kind of preparations that Ranbir Kapoor is undergoing for his upcoming film with Rajkumar Hirani, the biopic on Sanjay Dutt. Along with beefing up to resemble Dutt, Ranbir Kapoor seems to be taking a cue from his 'honesty' too. Because what Kapoor told a newspaper recently does not exactly fall in the bracket of political correctness.

Ranbir told Deccan Chronicle how there was no whitewashing involved as far as portraying Sanjay Dutt on screen is concerned. That Dutt

has had many grey areas in his life is known to people who have followed the Munna Bhai MBBS star's journey. From his battle with drugs to being imprisoned in connection with the 1993 Bombay blasts, Sanjay Dutt's life has more or less been an open book. And Kapoor says they are trying to stay as close to reality as possible. "With his biopic, he's (Sanjay Dutt) been so honest about his life. He's admitting to his mistakes. We're not portraying a Gandhi-like character. We're portraying a very fraud man. He's someone who is loved and disliked. He's

the most controversial (of all), and to have the ability to tell about your life so honestly, and to make a movie out of it is very brave," Ranbir said.

The Ae Dil Hai Mushkil star also said how he might not have been able to do what Dutt is doing. "If I was in his position, I don't think I could be this honest about my life, and make myself look like a person who is not nice. If an audience can take something from that and learn something from his life, I think it's a very positive thing," said Kapoor. The Sanjay Dutt biopic, which is slated for a release on



March 30, 2018. Apart from Nargis and Paresch Rawal as his father Sunil Dutt. Anushka Sharma, Ranbir in the lead role as Sanjay Dutt, the film stars Manisha Sonam Kapoor and Dia Mirza are also part of the biopic.

Malaika Arora Khan On How She Navigated Life After Her Marriage Of 18 Years Fell Apart

(News Agencies) In March 2016, Malaika Arora Khan and Arbaaz Khan, one of Bollywood's most high-profile couple, announced their separation. A joint statement released by the couple said that they are taking time out to 'figure out' their lives. In July this year, the Bandra Family court formalised their divorce, which ended their 18-year-old marriage. Ever since the split, the couple has been cordial to one another, as far as their public appearances are concerned. They have also expressed concern for their teenage son, Arhaan, who lives with his mother. Now, in an interview with senior journalist Upala KBR of Mid-Day, Malaika opened up about how she coped with the divorce, something that left

both, her and her ex-husband, emotionally drained. The model-dancer revealed that her inner circle of friends helped her cope with the tough patch (Malaika is usually seen hanging out with industry folk Kareena Kapoor, Dolly Sidhwani, Bhavna Pandey). She said, "While some read self-help books or indulge in some form of self-healing, for me, it's been a combination of things. I rely on my friends who are my sounding board. I am not very spiritual, but I meditate and focus on my health (Meditation is known to be of great help in dealing with emotionally stressful events like divorce). I can't take off and spend time alone in a remote location." Khan also revealed that she was reticent to talk about her issues

in the past but now that has changed. She said whether it's friends or therapist, externalising your problems is one way of dealing with a difficult situation. "My son Arhaan keeps me focused. He is loving and accommodating. So, that has helped me heal." While her former husband has said that he's dating someone, Malaika is taking each day as it comes and hasn't yet gotten into a relationship. Despite him having thought of moving on, the couple remains in touch as their son likes to spend time with his father. "No matter what happens or where life takes us, Arbaaz will always be integral to my life. Separation is never easy on anybody. Only those who encounter it understand it," she concluded.



Katrina Kaif finally finds someone who talks more than her



(News Agencies) Katrina Kaif finally finds someone who talks more than her. Katrina Kaif, who is busy in shooting for her upcoming movie 'Tiger Zinda Hai', always keeps on sharing things from the sets to keep her fans updated. Now, the actress took Instagram to share a picture of herself and a little co-star on her social networking handle.

Sharing a picture from the sets of the movie, Katrina wrote, "I've finally met someone who actually talks more than me much more my mbkd co-star's grown up #tigerzindahai #abudhabi." Apparently, the child actor had worked with Katrina in her 2011 movie 'Mere Brother Ki Dulhan'.

'Tiger Zinda Hai' is a sequel to Kabir Khan's 'Ek Tha Tiger' which also starred Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif. Produced by Aditya Chopra under Yash Raj Films, the film is gearing up for Christmas release this year.

China standoff: Defence ministry wants extra Rs 20,000 crore budget to be battle-ready

The demand for additional money comes at a time when the face-off between Indian and Chinese troops in Doklam in Bhutan has entered the 8th week and the borders with Pakistan remain unusually active.



STORY ON page 22

Modi Government Plans On Introducing A Cow Ministry, Says BJP President Amit Shah

BJP-ruled Rajasthan is the first Indian state to have a minister in charge for the welfare of cows.

(News Agencies) The Narendra Modi government is planning on introducing a new ministry for cows, said BJP President Amit Shah in Lucknow on Monday. The Telegraph quotes Shah saying that "there are many recommendations about a cow ministry. A discussion (about the matter) is on." According to the report, Shah did not specify what the mandate for the said ministry would be. It added that Uttar Pradesh CM, Yogi Adityanath was present with Shah at the press conference. Adityanath, who has been championing a 'save the cow' campaign, was reportedly the first to ask for such a ministry, requesting Prime Minister Modi in 2014. BJP-ruled Rajasthan is the first Indian state to have a minister in charge for the welfare of cows. Prime Minister Narendra Modi rode to power in 2014 on a slew of promises, which include a national ban on cow slaughter. In April, the home ministry came out with plans to assign a unique identification number, Aadhaar, to cows. His home state Gujarat raised the sentence for cow slaughter to life term in jail. In Lucknow on Monday, Shah described Modi as the "undisputed most popular PM" of India, claiming that the saffron party's government had succeeded in "ending the politics of family, caste and appeasement" in the country.

India's Barefoot



(News Agencies) BOGRIBAIL, India — A David and Goliath story: Two years ago, a road-construction company called IRB Infrastructure Developers established an open-air factory just across a path, and upwind, from this village in Karnataka State, in southwestern India. Here stone-crushing machines pulverize piles of rocks while other machines mix crushed stone with hot tar, cement and chemicals.

It is monsoon season, when heavy rains shut down the machines for long stretches and tamp down the dust. When I visited on July 29, the air seemed fine. But the rest of the year the machines work 16 to 18 hours per day, swathing the village in the fine dust of crushed stone.

Just outside the factory fence — which is low and porous, meant to keep people out, not to keep dust in — I met Ravi Gouda, one of the villagers most active in trying to stop the pollution. He transports goods by rickshaw for a living, and like everyone in the village, he is also a farmer.

(Contd on page 22)

Ragtag opposition and TINA: The 2 factors that will keep Modi invincible

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: After wresting the top four constitutional posts — President, Vice-President, Prime Minister and Lok Sabha Speaker — and vanquishing Congress and regional parties such as SP and BSP, BJP is focusing on the upcoming assembly polls and 2019 general elections. Congress, which is in power in just five states, has every reason to worry as its political footprint may see further erosion in the forthcoming elections to Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka where the party is in power. The disarray in Gujarat



Congress is in full display with Shinkersinh Vaghela quitting the party and party veteran Ahmed Patel fighting

a tough battle to get another Rajya Sabha term. In Himachal Pradesh, the other state where assembly polls will be held in December, the party is facing huge anti-incumbency due to graft cases against chief minister Virbhadra Singh. Even the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government in Karnataka may find it tough to win assembly polls due in April next year. While Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi still shows all signs of being a reluctant politician and has kept everybody guessing about his promotion, (Contd on page 22)

11 days, 2 resorts: Ahmed Patel's big Rajya Sabha victory may have cost the Congress several lakhs

After several dramatic twists and turns, veteran Congress leader Ahmed managed to win the Rajya Sabha seat from

(News Agencies) Never has the fight for one Rajya Sabha seat witnessed such political twists and turns. In a pitched battle between Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Gujarat, the fate of veteran leader Ahmed Patel was undecided till the last minute. It was well past midnight when Ahmed Patel tweeted 'Satyamev Jayate', announcing his victory in the Gujarat Rajya Sabha election.

It all started with the BJP deciding to nominate a third candidate from



Gujarat to the Rajya Sabha. While nomination of Union minister Smriti Irani and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief Amit Shah from Gujarat was along

the expected lines, the decision to name former Congress leader Balwantsinh Rajput for the third seat in Gujarat stumped the Congress.

Fraught with infighting and desertion of its MLAs, particularly Shinkersinh Vaghela, the Congress' strength in the Assembly was reduced, with many questioning if the Congress would muster enough numbers to see veteran leader Ahmed Patel sail through the Rajya Sabha election.

(Contd on page 23)

