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Sonakshi Sinha urges fans to clean Mumbai beaches



Laying BRICS On China Road

Modi's decision to attend the BRICS Summit helped defuse Doklam. It can be used as a platform for peace.



Journalist Gauri Lankesh's killing India ranks 136 out of 180 countries in press freedom

India was ranked a lowly 136 among 180 countries in the latest world press freedom rankings released in April with the dismal performance blamed on "Modi's nationalism" and growing "self-censorship" in the mainstream media.



Facebook is gearing up to make money from WhatsApp

Facebook Inc is gearing up to make money from WhatsApp, the messaging service used by more than a billion people every day, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday. WhatsApp will be testing new features to make it easier for people to communicate with businesses they want to reach on WhatsApp, the messaging service said on a blog post.

"We're building and testing new tools via a free WhatsApp Business app for small companies and an enterprise solution for bigger companies operating at a large scale (Contd on page 23)

Who is Hardeep Singh Puri?

Hardeep Singh Puri: In his four-decade career in diplomacy, he served critical roles as India's ambassador to Brazil and the United Kingdom, and Permanent Representative of India to Geneva

Hardeep Singh Puri, 65, a 1974-batch Indian Foreign Service officer is considered to have been close to L K Advani during NDA-I. Puri is considered as one of the top diplomats of India and has served as India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 2009 to 2013 and was the vice president of the International Peace Institute, New York. Currently, he holds the post of president and chairman of think-tank Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS). He is also the head of In-

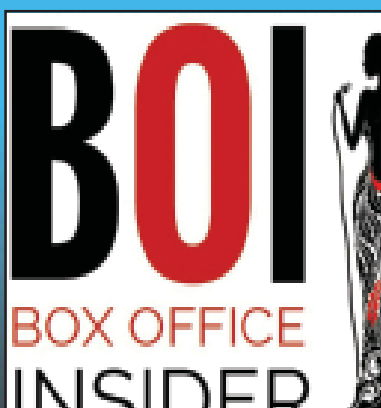


dian delegation to the UNSC, and served as the chairman of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the UN and president of the UNSC. In his four-decade career in diplomacy, he served critical roles as India's ambassador to Brazil and the United Kingdom, and Permanent Representative of India to Geneva. (Contd on page 23)

The murder of senior journalist and editor Gauri Lankesh in her home in Bengaluru has brought the focus back on the perilous conditions journalists in India work in. India was ranked a lowly 136 among 180 countries in the latest world press freedom rankings released in April with the dismal performance blamed on "Modi's nationalism" and growing "self-censorship" in the mainstream media. India slipped three places as compared to the year before. India was ranked just three places above Pakistan and was one notch below violence-torn Palestine. India's neighbours Bhutan and Nepal were placed at 84th and 100th rank, respectively. (Contd on page 22)

How We Killed Expertise

Average Americans have never much liked eggheads. That's not a bad thing in itself: Americans are a skeptical but level-headed people—or were until recently—whose common sense and ingenuity allowed their nation to achieve great heights in science, diplomacy and the arts, while never displacing the ordinary voter as the deciding voice in affairs of state. But recently skepticism has curdled into something more toxic, even dangerous. Donald Trump explicitly campaigned against experts, calling them "terrible" and saying he didn't need them. As president, he seems determined to prove that experts are unnecessary to the running of a superpower—winging important conversations with foreign leaders, issuing an executive order without advice from (Contd on page 23)



Apple, Google, Microsoft vow to fight for employees hit by Trump's latest move

HOUSTON: US tech giants, including Apple, Google and Microsoft, have pledged to stand by their employees after the Trump administration scrapped an amnesty programme that granted work permits to immigrants who arrived in the country illegally as children. US President Donald Trump on Tuesday scrapped an Obama-era programme known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a move likely to impact 8 lakh undocumented workers including more than 7,000 Indian-Americans. Microsoft and Apple are offering the most full-throated defence of "Dreamers" — undocumented individuals who have been in the US since they were young and registered with the federal government to get work permits. Apple CEO Tim Cook condemned the Trump administration's decision and pledged in a note to employees to offer any employees affected by the change the "support they need, including the advice of immigration experts." Apple will "fight" for its Dreamers, Cook tweeted. "If Congress fails to act, our company will exercise its legal rights properly to help protect our employees," Microsoft president and chief legal officer Brad Smith wrote in a blog post. "If the government seeks to deport any one of them, we will provide and pay for their legal counsel," Smith wrote, of the 39 Dreamers who work at Microsoft. He said the company would also seek to intervene in those cases. "Dreamers make our country & communities stronger. We stand for diversity and economic opportunity for everyone. Legislation to protect 800,000 #Dreamers is an economic & humanitarian imperative. Congress needs to act quickly," Nadella tweeted. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, meanwhile, spoke out against the decision to rescind DACA and encouraged users to call Congress to support a measure that would enact the DACA program—created by an executive order by then-President Obama—into law. Google's India born CEO Sundar Pichai took to Twitter to call on Congress to act to defend the DACA.

Trump's withdrawal of US immigration policy for children is short sighted

Donald Trump has suspended the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programme which saves 800,000 migrants who arrived in the US as undocumented children from being deported



Immigration is the four-letter world of contemporary politics around the world. It resulted in Brexit, roils central Europe today, will be a subtext of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's present visit to Myanmar and is being seen by United States President Donald Trump as the means to resuscitate his drooping poll ratings. Mr Trump has suspended the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programme which saves

800,000 migrants who arrived in the US as undocumented children from, effectively, being deported. This has been a particularly poignant issue because many of these migrants came to the US so young — the average age of arrival is six — that they know no other country. The vast majority of them are Latinos though about 7000 are believed to be of Indian origin. Mr Trump was elected on a platform that called for the deportation of illegal migrants and restrictions on immigration as a whole. Implementation of this platform has not been easy. The

US has a deeply embedded culture of migration and its laws, judicial precedents and much of its political establishment — Republican and Democrats — are biased in favour of an open door policy. Various Trump-backed anti-immigration actions such as the select ban on Muslim migrants and restrictions on H-1B visas have run into legislative and judicial resistance. But they resonate with his white working class base so he has persisted. Shutting down DACA is different from the earlier actions. Barack Obama initiated the programme but was never able to make it

law. Trump claims he is not opposed to DACA, he just wants the US Congress to convert it into a piece of legislation. Strict constitutionalists would argue the president is right to demand an ad hoc policy be made into law. It is obvious the legal argument is little more than a fig leaf for the US president. So far, it seems unlikely Republican and Democrat legislators would join hands to reverse Mr Trump's action. But if they did so, it would be a small but symbolic step towards reversing the present global scepticism about what are the otherwise self-evident benefits of human mobility.

Trump's 'China First' option in North Korea will Make China Great Again

Although a Chinese military intervention in North Korea is unlikely, it's Beijing's best opportunity to achieve greater strategic parity with the US in the region

Most pundits agree that the least bad way to deal with North Korea's nuclear sabre rattling is a continued combination of tight containment and aggressive diplomacy. Fewer, however, have recognised that the least bad military option — the one implied by US President Donald Trump's insistence that China take responsibility for its dangerous neighbour — is a Chinese invasion, or regime change forced through China's threat to launch one. This outcome, which would sharply shift East Asia's strategic balance in China's favour, is not as unlikely as most people think. In fact, its very plausibility is one reason why it needs to be taken seriously, including by Chinese military

planners. In Trumpian terms, this is a 'China First' option that could help 'Make China Great Again'. Any military intervention, Chinese or otherwise, would carry huge risks. But before dwelling on them, consider what a successful Chinese intervention would achieve. For starters, it would put North Korea right where the country's post-Korean War history suggests it belongs: Under a Chinese nuclear umbrella, benefiting from a credible security guarantee. Mao Zedong used to say that his country and North Korea were "as close as lips and teeth" — a fitting description, given Chinese troops' role in averting an American victory in the Korean War. But while

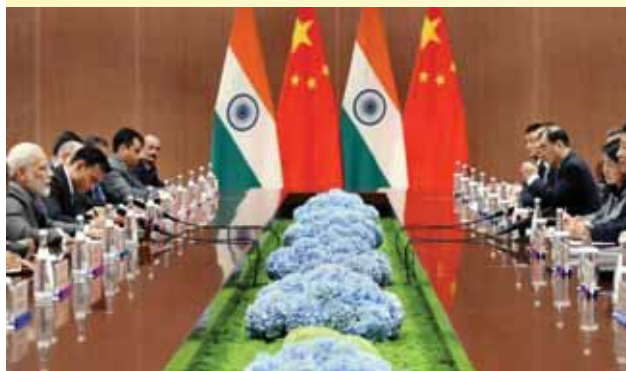
Japan and South Korea have remained close allies of the United States during the six decades since then, hosting US bases and sheltering under US nuclear protection, China and North Korea have drifted ever further apart. As a result, China has little control over its neighbour and purported ally, and probably scant knowledge of what is going on there. It could, it is true, tighten the existing siege on North Korea by cutting trade further and blocking energy supplies. But this might achieve little beyond pushing Kim Jong-un's cloistered regime to look for support from its other neighbour, Russia. If, as is commonly assumed, North Korea wants some sort of credible security

guarantee in exchange for curtailing its nuclear programme, the only country capable of providing it is China. No American promise would remain credible beyond the term of the president who gave it, if even that long. So if China were to combine threats of invasion with a promise of security and nuclear protection, in exchange for cooperation and possible regime change, its chances of winning over large parts of the Korean People's Army would be high. Whereas a nuclear exchange with the US would mean devastation, submission to China would promise survival, and presumably a degree of continued autonomy. For all except those closest to Kim, the choice would not be a difficult

one. China's strategic gains from a successful military intervention would include not only control of what happens on the Korean Peninsula, where it presumably would be able to establish military bases, but also regional gratitude for having prevented a catastrophic war. No other action holds as much potential to make Chinese leadership within Asia seem both credible, and desirable, especially if the alternative is a reckless, poorly planned US-led war. What China needs, above all, is legitimacy, and intervention in North Korea would provide it. Successful use of hard power would bring China, to borrow the distinction coined by Harvard's Joseph S. Nye, huge reserves of soft power.

'Mention of Pak, Afghan terror groups in Brics declaration a mistake by China'

The Brics grouping on Monday bracketed Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed with global terror groups Islamic State and al-Qaeda.



China has made a mistake by including terrorist groups based in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the Xiamen declaration as the move could prove costly for its ties with countries in the region, experts said. Also, they said the agenda of Brics, which is an economic forum, was hijacked. The Xiamen declaration endorsed and issued by the five Brics countries on Monday listed the "Taliban, ISIL/DAISH, Al-Qaida and its affiliates, including Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), Islamic

Movement of Uzbekistan, the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, TTP and Hizb ut-Tahrir," as terrorist groups. "We deplore all terrorist attacks... and condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations wherever committed and by whomsoever and stress that there can be no justification for any act of terrorism," the statement said. But Chinese experts questioned what they said selective inclusion of groups in the list. "The China-Pakistan relationship will face its biggest, biggest challenge since the

1960s," Hu Shisheng, director of the Institute of South and Southeast Asian and Oceania Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, told Hindustan Times. "I think this is too costly," Hu said. "It is really a big mistake, which the Chinese government will feel in the coming years." A leading expert on south Asia echoed Hu's view. "India won the game and the statement is what India wanted and got. It's not a step that China should have allowed," the expert, who did not wish

to be identified, said. According to Hu, the Haqqani network is in a commanding position within the Afghan Taliban, which now controls more than 40% of the territory in Afghanistan. "There is a rationale to regard this group as a political group," Hu said. "Such an inclusion could make the Afghanistan situation worse." China's role in promoting Afghanistan's political reconciliation will be reduced to nothing, he added. "Brics is not the ideal

platform for the emerging economies to talk about terrorism. I think the agenda of this Brics summit has been hijacked by some forces," Hu said. Wang Dehua from the Shanghai Municipal Centre for International Studies questioned the selective inclusion of groups from Pakistan. "I frequently hear from Pakistan that they think India supports the Balochistan Liberation Army and other subversive groups active along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border," Wang said.

Pakistan rejects Brics statement on presence of terror groups on its soil

Pakistan on Tuesday rejected a statement by the five emerging-market BRICS powers that militant groups in Pakistan pose a regional security concern



Pakistan on Tuesday rejected a statement by Brics that terror groups based on its soil such as JeM and LeT pose a threat to regional security, with defence minister Khurram Dastagir Khan saying the country does not provide safe haven to such organisations. We have already said that there are no terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan," Khan told the media after a meeting of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet in Islamabad. "Terrorist safe havens are found in Afghanistan. Pakistan does not fear any external aggression as its army, navy and air force are keeping a strict eye on the

situation," he added. "These organisations, they have some of their remnants in Pakistan, which we're cleaning," Khan also told Geo News channel, without specifying which groups he was referring to. "But Pakistan, we reject this thing categorically, no terrorist organisation has any complete safe havens." Khan's response followed a declaration on Monday by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa that called for patrons of Pakistan-based terror groups to be held to account. A brief statement issued by the Foreign Office spokesperson in

response to the Brics declaration said Pakistan was "seriously concerned" about the threat posed by terrorism in South Asia. It noted that groups based in the region, including Afghanistan, such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and its associates like Jamaat-ul-Ahrar "have been responsible for extreme acts of violence against Pakistani people". he statement, however, was silent on anti-India terror groups Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), blamed for the 2001 attack on India's parliament, and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which killed 166 people

during a brazen assault on the financial hub of Mumbai in 2008. It added that Pakistan was "deeply concerned" by the presence of Islamic State, Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in the "ungoverned spaces in Afghanistan" as they pose a threat to regional security. For the first time, Brics bracketed the JeM and LeT with the Islamic State and al-Qaida in the Xiamen Declaration that was issued after the grouping's summit in the coastal Chinese city. The declaration also named the Haqqani Network, which is part of

the Afghan Taliban and targets US-led foreign forces in Afghanistan, and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. The US warned Pakistan that it could cut military aid if the country doesn't do more to tackle terror sanctuaries on the Pakistani side of the Afghan border. China is also concerned about Islamist influence spilling over from Pakistan and Afghanistan into its far-western Xinjiang region. Countries attending a December conference aimed at stabilising Afghanistan made a similar statement, naming several Pakistan-based terror groups as a source of concern.



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India is learning to behave like a superpower

Before sending out troops on the border, successful governments explore all possibilities on the diplomatic front. That's what New Delhi did.

Heading towards the 75th anniversary of its independence, has India learnt to behave like a superpower? The sequence of events over the last few months would seem to suggest this. You must have got it by now — I mean the standoff with China and its resolution.

The Indian government deployed a judicious mix of strength and wisdom during the Doklam episode. Two videos may be fresh in your memory. The first was in Doklam in which Indian soldiers can be seen pushing back the intruders in Red. In the second, at Ladakh's Pangong Tso Lake, the physicality of the conflict is palpable. Pelting stones, raining fists and blows on each other, Indian and Chinese soldiers appear to be engaged in a wrestling match. Episodes such as these have taken place on the border with China in the past too, but it was the first time that the videos were being watched by people in their drawing rooms, in a matter of hours.

The places where this skirmishes took place are inaccessible for tourists. There isn't even a village in the vicinity. So who shot these videos and why did they go viral? The answer to this may still be a mystery, but by destiny or design, it served a larger purpose. The videos kindled a confidence in the common citizen that our defence forces are second to none. When the occasion demands, they can put up stiff resistance and push back the Chinese.

This is a clear sign of a shift in India's military strategy.

What is significant is that even as India was changing its spots, China was steeped in the old mould: trespassing followed by hollow threats. When its defence ministry said India should remember what happened in 1962, its foreign ministry joined the chorus and added: The way the Indian army went to Doklam, imagine what could happen if the Chinese went and ensconced themselves in Nepal? They unleashed a series of

challenges and warnings. For Indians who love sensationalism, this was a different kind of thrill. The two video clips had become a good antidote for their anxieties.

All through this turmoil, the ruling establishment in India displayed extraordinary restraint. Defence Minister Arun Jaitley's brief but consequential response to the Chinese was that the India of today wasn't the India of 1962. A few days later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India was ready to resolve every issue through dialogue. That is why world opinion kept turning against them and ultimately China had to drop its road-building plans. This was the second jolt to our powerful neighbour. First, India boycotted Chinese President Xi Jinping's pet One Belt One Road Project (OBOR) and now this. Once bitten, why would India compromise on its sovereignty or on the security of its borders? Some people believe that after the setback to

its ambitious OBOR project, China could not have accepted India's absence from the BRICS summit. This had the potential of inflicting a serious blow to China's economic interests. So, it made amends. There is a possibility that India's policy architects had anticipated this and accordingly taken the blow-hot blow cold decisions. Before sending out troops on the border, successful governments explore all possibilities on the diplomatic front. That's what New Delhi did.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Beijing at present. In the evolving scenario, he will certainly meet his Chinese counterpart with renewed confidence. One hopes both the countries will prioritise peace and prosperity over other issues. Chanakya wasn't wrong when he said we can change everything but our neighbours. Alertness, understanding and cooperation are the best policy to deal with a neighbour. China should understand this. Their



companies conduct their business in India. If our people turn against China, who'll buy their products?

It will be wrong to assume that previous governments have not done enough to defend our borders. In 1967, during a skirmish near Nathu-La, Indian troops neutralised more than 300 Chinese soldiers but the general public didn't get a whiff of it. In 1999, it took a long time for the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government to declare the Kargil conflict as a war. Those were the days of hesitant

diplomacy. In a way the present government led by Narendra Modi has bid goodbye to that policy. Whether it is action against insurgents in Myanmar, surgical strikes against Pakistan or skirmishes with Chinese soldiers, New Delhi hasn't been reluctant to talk about them. Till now the United States and its allies have been pursuing this policy. We should welcome the tact and maturity that New Delhi has displayed over the last few months. It is a sign of India's new-found confidence.

'Citizen who speaks freely no longer safe': Gauri Lankesh's murder sparks outrage

Journalists, politicians and activists unite to condemn the murder of Bengaluru journalist Gauri Lankesh.

Journalists, authors, rights activists and members of Parliament expressed outrage over the murder of senior journalist Gauri Lankesh on Wednesday, a day after the 55-year-old was shot dead by unidentified assailants outside her home in Bengaluru.

Protests were planned across India by journalist groups, including the Editors' Guild, Press Club of India and Press Association. In a statement released on Wednesday, the Indian Writers' Forum pledged to continue Lankesh's fight. "The forum condemns the continued unmaking of India in which writers, artists, scholars, rationalists - and indeed any citizen who exercises her right to speak freely - is no longer



safe," it said.

Senior journalists expressed their shock and anger at losing a brave colleague, but also spoke out against what they saw as a muzzling of dissent with bullets.

Veteran journalist Shekhar Gupta tweeted: "Journalism is nothing without courage. Democracy is nothing without dissent. Lankesh had plenty of

both."

The journalism fraternity banded together to condemn the attack. "To those who use guns to silence dissent, you are cowards. And your bullets may kill but will not deter the brave," said Rajdeep Sardesai.

India has a poor track record when it comes to protecting journalists. The country slipped three places to

136th in this year's World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders.

Lankesh's murder made many commentators recall similar killings of activists Narendra Dhabolkar, Govind Pansare and MM Kalburgi. "To kill someone for their views is not Democracy, its beginnings of a Banana Republic, where violence speaks louder than words," said film director Shekhar Kapur.

Lankesh's murder shook the political class, too, with leaders across parties condemning the attack. Karnataka chief minister Siddaramiah called Lankesh's killing "an assault on democracy", promising a free and fair probe. (Contd on page 23)

Gauri Lankesh Could Not Be Jailed. But She Could Be Killed

The cowardly, brutal killing of Gauri Lankesh has led to waves of spontaneous protests in different corners of India. Gauri was a voice of honesty and courage, she challenged the status quo in multiple ways as a single woman, as the editor of a weekly, as an anti-establishment voice, as the proud promoter and practitioner of Kannadiga language and cultures, as a vociferous opponent of Hindutva ideologies. It is known that she was targeted by the Hindutva forces more so after she was convicted of defamation for a story she published in 2008 against a BJP MP Pralhad Joshi and BJP leader Umesh Dushi. She had publicly stated that she intended to challenge the conviction in the higher court, declaring, "Some people want to see me behind bars, but that has not happened." She was given bail. She could not be put behind bars. But she could be killed. Who are the murderers? The investigation has started. Some of her friends and family have asked for a CBI inquiry. Whether it is the state government or a central agency that does the investigation, her killers must be caught and punished.

Karnataka Law Minister TB Jayachandra has said that the manner of Gauri's killing is similar to that of MM Kalburgi, the public intellectual, rationalist thinker who was gunned down at his Karnataka home two years ago. His killers have not yet been identified or punished. Earlier in Maharashtra, two leading intellectuals Govind Pansare and Narendra Dabholkar were shot down. Their killers also have not been identified. There is a pattern to the targets and the killings, and the needle of suspicion in the latest - that of Gauri points clearly to those who would gain from her death, gain because they think it will send a warning message to all those who challenge their ideology, gain because they think they have silenced a powerful voice. Her killers may be hired killers, they may be directly members of an organization. But in truth, Gauri was killed by the atmosphere of violence created by the politics of hatred and bigotry in which every communal or casteist fanatic finds legitimacy in the act of killing, of burning, of cruelty.

When a Muslim is lynched on manufactured rumours that a cow has been killed, it is backed by top leaders who use their positions of power to spread the message that this is all pure and good work in defense of religion and religious belief. When Dalit homes are burnt to cinders, they are being taught that Manu Smriti is the benchmark to keep Dalits in their place. When those wearing black coats, mandated to uphold the law, beat up a young man like Kanhaiya Kumar in the premises of a court of law and bay for his blood, they feel no shame, they take pride in their criminal actions. For them, dissent is sedition and this is the way to deal with anti-nationals, that is the word from the very top. When acts of terror are committed by right-wing groups owing allegiance to Hindutva ideologies, and the top investigation agency cautions the public prosecutor to "go soft" in the case, what is it but clear patronage to terror acts? Within a year of such instructions becoming public, all the accused get released on bail. This is the environment which encourages killings of those who challenge this politics - like Gauri Lankesh.

This is how the communal right wing operates: create an environment of hatred and let the fanatics do the job. That is the atmosphere created when Gandhi was killed. In 1994, after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, when the country was deeply wounded by communal hatred and violence, an interview of Gopal Godse, younger brother of Nathuram Godse, was published in the magazine "Frontline".

In a chilling telling of Gandhi's assassination, he describes how an atmosphere is created. "It many times happens that the clouds gather in the skies and we assume that in the next 15 minutes it will rain. But things happen otherwise. Winds blow and take away the clouds...so what is required for the rainfall? That particular atmosphere, the particular degree of temperature to be connected with the particles of water in the cloud. And then they take the shape of water to drop to the earth...so there might have been conspiracies and conspiracies and the wind might have come and blown them away. But when everything was in order, this conspiracy (the killing of Gandhi) proved to be fruitful..." So spoke the brother of Gandhi's killer who had stated proudly in the interview "all the brothers were in the RSS. Nathuram, Dattatreya, myself and Govind. You can say we grew up in the RSS rather than in our home. It was like a family to us." RSS spokespersons today claim that the RSS has gone through many stages - from "ignorance about it, to opposition to it and now, acceptance" of the organization. The widespread protests against the killing of Gauri in which most people, rightly or mistakenly believe that it is the hand of the Hindutva forces behind it, just as in the killings of Pansare, Dabholkar and Kalburgi, show that there is no "acceptance", there can never be "acceptance" and that truth and justice will prevail. We deeply mourn the loss of Gauri Lankesh. We extend deep condolences to her family and large numbers of friends and admirers. Her vibrant life and work will always be an inspiration and will live on as will the values and progressive politics she held so dear to her heart.

The Way to Make North Korea Back Down

After Sunday's nuclear test, the most powerful yet, and two successful intercontinental missile tests in July, North Korea can credibly threaten to nuke a major United States city and kill millions of Americans. To date, the Trump administration, frustrated by its misplaced hopes of Chinese cooperation to restrain Pyongyang, has been reduced to empty bluster, while others, including a senior official in the previous administration, are resigned to living with a nuclear-armed regime on the Korean Peninsula. But a nuclear North Korea is unlike a nuclear China or Russia. During the Cold War, neither Beijing nor Moscow faced an existential threat in the form of an alternate Chinese or Russian state. Pyongyang, on the other hand, has had to live with a far more prosperous and legitimate Korean state across its southern border. This internal dynamic of the Korean Peninsula compels Pyongyang to continue to threaten war and perfect its weapons of mass destruction. The regime's logic is that the more advanced its nuclear capability, the less likely the United States will be to defend South Korea at the risk of sacrificing millions of American lives at home. Hence, for the North, menacing the United States is a nonnegotiable means of isolating and exercising dominance over Seoul. This is how the regime of Kim Jong-un seeks to ensure its long-term survival.

This latest nuclear blast, during America's Labor Day weekend, shows that Pyongyang is less interested in reaping concessions from the international community than in sticking to its playbook of strategic provocations. It seeks maximum political impact by conducting carefully timed weapons tests. The pattern of the United States' tepid response to these affronts has been to apply incremental sanctions to get Pyongyang to back off a bit and then to defuse tension. Pyongyang's provocations, which have been followed by disingenuous talks about denuclearization, have often also won generous blandishments from its adversaries, including at least \$10 billion from Seoul and \$1.3 billion from Washington over the past 20 years or so. With good reason, Pyongyang sees itself as wielding both a carrot and a stick. Even now, despite solid American support for the South, North Korea is able to pressure Seoul into selective censorship. Whether North Korea can induce Washington to abandon Seoul or embrace a nuclear North Korea, the security of the rich, risk-averse South will be increasingly compromised either way. The only nonmilitary means of forestalling this ominous trajectory of events is for the United States to enforce both American and United Nations sanctions against the North Korean regime and its enablers, the foremost of which remains China. Thanks to the strength of the dollar, Washington has the means to create severe financial hardship for Pyongyang. For far too long, the United States has shied away from shutting off the Kim regime's sources of money and matériel, let alone sanctioning its Chinese partners. This has been out of concern that Pyongyang might escalate its aggression or that Beijing would adopt retaliatory economic measures. These fears are unfounded: North Korea escalates tension according to its own timetable, while China shows restraint in the face of legitimate financial measures. There is therefore a compelling case to isolate Pyongyang economically. (Contd on page 23)



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Middlemen In God's Market

People largely err in finding their spiritual master. The guru shouldn't be a rockstar with fans willing to obey anything. The case isn't different outside India too.

It is human to try and understand nature and use that knowledge to improve the quality of life. The forager did it. The hunter did it. The fisherman, the herdsman and the farmer did it. But where does nature end? Does it exist beyond sight and sound? Beyond senses? Who can access this world beyond name and form?

In tribal society, there was the shaman. In Chinese society, the shaman became king, for he had the 'Mandate of Heaven' to rule. In Greek society, kings claimed that their father, or mother, was a divine being. It made them special. In Arab-Persian society, there came God's messenger who introduced the idea of God who created the world and his message of how we are supposed to live in it. The messenger was the leader; he spoke to God, and followed God's instruction, and told people who should be king.

In Vedic society, it was

the rishi who 'heard' what no one else could hear. That secret knowledge was transmitted by ritualists (brahmana) and passed on by teachers (acharyas), who granted kings legitimacy. But then the Buddha came along and accessed this secret doctrine by meditation and contemplation. His followers transmitted

Buddha's knowledge and eventually concluded anyone could be a Buddha, thus access the transcendental world. In the Puranas, the wisdom of the Vedas was being revealed to all by Shiva and Vishnu. Not only did they decode Vedic wisdom, they embodied it.

We have to understand all this to appreciate the guru phenomenon. Who is a guru? Is he just a wise old man (pir, in Persian), or a messenger (paigambar, in Persian) of God, God himself, or the embodiment of wisdom, whose presence and blessings are enough to

solve the problems of life, without any material, intellectual or emotional investment? Maybe he is a sorcerer, with secret knowledge not accessible to all? He can dig into the magical world that overlaps the material world? Isn't that who is mystic, yogi, druid or magi supposed to be?

We want to understand the guru phenomenon rationally. Since the 19th century, under Protestant influence, there was a global trend to equate all holy men as good teachers. So Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha are all being cast into a single mode. This has led many modern guru enthusiasts to give the word guru, which simply means someone with gravitas or intellectual weight—a pseudo-etymology as one who takes people from darkness (gu) to light (ru). But in fact, the connection between a guru and his disciples is visceral, defying rationality. They



are not students chasing a teacher; they are fans running after a rockstar, willing to do anything he tells them to do.

How does one create a rockstar? You can train to be an actor. You can pretend to be a celebrity. But few have been able to explain the phenomenon of a rockstar. What makes people so crazy for a performing artiste on stage? What is it about his song and dance that renders people mad? They chase him. They cry for him. They are even willing to die for him. What is the science? All psychologists are able to offer is just post-facto rationalisations.

We find this is the word of films, of sports, theatre, dance and music. In the world of politics too, when even the most absurd words of a leader sound rational to his mob of trolls. But we are not willing to extend this to the hallowed world of spirituality, which is just a fancy word for deep psychology: the emotions and sensations that cannot be explained by measurable phenomena. It is that part of our existence that is located just beyond the tangible and the explainable. It is the inspiration that manifests as poetry. This is not just an Indian phenomenon. Any such suggestion is

essentially racist. It is rooted in the human desire for meaning and validation. It manifests differently in different cultures. But it is universal. We feel disconnected from the world around us, and seek belonging. There is the rational and burdensome world of relationships with their roles and responsibilities; but what really fuels us is the irrational and involuntary world of love, a connection over which we have no control, but feels real, inspiring yet safe, common sense notwithstanding. A guru is able to evoke this unconsciously.

(Contd on page 23)

There is much more to the India-China partnership than border disputes

By getting through the Doklam crisis without a shot being fired, India and China have shown that as they both rise, the potential for cooperating more and confronting less remains considerable.



When you think about Doklam, keep calm and carry on. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, seemed to have sensibly adopted the view that there is more to the larger Sino-Indian relationship than a border stand-off during their hour-long meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Xiamen. They

both agreed to treat Doklam and similar border incidents as problems that should be managed rather than treated as a fatal flaw in bilateral relations between the two largest Asian countries.

Doklam, as seems to have been recognised by both sides, represents a new phase in the territorial disputes between New Delhi and

Beijing. One, India was defending the claims of a third country, Bhutan, with which it has a defence understanding. Two, as a consequence, there was just enough misunderstanding for the crisis to escalate quickly to the point it had the potential to become something larger than either side wanted. There seems to be a case for

India and China to begin negotiating yet another border management agreement, but one that incorporates protocols regarding military confrontations in third countries and even the maritime domain.

The BRICS summit was a symbol of how much larger the Sino-Indian relationship is than disputes over uninhabited bits of rock. The Xiamen summit continued the emerging economies tradition of laying out an international order which would give them a greater say in rule-making and institutional representation. It also incorporated a number of other emerging

economies for the first time, signalling how the BRICS concept is attractive to other players as well.

The surprise was the Chinese acquiescence to a mention of Pakistan-based terrorist organisations like the Lashkar e Tayyeba and Jaish e Mohammad in the joint statement. The statement does not denounce these groups or call for action against them, it merely expresses concern at these and other terrorist groups. Nonetheless, it reflects an evolutionary step upward in Beijing's attitude to terrorism. Namely, that while Pakistan remains its "all-weather friend," the

former's use of terrorism to further its political agenda is a flawed policy that undermines a growing Chinese interest in regional stability. The joint statement was noticeable for speaking about almost every major international conflict that has a bearing on world stability. It is hard to see India and China ever becoming close friends but they need not become violent rivals. By getting through the Doklam crisis without a shot being fired and even high-level summity being sustained, they have shown that as they both rise, the potential for cooperating more and confronting less remains considerable.

Why BJP's treatment of NDA allies could derail its Mission 350

Despite indications that it will not be pushed around, BJP needs allies in 2019. But its treatment to NDA partners could influence potential allies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is known to spring surprises and he has done it again in the Cabinet reshuffle.

As surprising as the widely-hailed elevation of Nirmala Sitharaman as the defence minister was the non-inclusion of the Janata Dal(U), or for that matter any other existing or new ally. The other surprise was that the four former career bureaucrats who were inducted into the ministry were not given departments related to their specialisation. Hardeep S Puri, with his immense experience in the foreign policy domain, has been given urban affairs; and KJ Alphons with his expertise in urban matters got tourism.

As for allies, it is possible that Modi may still induct them, particularly the JD(U), in another expansion exercise, though he has given no such indication. Unless done soon, the exercise would be meaningless for the countdown to the general elections would begin in 15 months.

The media had written about

two JD(U) leaders being included in the ministry. But Nitish Kumar disclosed that his party had neither been asked, nor was any offer discussed.

It stood to reason that the JD(U), which has formed a government with the BJP in Bihar, would enter a government led by the BJP at the Centre. That this did not happen has given a handle to Kumar's detractors, including rival Lalu Prasad, to make snide remarks against the Bihar chief minister. That Kumar, who once enjoyed a near-parity status with Modi, someone who could take him on in the future, cannot get his party's entry into the Cabinet today, must add to his discomfiture. But then, Kumar consciously chose a limited role for himself, confined to Bihar, when he quit the 'grand alliance'.

The BJP brass may calculate that Kumar — and for that matter Shiv Sena's Uddhav Thackeray — has few options today. Kumar cannot go back to Prasad, just as it would be difficult for Thackeray to shake hands with

the Congress. It is not just the JD(U) which is chafing against a perceived humiliation, Thackeray has also expressed his unhappiness at not being consulted or informed about the reshuffle. The Shiv Sena's angst against the BJP is nothing new, and the possibility of the BJP breaking with its oldest ally before the 2019 elections cannot be ruled out. There were also strong rumours at one stage about the NCP — playing footsie with the BJP and remaining with the Opposition — joining the Cabinet. This would make sense only if the Sena were to pull out of the Maharashtra government and the NCP was needed to prop it up. Otherwise, the NCP joining the NDA would give strength to the Congress, for some of its base would gravitate towards the grand old party. The best case scenario for an ascendant BJP in Maharashtra is to keep the Congress and the NCP apart and have a four-cornered contest next time. The continuing political flux in Tamil Nadu may explain



why the AIADMK was not taken into the Cabinet, as once reported. Given the BJP's majority in the Lok Sabha, Modi is in a comfortable position vis-a-vis the allies. Unlike in the past, when the Congress yielded to regional parties' ambitions in the states in order to get their support at the Centre, the BJP is acting tough, not giving up on its plans to widen its base in states. It has given enough indications that it will not be pushed around by allies. And yet, politics is never static, and even though Modi's popularity continues undimmed, the growing restiveness in sections today — Dalits, farmers, jobless

youth — cannot be denied. The allies' unhappiness can have a bearing on the party's 'Mission 2019'. A 'happy' Kumar, for instance, can add value to the BJP not just in Bihar but also in eastern UP where there is a concentration of Kurmis. An 'unhappy' Kumar may not put his best foot forward in 2019 or 2020, and the stakes are higher for the BJP today than for Kumar. The BJP's 'Mission 350' may need allies. The treatment meted out to the present allies — summed up in the words of a JD(U) leader as a partnership with "izzat" or "beizzat" — could influence the decision-making of potential allies, who are neither in the NDA or UPA today.

Gauri Lankesh's case shouldn't fall by the wayside owing to police apathy

In all these cases, there was enough forensic evidence for the police to act on. But they don't seem to have made any headway either due to incompetence or deliberate neglect



A link is being drawn between the ghastly murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh in Bengaluru, that of rationalists Narendra Dabholkar in Pune in 2013, Govind Pansare in Kolhapur in 2015 and MM Kalburgi in Dharwad in 2015. It is too early to come to any conclusion about Lankesh's killing as investigations are underway. But, many see this as an assault on the freedom of the press.

Indeed, there is no denying that journalists have come under great pressure in recent times especially those reporting on injustices and corruption. There are two worrying aspects that must be highlighted. In all these cases as also similar ones which have not got much notice, the murders have not been carried out in any secretive manner. Rather, the killers have quite openly approached

the victim and carried out the crime in full view of others and in the case of Lankesh, CCTV cameras.

This suggests that they have no fear of the law or of being apprehended. This also suggests that they may have powerful backers. The other is that these cases have been hanging fire for years. It can only be hoped that Lankesh's case does not become a casualty to such apathy. The killers in all these cases have left behind enough evidence for the police to proceed on. Surely using ballistics and forensic evidence, some headway could have been made by now on the older cases. In fact, these cases had receded into the background and have been resurrected now only after Lankesh's killing. From the time lag, we can only conclude that the police are either incompetent or are dragging out these cases for whatever reason. This is simply unacceptable. There have been demands for the Karnataka's chief minister's resignation. But this serves no

purpose. In Lankesh's case, she had also been involved in rehabilitating Maoists and this also earned her many enemies. But from whichever source the threat came, it is inexplicable that the police did not have a greater handle on the situation and seem to have been caught completely unawares. Unfortunately, media attention also wanes after such sensational murders allowing the police to get away with inaction and incompetence. In the Dabholkar case, two of the suspects are absconding. In all the cases, the investigating officers have been changed frequently despite protests from the families. The longer these cases take, the less the likelihood of finding evidence or the culprits. It is time that we at least learnt of any progress made in these cases. Like those before, the case of Lankesh, who fought so valiantly for the underdog, should not fall by the wayside once the attention has died down.

Journalist Gauri Lankesh, known critic of Hindu right-wing extremism, murdered

The Karnataka Police is on the hunt to trace the killers of the senior Kannada journalist who was shot dead at her house in Bengaluru Tuesday evening.

The Karnataka Police is tracing the killers of senior Kannada journalist, Gauri Lankesh, a critic of Hindu extremism, who was shot dead at her house in Bengaluru on Tuesday evening.

"The three special teams set up to crack the case are on the lookout for the suspected assailants. We are taking the movements of people and vehicles at check posts and inter-state borders," deputy commissioner of police (West) M N Anucheth told IANS in Bengaluru.

According to the police, at least three suspects were involved and Lankesh was found dead on her verandah around 8pm with bullet wounds to her head and chest. Television reports said seven bullets were fired at her and three hit her.

Lankesh, 55, was the daughter of famous poet-turned-journalist P Lankesh. She was the editor of Gauri Lankesh Patrike, writing often against Sangh organisations and communal violence in the country.

"This is not the death of a journalist, but the death of democracy and constitutional values. She had raised her voice against communal violence with us and we know that all our lives are in danger. But we did not expect this," said KL Ashok of the Karnataka-based Komu Souharda Vedike (Communal Harmony Forum), who worked closely with Lankesh.

Ashok said there "was no doubt" that Lankesh's killing was part of a larger conspiracy to kill rationalist ideas. "Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, MM Kalburgi and now Gauri Lankesh. They were all rationalist thinkers, and that is why they have been murdered," he added.

In 2015, Left ideologue and Kannada author Prof MM Kalburgi was shot dead in a similar manner by an unidentified gunman at the doorstep of his home.

Bengaluru deputy commissioner of police MN Anucheth said, "It is too early to



comment on the issue, we cannot reveal any further details at the moment."

Karnataka home minister Ramalinga Reddy said there were two CCTV cameras and three police teams were working on the case.

In November, Lankesh was

convicted by a court for the killing. Shortly after the defaming two BJP leaders for murder, Karnataka chief articles published in her periodical in 2008. She was sentenced to six months in jail and asked to pay Rs. 10,000 penalty. Lankesh had been granted bail. Journalists as well as several politicians condemned

the killing. Shortly after the murder, Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah expressed shock in posts on Twitter: "In fact, this is an assassination on democracy. In her passing, Karnataka has lost a strong progressive voice, and I have lost a friend". Congress

vice president Rahul Gandhi too spoke out against the murder. She recounted the 2015 murder of Left ideologue and Kannada author Prof MM Kalburgi, who was shot dead in a similar manner by an unidentified gunman at the doorstep of his home Two months after Kalburgi's murder, a young Dalit writer of a book critiquing the Hindu caste system was abducted and assaulted by goons in Karnataka. Writer Huchangi Prasad said his assailants kept calling him a traitor. Before Kalburgi, Maharashtra rationalist and communist leader Govind Pansare was shot along with his wife during a morning walk on February 16, 2015, near their home in Kolhapur. He died in hospital four days later. The main suspect in the Pansare murder is allegedly associated with Sanatan Sanstha, a Hindu right-wing group.

State funeral for Gauri Lankesh, K'taka CM orders SIT probe as protests erupt

Journalist-activist Gauri Lankesh, a known critic of right-wing extremism, was shot dead outside her Bengaluru home on Tuesday.

Protests swept India on Wednesday against the killing of senior journalist Gauri Lankesh in Bengaluru as Karnataka set up a special investigation team and police pored over surveillance footage to solve the sensational murder.

Lankesh was laid to rest with full state honours in Bengaluru where thousands of people poured in to pay their respects to the 55-year-old editor and outspoken critic of Hindu right-wing elements. Unidentified assailants pumped three bullets into her head and chest on Tuesday night while she was entering her residence in the city's busy Rajarajeshwari Nagar.

"It was a dastardly attack by organised criminals... I have ordered the constitution of a SIT, which will be headed by an inspector general of police," chief minister Siddaramaiah told reporters.

"She had met me just a week ago but she had not informed me about any threat to her life," he added. The Union home ministry also sought a report from the state government.

Siddaramaiah said he personally examined CCTV videos and that said in the footage, a person wearing a helmet is seen approaching Lankesh, who was opening the

gate to her house to park her car. "This person is seen firing at her, and because of the impact of the shots that were fired at close range she falls back inside her compound," the chief minister added.

Lankesh's murder prompted spontaneous events across 10-odd cities to protest against what the Editors Guild of India called a "brutal assault on the freedom of the press". In Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Pune, Lucknow, Patna and many other cities, ordinary citizens joined writers and journalists in demonstrating against the killing and demanding strict action. "The silencing of a journalist in this manner has dangerous portents for Indian democracy," said the Indian Women Press Corps.

Lankesh's brother, Indrajit, also expressed confidence that the culprits would be traced with the help of CCTV footage and the journalist's mobile phone. "Her mobile phone also contains a lot of evidence and clues... Investigation is underway," he added. Her death brought the spotlight back on three similar killings of rationalists and left-leaning thinkers since 2013 -- Maharashtra's Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, and Karnataka's MM

Kalburgi. In all cases, probes have seen little progress though chief minister Siddaramaiah ruled out an immediate connection between these incidents and Lankesh's murder. Politicians sparred over her death, with Congress president Sonia Gandhi saying she asked Siddaramaiah to ensure swift justice. "Anybody who speaks against the RSS/BJP is attacked & even killed. They want to impose only one ideology which is against the nature of India," said party vice-president Rahul Gandhi. But the BJP attacked the state government, blaming it for delay in the investigations into Kalburgi's murder and demanding a CBI probe into Lankesh's death. "Law and order of Karnataka is the responsibility of the state government, under Congress. Holding the prime minister responsible for it is wrong," said Union minister Nitin Gadkari.

Many journalists and intellectuals in Bengaluru also appeared angry with the state government. "When we asked Siddaramaiah to ensure justice for Kalburgi, he only gave us assurances... Maybe if that murder had been cracked we might not have seen this day," said K Neela, a close associate of Lankesh.

'I am also Gauri': Bengaluru journalist's murder sparks protests, condemnation

The killing of journalist Gauri Lankesh by gunmen outside her residence in Bengaluru "raises alarm" about the state of freedom of expression in the country, Amnesty International India has said.

The killing of journalist Gauri Lankesh provoked outrage and anguish across the country on Wednesday, with thousands protesting what they saw as an effort to silence a critic of Hindutva groups.

Even as police promise to hunt down the assailants who gunned down Lankesh outside her Bengaluru home on Tuesday night, many said they feared the perpetrators of the attack — like so many others — would get away with impunity.

Spontaneous rallies erupted in cities and towns across India on Wednesday. Protesters demanded the government do more to protect free speech in the secular democracy.

In Bengaluru, thousands gathered for a public vigil and the viewing of Lankesh's body at Town Hall.

Weeping, they filed slowly past her glass-covered coffin. Some carried placards that read "I am also Gauri."

Others held banners that said: "You can kill the person; but not her ideas" and "Voices of dissent cannot be stifled by

the barrel of the gun".

Lankesh, 55, was the editor of the independent Kannada-language magazine "Lankesh Patrike". In November, she was found guilty of defaming lawmakers from the Centre's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in a 2008 story. She said the case was politically motivated and vowed to challenge her conviction in a higher court.

Print and electronic journalists in Chennai took out rallies, shouted slogans and demanded the arrest of heLankesh's killers. They said the killing was "an affront on the freedom of expression".

Journalists' organisations Maharashtra, including those in Mumbai, strongly condemned the killing. The Mumbai Press Club (MPC), the Mumbai Marathi Patrakar Sangh (MMPS), the Mantralaya Ani Vidhimandal Vartahar Sangh (MVVS), the TV Journalists Association (TVJA) and others, in separate statements, expressed outrage.

"If this is how the Fourth Estate is going to be treated by the powers that be, while the government looks the other way, it is indeed a black hour for

Indian democracy," said the MPC.

Outraged, prominent journalists from across Delhi gathered at the Press Club of India, and demanded justice amid call for standing up to "forces" trying to the "muzzle" the voices of dissent.

Similar protests were held in H y d e r a b a d , Thiruvananthapuram and Kolkata, among other cities.

The US embassy in New Delhi also condemned the killing.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi said it was a chilling reminder that "intolerance and bigotry is raising its ugly head in our society".

Her son and party vice president Rahul Gandhi, senior leader P Chidambaram, Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh and party spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi also expressed shock at the killing.

The BJP, for its part, accused Rahul Gandhi of trying to make "political capital" out of Lankesh's murder and rejected as "irresponsible and baseless" the allegations linking the killing to the people following its ideology.

Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah also announced a SIT probe, to be headed by inspector general-level officer in the matter, saying his government had an "open mind" to an investigation by the CBI.

Her killing was the latest in a string of similar attacks in recent years targeting writers, artists and scholars who faced a backlash for criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government or the BJP.

"The silencing of a journalist in this manner has dangerous portents for Indian democracy," said Shobhana Jain, the president of Indian Women's Press Corps.

In 2015, scholar Malleshappa M Kalburgi was shot dead at his Bengaluru home, following death threats from right-wing Hindu groups after he criticised idol worship and superstitious beliefs by Hindus.

Earlier that year, writer and anti-superstition crusader Govind Pansare was shot dead while taking a walk with his wife near their home in Maharashtra. And in another daytime attack in 2013, two assailants shot anti-superstition activist Narendra

Dabholkar dead while he was out for a walk in the Maharashtra city of Pune. On Wednesday, the Indian Writer's Forum called Lankesh's murder "a chilling continuation" of the killings of Dabholkar, Pansare and Kalburgi and pledged to continue Lankesh's fight against the "haters of free speech".

Police have arrested a suspect in Pansare's murder who has been released on bail. Another suspect is in custody in the Dabholkar case. But no one has yet been prosecuted in any of the three cases.

"We will continue to speak on her behalf and ours. They cannot silence us all," the Forum said in a statement.

Some said they feared the killing was evidence that the space for democratic opinion was shrinking in India. The message is, "if you do not fall in line, you will be executed", said Ananya Vajpeyi of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. "Gauri Lankesh's murder last night was more than the killing of an individual; it was an assault on the freedom of the press, on the right to dissent and on democratic citizenship."



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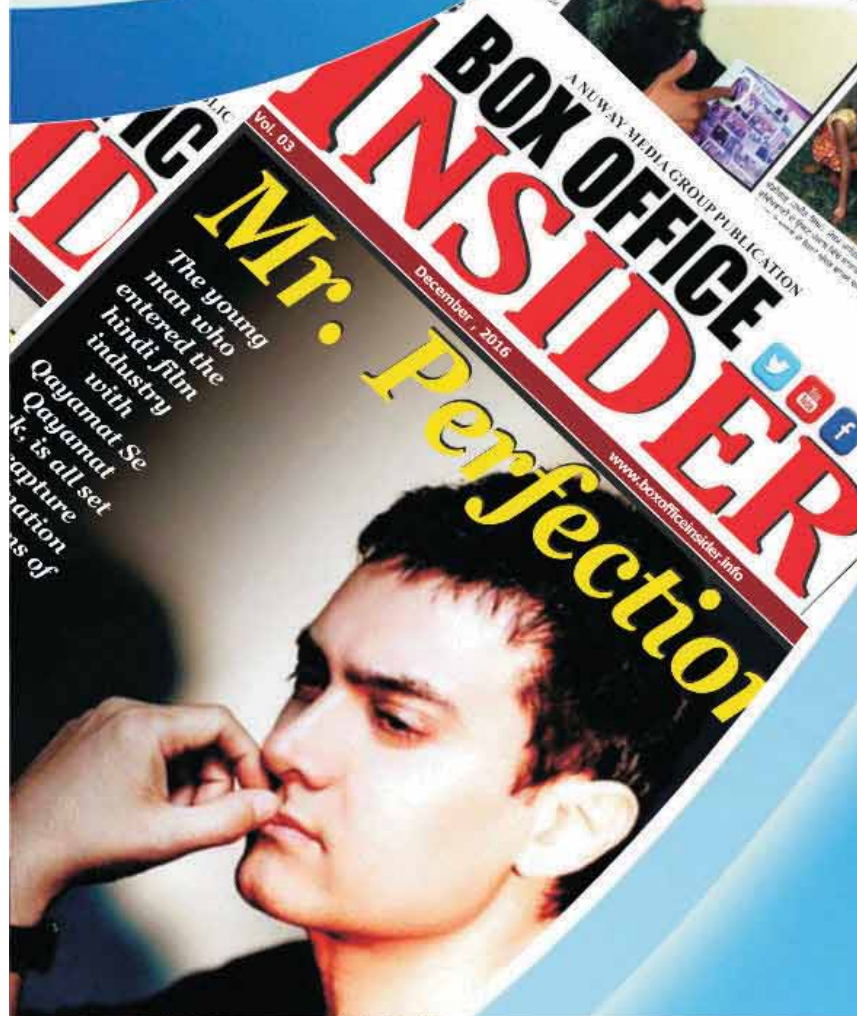
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Namami Gange mission: What Nitin Gadkari must do to clean Ganga

To clean Ganga, Nitin Gadkari must start with rejuvenating and cleaning the tributaries that feed the river



In a bid to give a more concerted push to the Centre's clean Ganga action plan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday gave minister of road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari additional charge of the ministry of water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation. While it is too early to debate on whether Mr Gadkari will manage to turn around this critical and difficult project, if critics are to be believed, we now have minister who is a good administrator but with limited understanding of river systems and ecology replacing a colleague (Uma Bharti) who had some understanding of river

systems but was not a top-of-the line administrator. The 2,525-km river which flows through Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Jharkhand is of key electoral importance to the BJP as it accounts for approximately 167 Lok Sabha constituencies. Here's the challenge that Mr Gadkari has at hand: According to the water resources ministry, a total of 160 projects, worth around Rs 12,500 crore, have been approved under the Namami Gange Mission – the Rs 20,000-crore project for cleaning the river.

Mr Gadkari has his work cut out because the ministry

seems still does not have a clear-cut road map on how to go about it. According to the Namami Gange Mission, rejuvenation implies restoring the "wholesomeness" of the river and that includes three things: Aviral dhara (continuous flow), nirmal dhara (unpolluted flow) and ecological and geological integrity. Yet the ministry it seems is overly focused on nirmal dhara but not aviral dhara,

forgetting that nirmal dhara is only a subset of aviral dhara, not the other way round. To ensure that there is aviral dhara, the focus cannot be only on the main river. The ministry really has to work on the smaller rivers, as it mentions in the integrated Ganga mission, since these feed the main river. What needs to be seen also is how Mr Gadkari balances his new job with his existing interest in water

highways. To ensure water round the year for the monsoon-fed rivers of India for water highways, the government will have to build barrages etc, and that goes against its other aim of aviral dhara.

The other critical issue is of pollution: The business-as-usual strategy won't work. The main problem with sewage treatment plants (STPs) was not only that they could not cope with increasing pressure, but also bad maintenance. The Centre built them but the states and municipalities did not have the wherewithal to maintain them and the contractors made a killing. With two ministries on his plate, Mr Gadkari's hands will be full. But, if he can turn this round, he will be doing not just the BJP but the country a huge service.

Govt freezes bank accounts of more than 2L firms in crackdown on shell companies

The Department of Financial Services has advised banks that they should take immediate steps to put restrictions on bank accounts of such struck-off companies.



The finance ministry on Tuesday restricted directors of around 200,000 dormant companies struck off official records from accessing their firms' bank accounts. The move is a precautionary measure aimed at preventing misuse of the bank accounts, said a government official who spoke on condition of anonymity. A large section of these companies may have failed to comply with the requirement of submitting annual reports and other filings as their businesses had failed to take off. Some of them have come under the scanner of the income-tax department for suspected money laundering and stock price manipulation. The companies have been removed from the records of the Registrar of Companies (RoC) under section 248 of the Companies Act. Reasons include not commencing operations within a year of incorporation or not carrying out any business in the preceding two financial years. Directors of these firms will be able to access the bank

accounts only after they get legally restored by an order of the National Company Law Tribunal, the finance ministry said in a statement. Action will be taken against companies detected to have been used for money laundering and tax evasion. "The department of financial services has, through the Indian Banks Association (IBA), advised all banks that they should take immediate steps to put restrictions on bank accounts of such struck-off companies," said the statement. The department also cautioned banks in dealing with companies that are listed as active in RoC records, but have not been filing annual records disclosing any charge on their assets for the benefit of stakeholders, said the ministry statement. "This is a house cleaning exercise," said Ved Jain, former president of accounting rule-maker Institute of Chartered Accountants of India. A senior banker explained that defunct companies—those that remain only on paper and do not do any business—can also be used to launder money.

The banker explained that transactions that are way beyond the capital of a company

are an indication of possible wrongdoing. Kamlesh Vikamsey, another former president of

ICAI, said most companies removed from records under section 248 of the Companies Act are defunct ones with no business activity and very few of them could be shell companies. Often, entrepreneurs open companies to hold certain assets such as trademarks, but because of business reasons, they fail to start operations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration is cracking down on firms that are engaged in fraud as well as those that are dormant and strain the regulatory system.

Not shied from taking tough decisions: PM Modi in Myanmar

NEW DELHI: In his address to the Indian diaspora in Myanmar on Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitched his government's nation building efforts to realise his vision of a 'New India' free of any kind of discrimination. "We are not merely reforming India but are transforming India. A new India is being built. An India free from poverty, terrorism, corruption, communalism, casteism is being created," PM Modi said at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon. The Prime Minister said the BJP-led NDA government has made crucial executive decisions like demonetization, introducing GST and the surgical

strike on Pakistan without fear or hesitation. "We have not shied away from taking decisions that are tough. For us, the nation is bigger than politics," he said. "People of India have the confidence that India can be transformed and we can break free from some of the evils that entered our systems," he added. PM Modi also commended the Indian community in Myanmar for contributing to their adoptive country's development while also keeping in touch with their roots. He assured them the Indian government has taken a number of measures for the diaspora. On a lighter

note, the Prime Minister recounted how he'd read somewhere that five Bs are the base of India-Myanmar relations, namely: Buddhism, Business, Bollywood, Bharatnatyam and Burma teak. He then observed, "the most important 'B' is missing here and that 'B' is 'Bharosa' (Trust)." It is noteworthy that during his 35-minute address, PM Modi did not allude to the Rohingya Muslim crisis. The Myanmar government is facing international censure for the violence against the minority community, and its repercussions are being felt in India too, in the form of illegal Rohingya refugees

Brics member states must find common ground to balance Western interests

Each member has a different relationship with the US or EU. Yet, it is important to articulate common positions in areas of convergence to balance the norms emerging from the West based solely on trans-Atlantic interests



The just-concluded ninth Brics summit in Xiamen, China, had attracted more than the usual attention because of the preceding month-and-a-half tense standoff between India and China at Doklam, and the sixth nuclear test conducted by North Korea coinciding with its start.

Questions were also raised about continued relevance of Brics since two of its members (India and China) had serious differences, geopolitical rivalries and intensifying competition in the Indian Ocean, South Asia and Southeast Asia; two other members (India and Russia) were seen as somewhat drifting apart with India building closer relations with the United States and Europe, and Russia getting

more linked to China and exploring new opportunities, including military, in Pakistan; and two (South Africa and Brazil) bedevilled by political and economic instability. This was a far cry from the beginning of this century when the concept was promoted as an investment marketing strategy by western financial firms, and taken forward by the five countries also as a check on post-1990 western unipolar dominance.

Despite its detractors, the summit and its outcomes showed that the Brics process remains relevant. The five countries--Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa--account for 42% of the world's population, 23% of global GDP, 17% of

international trade, and nearly 50% of growth in recent past.

Despite the shifts in relative global economic and political standing, especially with increase in China and India's GDP since 2000, there is still a need to work for "a more just, equitable, fair, democratic and representative international political and economic order" as the Xiamen declaration reiterates. Multi-polarity is essential for India to exercise its "strategic autonomy", a declared goal of India's foreign policy.

Support was also expressed for "an open world economy"

since both India and China grew in framework of global growth and rising exports, and both are concerned about the protectionist sentiments in the West, particularly US. Commitment was reiterated to work for "enhancement of the voice and representation of BRICS countries... in global economic governance", including shares and voting rights in the World Bank and IMF, where progress has been made, but much remains to be done. A call was made to fully implement the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change,

threatened by the US disavowal, and importance of "green development and low carbon economy" recognised. Common positions were articulated inter alia on Syria and Afghanistan, the North Korean test "deplored" with call for "peaceful means and direct dialogue".

Issues that these summits have deliberated on remain important in the global context. The first Brics summit (South Africa joined from 2011) was held in 2009, in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. Brics nations usually met and coordinated positions also in the framework of discussions in G20 (grouping of major world economies, set up at initiative of US and France in 2008, stimulated by the financial crisis) and the UN. The common positions they adopted on international trade and finance, global financial architecture and governance, quotas and voting shares in the World Bank and IMF, were important to balance Western perspectives and interests.

Brics 2017: Modi and team took off from China satisfied, but differences remain

One needs to simply scratch the surface of the BRICS bonhomie to find that China's indignation over Doklam is quite raw.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his entourage of India's top diplomats took off from a sunny Xiamen on Tuesday afternoon a fairly satisfied lot after the BRICS summit. The Doklam impasse was over, with New Delhi managing to emerge from it, if not a winner, at least on equal terms despite withdrawing troops; Pakistan-based terror groups were mentioned in the BRICS statement under China's current chair and on Chinese soil, proving to be vindication on India's stand against terrorism and India's pitch for FDI and global governance reforms at the summit was heard.

Earlier in the day, foreign secretary S Jaishankar made it a point not to mention Doklam -- called Donglang by the China -- during his 10-minute interaction with international media on the bilateral meeting between Modi and President Xi Jinping. The closest he went was to mention "situation" -- twice. Neither did the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) spokesperson, Geng Shuang, mention it when he took questions on the military impasse at the regular press briefing in Beijing. Both mentioned the need to have a peaceful and tranquil border. The responses from the two governments

were clearly coordinated to send a message out -- New Delhi and Beijing were trying hard to move forward, leaving behind the military impasse which had threatened to hijack diplomatic ties. But differences remain. One needs to simply scratch the surface of the BRICS bonhomie to find that China's indignation over Doklam is quite raw.

Official news agency Xinhua's report on the Modi-Xi meeting -- their 9th one-on-one -- made it a point to mention the impasse. "Xi and Modi's meeting came following a military stand-off lasting more than two months after more than 270 armed Indian troops with two bulldozers crossed the boundary in mid-June into the Donglang (Doklam) area in the Chinese territory to obstruct infrastructure construction," the Xinhua report said. "On August 28, China confirmed that India had withdrawn personnel and equipment from Donglang, and said its armed forces would strengthen patrolling and defence of the area to resolutely safeguard the country's sovereign security," the report added.

India cannot rule out possibility of two-front war with China and Pakistan, Army chief General Bipin Rawat says

NEW DELHI: India cannot rule out the possibility of a two-front war - with China and Pakistan - despite having credible nuclear deterrence capabilities, said Army chief General Bipin Rawat on Wednesday. Stating that differences with Pakistan seemed to be "irreconcilable", with the country continuing to wage a proxy war against India, Gen Rawat said China too will continue with its efforts to nibble away Indian territory through "salami slicing" and other measures. "As far as the northern adversary (China) is concerned, the flexing of muscles has started... Salami slicing, taking over territory in a very gradual manner, testing our limits of threshold... is something we have to be wary about and remain prepared for situations that could develop into conflicts," said Gen Rawat.

The Army chief's warning that India cannot let down its guard on either of the two fronts came at a seminar here, a week after the over 70-day Doklam standoff between India and China was finally diffused with mutual disengagement and withdrawal of troops+ after intensive diplomatic parleys.

The Indian defence establishment has repeatedly warned of a "collusive threat" from Pakistan and China, who often describe themselves as "all-weather friends". After the Doklam crisis, the assessment is that the People's Liberation Army will not shy away from needling India with "transgressions" -- military parlance for intrusions or shallow probes - all along the 4,057-km Line of Actual Control, especially in places like eastern Ladakh and eastern Arunachal Pradesh, as was earlier reported by media.

GST collection tops Rs 94,000 cr for July from 44 lakh businesses

NEW DELHI: As many as six lakh more businesses have filed returns and paid taxes in last one week, taking maiden revenue collections from GST to about Rs 94,700 crore.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had last week stated that 38.38 lakh businesses had filed their returns and paid Rs 92,283 crore in taxes for the month of July+ - the first month of implementation of independent India's biggest tax reform, the GST. A top official said since then the number of returns filed has gone up

to 44 lakh and over Rs 2,500 crore more has come in as taxes.

The collections so far are from 74 per cent of the total taxpayer base and more people are likely to come in when the final returns are filed in GSTR 1, 2 and 3.

Separately, Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia at an event here said 11 lakh businesses have not yet completed registration for the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

The GST, which unifies more than a

dozen central and state levies like excise duty, service tax and VAT, kicked in from July 1 and requires all tax payers to register on the new tax platform, GST Network.

He said 72.5 lakh people have migrated into the GST regime but only 44 lakh have so far filed returns.

There are six crore private enterprises in the country which also indicates that there is further scope of widening. While Adhia did not indicate the tax collections that have been made

so far, the official said revenue mop up is likely to further go up when all the tax payers file returns. The collections so far are in excess of the finance ministry's internal estimate of Rs 91,000 crore.

The government had earlier this week extended time for businesses to file returns. Now sales return or GSTR-1 for July will have to be filed by September 10 instead of September 5 earlier and purchase returns or GSTR-2 would be filed by September 25 instead of September 10 earlier.

BJP got Rs 461 cr, Congress Rs 186 cr from 'unknown sources' in FY16: Report

The BJP got Rs 461 crore as donations from 'unknown sources' in 2015-16, accounting for nearly 81 per cent of its total income, while the same for the Congress was 71 per cent or Rs 186 crore



unknown sources was Rs 460.78 crore while that of the INC was Rs 186.04 crore.

Income from "unknown sources" refers to those where the source is not declared for donations below Rs 20,000. Such income includes those from sale of coupons, relief fund, miscellaneous income, voluntary contributions and contribution from meetings or morchas, stated the report.

The details of donors of such voluntary contributions are not available in the public domain, it said.

The contribution statements, submitted by the political parties declaring names and other details of donors who contribute above Rs 20,000, are the only known sources of income parties, ADR said.

Among the unknown sources of funding, maximum funds were collected under "voluntary contributions" by the BJP, which amounted to Rs 459.56 crore in fiscal 2016, it said.

The BJP got Rs 461 crore as donations from 'unknown sources' in 2015-16, accounting for nearly 81 per cent of its total income, while the same for the Congress was 71 per cent or Rs 186 crore, a report said on Wednesday.

Citing their tax returns, the report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said the two parties together got Rs 646.82 crore, or over 77 per cent, of their total income from "unknown sources" during the year. Voluntary contributions and coupon sales were the key income sources

for the ruling BJP and the Congress (INC) while the two parties' cumulative total income amounted to Rs 832.42 crore in fiscal 2016, according to ADR, a non-government organisation that works for electoral reforms.

ADR said the total declared income of the BJP and the Congress stood at Rs 570.86 crore and Rs 261.56 crore, respectively, in 2015-16.

The findings are based on an analysis of the two parties' income and expenditure data submitted to the Election Commission of India.

In 2015-16, the BJP's income from

Missing SPG commando from Sonia Gandhi's security traced in Delhi

NEW DELHI: A Special Protection Group commando trained for VIP security covers, who had gone missing on September 1, was traced to a relative's house near Tughlaq Road on Wednesday. He is being questioned about his disappearance.

"We had formed teams to trace down the SPG commando and he was located in the Tughlaq Road area. He had left his mobile phone at home before leaving. He is being debriefed for the time being," said B K Singh, DCP, New Delhi.

Rakesh Kumar had left his home in Dwarka sector-8 on September 1. His family had told the police that Kumar had left to report for duty at 10, Janpath. However, it was found that he was not deputed to a VIP so far.

When he did not report for duty, his family made several calls on his mobile phone. When the multiple calls went unanswered, they initially assumed that he must have been posted in a bad signal zone. When they enquired with his colleagues later they found that he had not joined duty at all.

On September 3, Kumar's father filed a missing person complaint at Tughlak Road police station after which the police started a manhunt for him.

SC asks states to appoint cops in each district to prevent cow vigilantism

Focus on cow protection has risen since the BJP-led government took power three years ago, and several states ruled by the party made laws to punish cow slaughter.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked states to appoint in every district a senior police officer whose job will be to stop violence in the name of cow protection.

Proposing measures to stem what it called growing violence by so-called cow protection groups, the court said the nodal officers would have to ensure that vigilantes did not become a law unto themselves. States have

a week to comply with the court's order.

Focus on cow protection, especially by vigilante groups, has risen since the BJP-led government took power three years ago, and several states ruled by the party made laws to punish cow slaughter.

So-called cow protectors have targeted cattle and meat traders, transporters and even farmers walking their animals —



violence that has killed several people, mostly in BJP-ruled states. Critics accuse the vigilantes of using cows as a pretext to target Muslim and Dalits. The court said states must stop this. "The senior police

officer shall take prompt action and will ensure vigilante groups and such people are prosecuted with promptitude," a three-judge bench led by Chief Justice of India Deepak Mishra said.

It said states would have to

list steps they will take to step up security on highways, where cow vigilantes have stopped vehicles carrying cattle and attacked people. It also asked the central government to explore what actions it can take against the states that fail to prevent such attacks. Advocate Tushar Mehta, appearing for four BJP-ruled states, tried to persuade the court not to issue the order but was overruled. The top court was responding to a private petition from Tushar Gandhi, the great grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, which sought action by states to curb cow-related attacks.



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Goddamn!

He is the man with all the answers, who has the masses and the 'classes' eating out of his hands. He pushes the -envelope of profit and power that piety and fealty draw like nothing else. But this heady combo of cult and clout also makes the -godman's fall as a common criminal just as spectacular.

God and sometimes the voice of God. He plays stress-buster, therapist, family and business advisor, and the man with all the answers: marketing, yoga, TM, world peace, FMCG goodies, miracle healing, salvation from existential dilemmas. He (it's mostly a he) is also often the object of secret envy. Though claiming a touch of other-worldliness, he's so blatantly of this world and totes all the toys that boys like—and in such abundance that it fits most common fantas-ies. And if there's a whiff of cultic fanaticism at one end, at the other he also possesses that ultimate aphrodisiac: political clout. So, it's always a TRP-booster when a bad boy of babadom bites the dust as a common criminal.

Viewers had their fill of exclamations and schadenfreude last week after the judicial gavel came down on

a baba who looks straight out of a comic-strip but has deathly serious aspects to him: on his way to jail, he left a wake of corpses, injured followers, damaged property and a fistful of real heroes. Eyes remained glued to television and mobile screens as the 'baba of bling', Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh 'Insaan', leader of Dera Sacha Sauda (DSS), was first convicted and then sentenced to 20 years, along with fines, for the rape of two of his former devotees. The anonymous letter that finally led to the conviction described the rape scene as out of a Bollywood B-film, with a pistol on the bed and a pornographic film playing on a TV screen.

A full accounting of what went on at DSS may not be possible—the tales are legion. One case that has resurfaced is that of a man from Jaipur whose wife was escorted out of their room at the Sirsa dera one

night and never returned. After futile att-empts to lodge an FIR at a Sirsa police station, he tried from Jaipur. The Rajasthan police eventually filed a closure report with the court and the court was about to rule on the closure, when the rape trial concluded and led to the conviction.

Possibly the first conviction by Indian courts of a godman for raping his followers, 'Insaan' is in fairly q u a s i - d i v i n e territory. Babas of all hues and r e l i g i o u s persuasions

have been branded with sleaze and worse. The common thread is the bouquet of spirituality on offer for the seeker, criminality to lace his pockets, a lust for real estate, a protective entourage, fanatic followers and politicians bidding for their boroughs of influence.

A similar media blitz was last seen exactly four years ago when rape allegations were levelled against Asaram Bapu (real name: Asumal Sirumalani). It's difficult to erase the imagery piqued by news reports of the godman being administered a 'feather test' to rule out any chance of erectile dysfunction bef-ore proceeding with a rape trial. Asaram would allegedly throw a fruit at a female follower to mark her for his women apostles to deliver to his ashram for an 'anushtan'. His son Narayan Sai (also later arrested) had an overactive libido too.

The rape allegations against Kripalu Maharaj, a godman from Allahabad, portrayed a scene no less cheesy, with dialogues like "Tu mera premi, aa gale lag ja" apparently sending female devotees into a hypnotic trance. Later, older female disciples would tell them they had been "blessed with pure devotion". The accounts started flowing only when a case was filed in Trinidad and eventually dropped for want of evidence. In 2011, Kripalu Maharaj's successor, Prakashanand Saraswati, too was accused of molesting a minor. He jumped bail and tampered with the evidence, but was later convicted in absentia with a 280-year sentence. It's believed he made it back to India with a fake passport. In a later account, the survivor described the cultist mentality of her mother, who had told her that she should "just enjoy it".

Why do people flock to the garish Ram Rahim, with his put-on ghetto gangsta vibe, superhero flicks and pop ditties like Love Charger that claim an anthem-like appeal among dev-outs? There are social

reasons—the dera movement's origin in Punjab's Dalit matrix, as an alternative to elite-controlled panthic Sikhism, is now well attested (The Dera Sultanates, p 46). There are also, of course, spiritual reasons. Says Jyotir-maya Sharma, author of several books on Hinduism, "The basic charisma that draws followers to cults is that they can have a two-way communication with God, who otherwise doesn't answer directly to their prayers. Within the ascetic tradition, the godmen are seen as an incarnation of a God."

The social genesis fades into the background as the gurus attain at a stratospheric level of popularity and enter the pop-cult world where new seekers of truth need merely to flip out their smartphone and access social media apps to see posts from their gurus. But a retrospective glance is illuminating. Ram Rahim inherited DSS in 1990 from his guru under a cloud of controversy. Some say DSS's popularity is an index of a government push against the waning Khalistan influence. "He targeted Mazhabi Sikhs and then broadened his base. Gurus know what to offer a consumer and have a cafeteria-like approach with a variety of products from which you can select. Some sell yoga, some meditation and so forth," says Bhavdeep Kang, author of a book on godmen, Gurus.

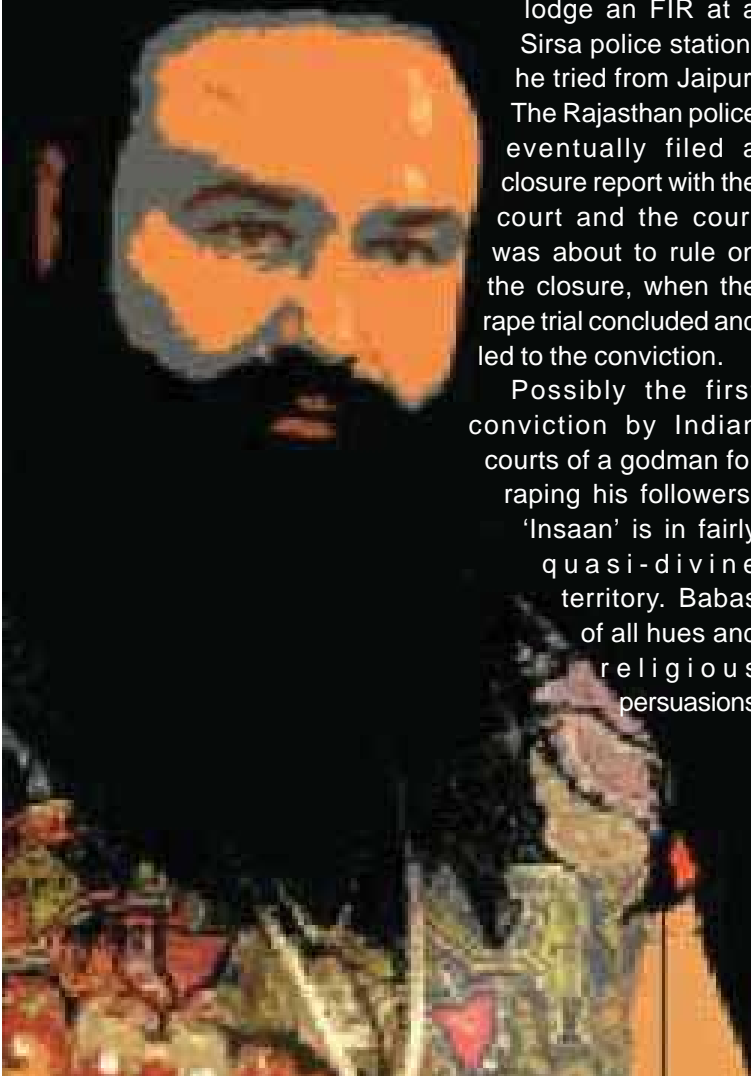
The Sikh radicals describe him as the government's Frankenstein. "Following the green revolution, landless people felt neglected and the SGPC did not evolve any mechanism to include them in mainstream Sikhism. The Dalits found solace, fulfilment of basic needs and a way out of social evils at the deras," says Kanwarpal Singh, spokesperson for the pro-Khalistan group Dal Khalsa. Ram Rahim claimed to have set up 'orphanages' within his ashram, but without any official

clearance. The dera had hitherto barred Haryana's women and child department from inspecting these 'orphanages'. Only when he landed in custody did the department finally write to district authorities who transferred the orphans to state-run institutions. Amongst them were around 20 minor girls. The dera also ran residential schools and colleges within its borders. Police sources claim there was a direct passage from the godman's residence to a girls' hostel.

Latter-day godmen are of course a kind of genetic mutant emerging out of the old sects and reformist movements. Having lost touch with their social context, they soon forfeit the spiritual one too. Flip the pages and there is evidence that every corner of India has recorded tales of babas exploiting their flock, committing crimes with self-proclaimed divine ind-emption and political quid pro quos. This last aspect partic-ularly attracts notice, because it challenges the construct that a godman only feeds the spiritual void or social alienation.

And yet the connection between the spiritual and temporal may be nothing new. "The general foundational assumption is that a godman of whatever variety must be above worldly considerations and politics and must dispense spiritual solace. But since ancient times, godmen have always competed with each other for lay members, donors, benefactors and royal pat-ronage. Many godmen couldn't have formed their cults without royal patronage," says Sharma. "From 19th century on, the modern nation state that developed needed an alignment with spirituality but that cannot be done explicitly. If spirituality becomes a threat to the state, the state will not tolerate it."

But what one gets now is increasingly caricaturish versions—often you can trace





2008, the godman's bodyguards had fired at a crowd of Jat Sikhs at a Mumbai mall, killing Balkar Singh and injuring others. In 2007, a former driver of Ram Rahim had confessed that the godman had allegedly ordered his former accountant Faqir Chand's murder. The trail had gone dry in both for want of witnesses. "This one conviction will change things

the arc even within one entity. A godman named Sat Saidata had set up an ashram at Charkhari in Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh, circa 1900. In this village of Dalits, he offered them his name and they took it on as a surname. The village revered both him and his successors. The fourth successor was more ambitious. In 1999, he convinced a devout old woman to commit sati. "A sati memorial would have drawn more followers. So, the godman was upfront about telling me that he convinced the old -woman, whose alternative was to live at the mercy of daughters-in-law and relatives. He was later arrested," says Sharma.

Or take 'Freezer Baba' Ashutosh Maharaj. Born Mah-esh -Kumar Jha, he had left his home and became an ascetic in 1973. A decade later, he set up an ashram in Noor Mahal near Jalandhar that soon started attracting migrant labourers from Bihar. In January 2014, the godman died, but his trust claimed he had only gone into 'deep meditation' and would eventually come out of it. They brought in a commercial freezer and kept him in it. In mid-2014, when this reporter ventured into the ashram, it took four rounds of frisking and security checks (the last by the Punjab Police). Approaching 'Freezer Baba' or his abode was impossible, the trust's functionaries said. The son, Dilip Jha, eventually approached the courts to cremate the corpse so as to claim succession. But the Divya Jyoti Jagran Sansthan would not let go of the corpse. At stake was an estate worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

The followers of Balak Brahmachari in Calcutta were not as lucky. In 1993, the godman died in a hospital and

his devouts brought back the corpse to his 'Santal Dal' ashram in Sukchar, a village in Hoogly district. The held it hostage for 55 days, claiming he was merely in a trance and an awakening was imminent. The administration served several notices in vain. Eventually, the police broke open the gates one night, confiscated the rotting corpse and took it for cremation.

But the comic aspects divert attention from the real damage potential—the mix of politics, violence and legal immunity. By the 2000s, for instance, Asaram's clout was quite visible. He used to circulate a pamphlet showing chief ministers, union ministers and opposition leaders bending at the waist, palms joined in a salute or touching the godman's feet. "How can such a man be treated like a criminal? Bapu swayam bhagwan hai (he is God himself)," says a lawyer linked to the ashram.

Such absolute faith soon turns murderous. After Asaram and son landed in custody, new cases emerged—witnesses getting bumped off—and old cases surfaced. Ex-followers turned up to depose about murders, disappearances and occult practi-ces. The parents of two boys who disappeared from an ashram in Madhya Pradesh in 2008 found public support. The Supreme Court recently issued notices to all states to set up guidelines for witness protection in India based on a petition by Mahendra Chawla (Sai's former aide) and the fathers of two complainants. Meanwhile, a probe into Asaram's tantric practices lies sealed with the Gujarat government since 2013.

Spurts of violence both seem to come naturally to cults and also occasionally cause their downfall. In 2013, followers of a self-styled Kabirpanthi godman, Rampal Singh,

clashed with Arya Samajis outside his ashram in Rohtak, Haryana. Three people died. A year later, when the Punjab & Haryana High Court issued an arrest warrant, the police could not execute it for two weeks as the godman holed up in his ashram, protected by a human chain of thousands of women followers. A hundred policemen, 70 journalists and 30 others were injured in the clash that followed and Rampal was arrested the next day. The violent streak was in evidence again as his followers disrupted a courtroom while proceedings continued.

Patiala lawyer Harinder Pal Singh Verma, the CBI special prosecutor against Ram Rahim since 2007, once had a car of dera followers hit his vehicle from behind, though he was unhurt. During the trial, a lawyer-follower of the godman also issued a death threat to him while proceedings were on. There are also two murders—of Ranjit Singh, a brother of one of the rape survivors, and of journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati, who had published the rape victim's letter. Singh's father and Chhatapati's son are witnesses so the CBI feels it has a good case. "Ram Rahim's freedom was directly connected with these deaths, so he is being tried for conspiracy," says Verma. Senior advocate Anupam Gupta, as amicus curiae, recalled an army intelligence input that had said former military personnel were imparting weapons training to DSS followers. Noting the impending rape and murder trials, Justice M. Jeyapaul too had said the dera should be searched for weapons and its activities monitored. The apprehension came true—it was all live on national TV on August 26. Similar mayhem



was seen last year in a state-owned horticultural garden in Mathura, UP, where a breakaway faction of the Jai Gurudev cult had set up shop for two years—running a country within a country. The original Jai Gurudev passed himself off as Subhas Chandra Bose, drawing on the popular theory that he was alive. Pankaj Yadav took over from him—and Ramvriksh was a malcontent unhappy at being sidelined.

After failed attempts to enforce a 'Netaji' currency, Ramvriksh gathered followers—mostly old tribals and Dalits from eastern UP and MP—and started marching towards Delhi. Midway, he was given space in Mathura. The commune had a 'national song', a school and other facilities but the core team was secretly stockpiling weapons. When police broke through the garden's wall, a gunbattle raged till someone set fire to the huts and those in them. Thus ended the devotion of some. Those who, as Kang says, "make an investment in the guru's purity even more than the guru", for whom "anything that impugns the purity of the guru is unacceptable". Trouble is, this is a homicidal sort of purity. In Ram Rahim's case, there are older murder cases that may now resurface. In

because the courts have ended the state patronisation of the dera," says Kanwarpal Singh.

While the protective umbrella is there, of course, the ashrams exhibit an enviable GDP rate, often ending like Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who is said to have had Rs 50,000 crore worth properties, or any of the southern spiritual 'empires'. Says activist Sreeni Pattathanam, speaking over phone to Outlook from Kollam, "New-age gurus have corporatised spirituality. They jet-set and live lavishly. They use spirituality to create empires. Political powers and big business are beholden to them. Most of them avail tax benefits as charitable institutions. Their account books should be made public. But governments are afraid to touch them because they are afraid of the devotees who make up a sizeable vote-bank."

And what happens to the dera's mini-empire in Sirsa? The children have control as of now, but after the government and judiciary are done with its assets, there may not be much left. And Ram Rahim's followers may carve out a place in Delhi's Jantar Mantar, squeezing into a tent somewhere between the respective followers of Asaram Bapu and Sant Shri Rampal.

Stateless and unwanted: Who are the Rohingya and why are they fleeing Myanmar?

Human rights organizations describe the systematic targeting of Rohingyas by the Myanmar government and Buddhist nationalists as 'ethnic cleansing'.



Thousands of starving Rohingya refugees are fleeing the latest round of violence in Myanmar, with many being stranded at the Bangladesh border without access to food or medicine.

The United Nations on Sunday said that more than 75,000 Rohingyas have fled Myanmar's Rakhine region since August 25. Satellite imagery shows entire Rohingya villages burnt to the ground in a clash between government forces and armed militants.

The Rohingyas, Myanmar's Muslim minority, are counted among the world's most persecuted communities. Human rights organizations describe their systematic targeting by the Myanmar government and Buddhist nationalists as 'ethnic cleansing', which the country denies.

As the international community once again confronts a looming Rohingya refugee crisis, an explainer on the historical and political reasons that have left the community stateless:

Who are the Rohingyas?

The Rohingyas are Burma's Muslim minority who reside in the northern parts of the Rakhine region (historically known as Arakan), a geographically

isolated area in western Burma, bordering Bangladesh.

The Rohingyas are ethnically, linguistically, and religiously different from Myanmar's dominant Buddhist community. The Rakhine region is Myanmar's least developed region, with more than 78 per cent of households living below the poverty line.

About 1.1 million Rohingyas are said to live in Myanmar's Rakhine region. According to the International Observatory of the Stateless, after the British annexed the Rakhine region in 1824-26, they encouraged migration from India. Successive Burmese governments have maintained that the Rohingyas are illegal migrants from India and Bangladesh and have refused to recognize them as one of the country's 135 ethnic groups.

The Myanmar government's refusal to grant Rohingya citizenship status or any legal documentation has effectively made them stateless, reports Council for Foreign Relations.

In 1962, after General Ne Win's Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) seized power, the military government dissolved Rohingya social and political organisations.

In 1982, a citizenship law by

the military junta effectively stripped Rohingyas of their Burmese nationality and basic rights, rendering them stateless. Along with the Rohingyas, an unknown number of Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) who reside in Burma are also stateless, though they have lived in the country for generations. According to the Indian government's estimates, as many as 2.5 million PIOs could be living in Burma.

In the 1990s, the Rohingya Muslims were issued identity cards, known as 'white cards', categorizing them as temporary citizens.

In 2014, the government held its first census in 30 years, backed by the United Nations. It initially permitted the Muslim minority group to identify as 'Rohingya', but backtracked in the face of opposition by Buddhist nationalists.

The Rohingyas have been the targets of violence perpetrated by both the state as well as Buddhist nationalist groups. They are denied basic rights, restrictions are placed on marriage, employment, religious choice. Coupled with this, the abysmal poverty and lack of development in the Rakhine region had fuelled Rohingya migration.

But an unparalleled refugee crisis has been brewing since 2012, when Buddhist nationalists burned Rohingya homes and killed more than 280 people and displaced tens of thousands in retaliation for the alleged rape and killing of a Buddhist woman.

According to the International Organization for Migration, more than eighty-eight thousand migrants took to sea from the Bay of Bengal between January 2014 and May 2015. The Rohingyas often pay people smugglers to find them a way outside the country. The resulting boat journeys are dangerous, and have claimed hundreds of lives.

After attacks on border posts in October 2016, the ruling government, helmed by Nobel Laureate Aung Sang Suu Kyi, intensified its crackdown on Rohingyas. The government forces were accused of arson, rape, extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses that they

denied.

Human Rights Watch has periodically released satellite imagery showing wide-spread fire-related destruction in Rohingya villages. The latest release on September 2, 2017 estimates that 700 buildings were burned down.

Where are they migrating to?

According to the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 123,000 Rohingya refugees have fled western Myanmar since August 25.

Bangladesh hosts the maximum number of Rohingya refugees in the world. The country was already hosting nearly 34,000 registered Rohingya refugees in Kutupalong and Nayapara camps, as well as several hundred thousand undocumented Rohingya living in makeshift sites and local villages. Bangladesh, however, considers Rohingyas illegal infiltrators and plans to relocate them and refuses to take in any more refugees.

Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia also host Rohingya refugees. In 2015, Rohingyas fleeing bouts of violence were stranded on their boats as country after country refused to take them in, earning them the title of 'boat people'.

What is India's stance on the Rohingyas?

India is home to approximately 40,000 Rohingyas, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs. About 16,500 Rohingya living in India are registered with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), but their actual numbers are much higher. The UNHCR says Rohingya refugees are spread across six locations in India — Jammu, Nuh in Haryana's Mewat district, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur and Chennai.

The Indian government has issued Long Term Visas to 500 Rohingyas, which will help them open bank accounts and secure admission in schools.

While New Delhi had accepted Rohingya refugees, it has been wary of taking a strong stance on the issue, fearing China's influence on Myanmar. K Yhome of the Observer Research Foundation who has studied India-Myanmar relations closely says, "India's position is that this is an internal affair of Myanmar."

On August 9, 2017, the minister of state for home affairs, Kiren Rijiju, told parliament that the government has issued detailed instructions for deportation of illegal foreign nationals including Rohingyas.

Rohingya Muslims: stateless and fleeing

The Rohingya minority

- Around one million Rohingyas live in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state
- Buddhist-majority Myanmar see the Rohingya as illegal Bangladeshi immigrants
- The Rohingyas are denied citizenship and face restrictions on movement and work
- Over 120,000 trapped in internal displacement camps since sectarian violence erupted in 2012

Military crackdown

- In Oct 2016, military launched a security crackdown to hunt members of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) who staged deadly raids on police posts in Rakhine
- UN investigators believe hundreds may have died in the crackdown, 87,000 refugees fled from Oct 2016 to Aug 2017

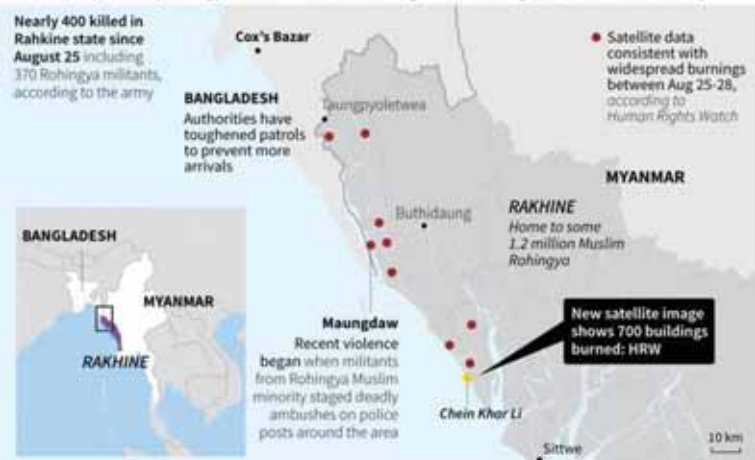
Ongoing violence

- On Aug 25, ARSA militants staged new deadly ambushes on police posts in Rakhine
- 123,600 Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh since Aug 25: UN
- At least 400 killed in clashes, including 370 militants: army

Displaced Rohingya refugees near Ukhia, Bangladesh, Sept 4
AFP Photo: K.M. Asad

Myanmar Rohingya crisis

123,600 people, mostly Rohingya Muslims, have entered Bangladesh since August 25, the UN said Tuesday



Before Daddy: Here's why Bollywood and underworld refuse to break-up

Satya, Vaastav, Once Upon a Time in Mumbaai... and now Daddy. As discussion shifts to whether underworld holds relevance anymore, one thing is for sure – the cinema on the subject sure does.



Satya, Company, Vaastav, Once Upon a Time in Mumbaai, Agneepath... and now Daddy. It is often asked why Bollywood is obsessed with underworld. The role of a gangster is a de riger before you earn your stripes and establish yourself in the industry. However, dig a little and the relationship – at its roots – is symbiotic. Just as the industry came to be obsessed with crime syndicates, the Mumbai underworld was obsessed with the glitz, glamour and fame that only movies could provide them.

With 80s and 90s came underworld's increased interest in the industry. What started as summoning a star to meet

friends or family, or probably be a part of a wedding soon turned into a business. Underworld started investing money in films – picking distribution rights of films and even financing them. Where money power didn't work, coercion came handy. A phone call from the Bhai could make a recalcitrant top star say yes to films and threats could get film rights.

The photos of top underworld bosses with superstars of the era are no secret. It is said that Chota Shakeel's man Rizvi went to film set several times with a briefcase full of cash, asking to meet the director and demanding that he should make

a film for them. In fact, one of the top actors today — who was just starting out then — hid in his vanity van for hours to escape the aide of an underworld boss who was waiting for him on film sets. The lack of transparency in the industry's financial matters made it a perfect way to launder money.

Whether it was Dawood Ibrahim or Abu Salem, no one was immune to the charms of the industry. Making it their business was the logical next step. In fact, author S Hussain Zaidi has famously said that don Abu Salem wanted only 'fame, fame, fame'. And what could be a better way of grasping it than the glamour industry? Salem, who was apparently obsessed with his good looks, was fascinated with actor Sanjay Dutt and wanted to meet him. He reportedly met the actor when he delivered two AK-47 rifles to the actor before 1993 bomb blasts. While Salem has denied this, it is said that Salem was so overwhelmed after meeting the actor that he could not stop talking about it for

days. Dawood Ibrahim, meanwhile, was a fan of Rishi Kapoor. The actor wrote in his autobiography how he was invited by the gangster to his Dubai villa to have tea. Spotted by one of Dawood's men at the airport, Rishi was handed a phone and told 'Bhai baat karenge' in the 80s. He was then invited and Dawood served the actor and his friends tea and biscuits. This was much before the 1993 bomb blasts and Dawood becoming India's most wanted.

While the grasp of underworld gradually lessened with the advent of studio system, the industry's obsession with these larger-than-life stories didn't. The smugglers of gold, diamonds and sundry other items of the 70s morphed into dreaded mob bosses and the industry's portrayal of them gave them broad strokes of glamour.

The makers got readymade stories replete with ruthless hunger for power, money in the underworld sags. And one particular man, Dawood

Ibrahim, figuring in most of them. The fact that most of these ganglords came from slums or the underbelly of various cities added yet another layer of romanticism to the narrative. Mahesh Manjrekar's Vaastav was based on Chota Rajan's life and was a huge success. Ram Gopal Varma understood the pull of these stories and delivered some of his best works such as Satya and Company. Shootout at Lokhandwala, Shootout at Wadala, Once Upon a Time in Mumbai and D Day are just a few of the successful films that followed in the genre. Coming up next are Arjun Rampal-starrer Daddy where he plays Arun Gawli – yet another Mumbai don who came out of nowhere to rule his own kingdom – and Haseena Parker where Shraddha Kapoor will play Ibrahim's sister. Even as discussion has shifted to whether underworld holds relevance anymore, one thing is for sure – the cinema on the subject sure does.

Blue Whale threat: Real or imaginary ?

The Blue Whale challenge — a suicide game where the player is given various tasks by an administrator over 50 days, ranging from isolation to self-harm and ultimately suicide — is not really new



With many questions regarding Blue Whale leading to suicide by children still remaining unsolved and unresolved, the big question arises if this threat is real or imaginary? Is it mere mass hysteria? Is it sensationalism spread by cyber world? Or it is real threat that is tainting the young minds and leading them to commit suicides? There are more questions as if Blue Whale is an app or a website? Where are the challenges coming from? Who is hosting the service or app? What are the end points? Who is the

creator? Is there any forensic evidence from devices acquired from suspected victims of the game? Is there any communication channel that can be intercepted? On August 11, the Government of India directed Google, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Microsoft and Yahoo to immediately remove the links to the online game, which has led to alleged suicide of children in India and other countries. The Government has made it clear that it will take action against social media platforms and their operators, if they fail to

remove links to Blue Whale Challenge, which has allegedly led children to commit suicide in the country. The directions have come from none else than the Law and Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. "People are committing suicide due to Blue Whale game. Clear instructions have been issued to all the technology platforms that they must delink this game immediately because under the Indian IT ecosystem, no initiative shall be permitted which provokes young boys to commit suicide. This is plainly unacceptable," Prasad said. "I appeal to all the platforms to abide by the direction which the IT Ministry has given. It is important and the violation will be viewed very seriously," the Minister observed. Blue Whale Challenge is an online game that is believed to have originated in Russia, where several teenagers have killed themselves over it. The game starts by asking participants to draw a blue whale on a piece of paper,

and later onto their own flesh. The game advances innocuous challenges at first, such as waking up at unusual hours, or watching horror movies alone. However, the challenges get progressively dangerous. The administrator usually set the tasks over 50 days. The last task involves suicide. Although Russia has the highest victims, 'The Blue Whale Challenge' has also believed to have claimed lives in the UK, India and the US. The name comes from the phenomenon of beached whales, a process by which the mammals strand themselves on a beach.

Blue Whale Challenge gives certain tasks to its players for a period of 50-days and the final task leads to suicide. The player is also asked to share photos after finishing every task. The Blue Whale challenge is an alleged 'internet/social media game' wherein the participants are given a series of tasks to complete over a period of time. The alleged final task is suicide. The game which is

seemingly prevalent in many parts of the world is said to have originated from Russia. The creator of the game, Philipp Budeikin, was sentenced to three years of jail by a court in Russia for having incited at least 16 schoolgirls to kill themselves. He is reported to have told investigators when he was arrested that he was "cleansing society". The game asks its participants to perform 50 tasks, starting from mundane ones and culminating in taking one's life. The participants are told to record all their tasks, which include waking up at odd hours, inflicting harm on one's body, listening to psychedelic rock and so on. There is still no clarity as to how participants 'play this game'. While some say it might be an app, there are rumours that it can be done via social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram etc. The game also allegedly involves carving out shapes on one's skin and other forms of self-mutilation.

Laying BRICS On China Road

Spin doctors in India and China have been on an overdrive since August 28 to explain to their respective audiences on how the stand-off at Doklam, where soldiers of the two sides faced each other off, raising the spectre of war between the two Asian giants, was resolved amicably without a single shot being fired.

But, more importantly, they had to explain as to how the resolution was reached without making any major compromise from the two countries' stated positions.

India had moved into Doklam, a Bhutanese territory, after China started constructing a road there in violation of existing agreements. New Delhi felt that the road was designed to give China easy access to the 'Siliguri Corridor'—a narrow passage that connects the northeastern part of the country with the mainland—posing a serious security threat. China, which claims Doklam as part of its own territory, on the other hand, insisted that India vacate the land immediately, warning that otherwise Beijing will have to take recourse to measures to forcibly evict Indian soldiers.

Despite the belligerent statements that poured out of various sections in China, negotiations between the two sides, especially among its senior diplomats and officials, continued in an attempt to reach an amicable solution. India, surprisingly, showed admirable equanimity throughout the crisis, deciding not to match China word-for-word in raising the temperature further.

Understandably, the resolution to the standoff on August 28 was reached only after both sides agreed to adopt a more flexible position, while agreeing to leave the interpretations of how it was settled to their respective spin doctors. For India, the bottomline was an assurance from the Chinese that road construction activities at Doklam will stop. For the Chinese, it was immediate withdrawal of Indian soldiers. Since Indian troops came to Bhutan's aid to prevent the road construction, its cessation meant New Delhi's objective was achieved, paving the way for its withdrawal from

Doklam.

While several lessons will be drawn by both India and China from the Doklam experience, a particular decision of India's appears to have played a key role in finding an early resolution to the stand-off at the land near the India--China-Bhutan trijunction. This had to do with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to participate in the forthcoming BRICS Summit, scheduled to be held in Xiamen, China, from September 3-5.

Incidents of border stand-off are occurring at more frequent intervals since 2013. It shows that the existing mechanism to manage the border issue is not working.

"This was a very important and significant decision on India's part," says former MEA secretary N. Ravi. "It clearly shows we have now risen above the dispute mode," he adds.

A debate had been raging in the Indian establishment on whether PM Modi should boycott the BRICS Summit to show India's displeasure over China's growing belligerence. This option, predictably, was being championed by the hardliners. However, the pragmatists felt Modi should not boycott the Summit. Earlier this year, India had boycotted the One-Belt-One-Road Summit in China—a toweringly ambitious initiative close to Chinese President Xi Jinping's heart, something he is keen on being a success. But India stayed away from the Summit, opposed as it was to the proposed China-Pakistan-Economic Corridor, which is to pass through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, territory that India claims to be under Pakistan's "illegal occupation".

Since then, Modi and Xi have met twice—once at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Astana, Kazakhstan, where India, along with Pakistan, became a full member, and the second time on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit in Hamburg. The last meeting was more significant, as it took place when Indian and Chinese soldiers were facing each other at Doklam. But the impending 9th BRICS Summit was more important, as this was the first such meeting being hosted by Xi since he became president.

A boycott of the Summit would have made it clear that much of India's anger was directed against Xi and, moreover, it would also have disappointed other member-nations, particularly Russia and its President Vladimir Putin, who is keen that BRICS remain a successful forum. Significant as it is, Modi's decision to participate in the BRICS Summit clearly conveys two things: India's commitment to BRICS and to play a part in the grouping of which it has been a founding member; and second, to make it clear to China that despite outstanding issues, New Delhi was keen to resolve them amicably, through negotiations. At the same time, it also wanted to stress on areas where India and China can work together, from which both can benefit.

But despite such positive signals issuing forth from New Delhi, there are some who caution about the emerging scenario and the likely trajectory of Sino-Indian relations. "Doklam clearly shows how relations between the two sides are now far worse than what they were some years back," says military historian Srinath Raghavan, a senior fellow at Delhi's Centre for Policy Research.

According to him, incidents of border standoff between Indian and Chinese soldiers have been occurring more frequently since 2013—Daulat Beg Oldi, Depsang, Doklam—than they were in the past. These clearly show that the existing mechanism to keep the

unsettled boundary between the two sides peaceful and tranquil is clearly not working. "Doklam should be seen as a warning about where Sino-Indian relations are heading," adds Raghavan.

A major worry for Raghavan vis-a-vis the Doklam episode and its resolution is the prevailing mood in India. He feels that because of commentaries and analyses, most Indians believe that it was China that withdrew and looked for a compromise because it realised that a possible war would not work out in its favour. The fact that most of these policy-planners in Delhi believe that India's 'firm resolve' to stand up to China was something hailed by most countries in South Asia and elsewhere, was a dangerous interpretation. "This is likely to make Indian policy planners more reckless," he warns. Irrespective of whether the Doklam episode will lead to a cavalier attitude on India's part or not, there is no doubt that sections in India that had always been suspicious of China and continues to use the 1962 prism to see the evolution of future Sino-Indian developments, have only hardened their position after the recent crisis. "India-China relations are now more seen as a zero-sum game than as one where they can cooperate with each other for mutual benefit," says Raghavan. He argues that any development that turns out to be in India's advantage is seen with suspicion by China and those that benefit Beijing are resented by New

Delhi. These are views shared by others as well. Recently, Indian army chief General Bipin Rawat warned that incidents of stand-off between Indian and Chinese soldiers may become more frequent along the LAC in future. Yet, despite scepticism about BRICS' future from certain quarters, it continues to be a grouping useful not only for the development and growth of the five member-countries, but also a large number of developing economies in Asia and Africa. Besides, BRICS continues to be a useful platform for Indian and Chinese leaders to meet bilaterally to iron out many of their outstanding issues and help the five members to collectively take positions on a host of issues that affect them all. But it is the forthcoming meeting between PM Modi and President Xi on the BRICS sideline that is being eagerly awaited by people in the subcontinent and beyond. Having amicably resolved the Doklam stand-off, expectations have also risen in different quarters that the two leaders may now direct their officials to travel down a path that makes Sino-Indian relations more stable, peaceful and productive. Doklam didn't happen in a vacuum; one of a series of crisis, it caught the world's attention and prompted the Chinese to unleash its usually well-guarded belligerence. Its lessons must not be confined only to cynical conclusions of strategic manoeuvrability. In the deft handling of its resolution may lie the seeds of lasting peace.

Journalist Gauri Lankesh's killing India ranks 136 out of 180 countries in press freedom

Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark took the first four positions in the rankings. The United States was at the 43rd position. Large swathes of sub-Saharan Africa, including dictator-ruled Zimbabwe, performed better than India. This came after a string of journalist deaths and murders, especially in small-town India, including Hindustan reporter Rajdeo Ranjan in Bihar last year. Two years ago, a similar study by Reporters Without Borders termed India as among the three most dangerous countries for journalists in 2015. "With Hindu nationalists trying to purge all manifestations of 'anti-national' thought from the national debate, self-censorship is growing in the mainstream media," the report from media watchdog Reporters without Borders said. India was ranked 133 last year. The report mentioned that journalists were increasingly targets of online smear campaigns and threats. Prosecutions are also used to gag journalists who are overly critical of the government, with some prosecutors invoking Section 124a of the penal code, under which "sedition" is punishable by life imprisonment. "No journalist has so far been convicted of sedition but the threat encourages self-censorship." The watchdog was also critical of a social media and internet gag in Kashmir and said that in the absence of any "protective mechanism, coverage of sensitive regions continued to be 'very difficult'. China was 176th among 180 countries and was described as the "world's leading prison for citizen journalists". North Korea was at the bottom of the index.

Middlemen In God's Market

We want to believe it is mass hypnosis. We want to believe he is just a teacher, or a good organiser, or a marketing man, or a manipulator and a hypnotist, or a performer, but we know that all teachers, organisers, marketers, manipulators, hypnotists and performers cannot be gurus, or rockstars. Some people just connect. And the connection is inexplicable, even to the guru, who may use words like 'transcendent' and 'God' and 'soul' and 'consciousness' to explain it.

Perhaps it has something to do with evolution. The animal needs to be part of a pack or a herd. We submit to the queen bee, or the alpha male, and feel safe, as decisions and responsibility are outsourced. We are happy to be part of a larger picture, anchored in the guru rockstar. He, or she, makes us feel connected to something larger than the visible, measurable, controllable reality that fails to impress, or empower us. The West, with its discomfort with plurality, rejected multiple gods,

multiple gurus and multiple prophets. China too does not like any challenge to the Emperor, and hates separating temporal and the spiritual. But in India, multiple gurus have thrived along with multiple gods, for divinity was seen as manifesting in various ways: rock, plants, animals, geometrical patterns and humans too. Today, with the rise of Pax Americana—a mixture of capitalism and Protestant aversion for singular authority—spirituality has become a

marketplace. Here there are many buyers and sellers: a variety of interpreters of God's message for the religious, or Buddha's message for the secular, or for the new-age seekers something to do with mysticism, yoga and altered states of consciousness. Each one is openly branding and stocking themselves in ret-ail outlets. Most begin with rational (or rationalised) approaches. But then the thunderbolt strikes. Some become rockstars, where rationality ceases to making

sense, like a viral meme whose viral-ness defies explanation and reproducibility. Until we accept the animal side of humanity, and that imagination establishes an irrationality that is part of the human condition, and until we outgrow our need to control and predict every phenomenon, we will never be able to handle the power of these spiritual rockstars, who themselves are clueless of the source of their power, and so very often corrupted by the agency it offers.

The Way to Make North Korea Back Down

This would include levying hefty fines on the Chinese banks that, unwittingly or otherwise, launder money for Pyongyang and facilitate dollar transactions on behalf of North Korean entities. A useful ripple effect from such action can be expected. In the past, China's biggest financial institutions have voluntarily ceased transfers with banks, both North Korean and Chinese, that have been designated by the United States as involved in money laundering.

In June, the United States identified the Bank of Dandong as a money-laundering concern. Deprived of plausible deniability, Beijing has neither protested vociferously nor retaliated. The same was true when the United States charged four Chinese nationals affiliated with the Dandong Hongxiang Industrial Development Company last year with money laundering; Beijing responded by arresting the head of the company and several other executives.

The test for President Donald Trump will be to refrain from any impulse to relax sanctions prematurely when faced with the next major provocation by Pyongyang. And it will come. North Korea sees itself as a revolutionary state that cannot live as the permanently inferior Korean nation.

Since the Kim regime is governed by the need to dominate South Korea by threatening the region with nuclear annihilation, its

willingness to use its lethal powers will only grow unless it is confronted by the specter of bankruptcy and the consequent destabilization of its rule. While reassuring American allies South Korea and Japan of the United States' steadfast commitment to their defense, the Trump administration should also persuade Seoul and Tokyo not to fall for the same trap of settling for an illusory peace in the face of Pyongyang's intimidation.

Rather than issuing empty

threats or blaming others, the Trump administration should work on becoming a credible financial threat to the Kim regime. Only then will the United States be in a position to negotiate from a position of strength, an entirely feasible feat that has nevertheless eluded every administration to date. Only then will the Trump administration have offset the futility of American diplomacy over the past quarter-century by the kind of resolute action that will save lives.

Facebook is gearing up to make money from WhatsApp

with a global base of customers, like airlines, e-commerce sites, and banks," according to the blog post. WhatsApp has already started a pilot program that would feature a green badge next to a business contact, indicating that the business was verified by the messaging service. "We do intend on charging businesses in the future," Chief Operating Officer Matt Idema told the Journal in an interview. Reuters had reported in March that a potential revenue source for WhatsApp was to charge businesses that want to contact customers, citing company documents. Started in 2009, WhatsApp was acquired by Facebook for an eye-popping \$22 billion in 2014. While WhatsApp had little revenue at the time of the deal, the purchase price was slightly more than the market value of Sony Corp. Facebook has not focused on WhatsApp so far. The social network had started showing ads inside its Messenger app in July to further monetize the chat service. Idema declined to describe the paid features or say when they would make their debut, according to the report. "We don't have the details of monetization figured out," he told the Journal.

How We Killed Expertise

His own Cabinet and picking a radio talk-show host with no background in science or agriculture for the top science position in the Department of Agriculture. In the far less grand homes of ordinary American families, knowledge of every kind is also under attack. Parents argue with their child's doctor over the safety of vaccines. Famous athletes speculate that the world might actually be flat. College administrators ponder dropping algebra from the curriculum because students keep failing it. This is all immensely dangerous, not only to the well-being of individual citizens, but to the survival of the United States as a republic. How all this happened, and why it threatens our democracy, is a complicated story. Even Alexis de Tocqueville took note of the American distrust of intellectuals in the 19th century, and it only deepened with the social and political traumas of the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, globalization and technological advances have created a gulf between people with enough knowledge and education to cope with these changes, and people who feel threatened and left behind in the new world of the 21st century. As a result, the implicit social contract between educated elites and laypeople—in which professionals were rewarded for their expertise and, in turn, were expected to spread the benefits of their knowledge—is fraying. Americans live increasingly separate lives based on education and wealth, part of a decades-long "big sort." What is qualitatively different today is that ordinary citizens seem increasingly confident in their views, but no more competent than they were 30 or 40 years ago. A significant number of laypeople now believe, for no reason but self-affirmation, that they know better than experts in almost every field. They have come to this conclusion after being coddled in classrooms from kindergarten through college, continually assured by infotainment personalities in increasingly segmented media that popular views, no matter how nutty, are virtuous and right, and mesmerized by an internet that tells them exactly what they want to hear, no matter how ridiculous the question. It is easy to dismiss hostility toward experts as a function of a poor education, but that's inaccurate. The affluent, educated parents of Marin County in California, after all, led the way on the anti-vaccine madness. "Dilbert" cartoonist Scott Adams, who holds an MBA, has a large audience for his attacks on experts, including his astonishing claim that there's nothing a president can't master in a conversation with a specialist in an hour.

Who is Hardeep Singh Puri?

An alumnus of Hindu College, Delhi University, Singh briefly took teaching as a lecturer at St. Stephen's college, Delhi, before joining IFS. During the JP movement, he actively participated as a student leader.

In today's Cabinet reshuffle he was inducted as a Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

'Citizen who speaks freely no longer safe': Gauri Lankesh's murder sparks outrage

Talking to media in New Delhi, Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi said: "Anybody who speaks against the ideology of the BJP-RSS is pressured, beaten, attacked and even killed." "It is very sad that a journalist against fanaticism was killed. The entire country is with her. Truth cannot be suppressed," he added. Lankesh was a known critic of the right-wing and had attacked the Modi government over its policies and politics. She had been convicted in a defamation case filed by BJP lawmaker Prahlad Joshi over a 2008 article. Ministers from the ruling party condemned the attack on Wednesday, asking for a speedy investigation. "Terrible news from Bengaluru about the heinous murder of Gauri Lankesh. I condemn all acts of violence against journalists," said sports minister Rajyavardhan Rathore. Minister of information and broadcasting Smriti Z Irani also condemned the attack.



The Deep State Is Real

But it might not be what you think.

At a conference in mid-July, Barack Obama's CIA director, John Brennan, remarked that executive branch officials have an "obligation ... to refuse to carry out" outrageous or anti-democratic orders from President Donald Trump. The comment quickly caught the attention of Rush Limbaugh, who saw nothing short of a threat to the republic. "He practically called for a coup!" the radio host bellowed on the air a few days later, warning of a plot orchestrated by "embeds in the deep state at the Pentagon, State Department, various intelligence agencies."

Embeds in the what? A year ago, the term "deep state" was the province of Edward Snowden acolytes and fans of paperback espionage thrillers. Today, Limbaugh takes it for granted that his millions of listeners know what it meant.

The deep state entered America's national discourse in 2017 with the feeling of an already familiar character, ready to assume a starring role as hero or villain—depending on how you feel about Trump. It's easy to dismiss the idea as the breathless complaint of a frustrated president who hasn't learned to work the system. But it's not that simple: There really is a kind of cabal that operates independently of elected officials in Washington—even if it's not quite what Trump or his conservative allies think it is.

Political scientists and foreign policy experts have used the term deep state for years to describe individuals and institutions who exercise power independent of—and sometimes over—civilian political leaders. They applied it mainly to developing countries like Algeria, Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey, where generals and spies called the real shots in nominally democratic societies and replaced elected leaders when they saw fit. (Turkey and Egypt have recently moved to more overt security-state dictatorships, in which the deep state is the only state.)

For a generation, the people who saw something like an American deep state—even if they rarely called it that—resided on the left, not the right. The 9/11 attacks triggered the rapid growth of an opaque security and intelligence machine often unaccountable to the civilian legal system. In the 2000s, the critique focused on a "war machine" of military and intelligence officials, defense contractors and neoconservative ideologues who, in some versions, took orders directly from Vice President Dick Cheney. In the Obama era, the focus shifted to the eerie precision of "targeted killings" by drones, and then the furor over Snowden, the ex-National Security Agency contractor whose 2013 leaks exposed the astonishing reach of the government's surveillance. "There's definitely a deep state," Snowden told the Nation in 2014. "Trust me, I've been there."

Even measured academics began to describe a dual-state system in the United States, the focus of Tufts University international law professor Michael J. Glennon's 2014 book, *National Security and Double Government*. Glennon observed that Obama had campaigned against Bush-era surveillance and security policies in 2008 but acquiesced to many of them as president—suggesting a national-security apparatus that holds sway even over the elected leaders notionally in charge of it.

Enter Donald Trump. After January 2017, the unaccountable string-pulling bureaucracy suddenly came to seem, especially to liberals, less a sinister cabal than a crucial check on a president determined to blow up the system we had come to take for granted. Trump was openly hostile to much of the government he now ran, and its institutions began fighting back, sometimes in public ways. They did so with a combination of the severe (leaks

of Trump's conversations with foreign leaders) and the absurd (critical tweets from federal accounts like that of the National Park Service). To Trump and his allies, the new president is now the victim of conspiratorial bureaucrats threatened by a president trying to "drain the swamp." In August, after Environmental Protection Agency employees alerted the New York Times to an EPA report on climate change they feared would be quashed, a headline at the conservative Breitbart News website shouted: "Deep State Teams with Fake News." Even more anxiety swirls around classified information: In July, the Republican-led Senate Homeland Security Committee released a report that found the Trump administration was being hit by national security leaks "on a nearly daily basis" and at a far higher rate than its predecessors encountered. (After the report was picked up in the conservative media, Trump's son Donald Jr. tweeted a link to it. "If there ever was confirmation that the Deep State is real, illegal & endangers national security, it's this," he wrote.)

Thus have the old battle lines flipped. Conservatives who once dismissed concerns about political abuse of NSA surveillance now complain about intelligence leaks linking Trump associates to the Kremlin; liberals who not long ago were denouncing the CIA for its unaccountable power have discovered new affection for the heroes at Langley who might uncover impeachment-worthy dirt.

Beneath the politics of convenience is the reality that a large segment of the U.S. government really does operate without much transparency or public scrutiny, and has abused its awesome powers in myriad ways. And sometimes the government bureaucracy really does exercise power over the commander in chief: Obama felt that the military pressured him into sending more troops to Afghanistan than he had wanted, while

an inexperienced George W. Bush was arguably led to war by a bipartisan cadre of national security insiders who had long wanted to take out Saddam Hussein.

Even the Trump critique about the deep state in revolt, however exaggerated, is worth consideration. Hillary Clinton voters might delight in the classified material gushing forth about the president's men—but its release can be criminal. (In May, Brennan called the intelligence leaks "appalling.") Yes, the president could be covering up misdeeds of his own, raising thorny ends-and-means questions. But Trump haters should consider the precedent—and how they would feel if, say, a President Kamala Harris were to enter the White House in 2021 and be hobbled by a similar blizzard of leaks from intelligence officials who consider her soft on terrorism.

Whether any of this means there is a deep state in America depends on your definition. Powerful bureaucrats with access to government secrets and trusted media friends certainly do try to influence presidents from the shadows. But in Washington, at least, their views and goals are not monolithic. And unlike their counterparts in the developing world, they do tend to execute the orders they're given by the president, however grudgingly—and are committed to upholding the rule of law.

Some of the subversion and leaks Trump has faced are merely federal employees defending their turf from budget cuts and bone-headed ideas. That's far from the way the right-wing blogger Mike Cernovich described matters in August, when he told fellow conspiracy theorist and talk-radio host Alex Jones that the deep state would turn, literally, murderous: "Trump will be killed. ... They're going to kill us, they're going to kill him, they're going to kill everybody."

Ghazipur disaster: Stop our cities from becoming choked with garbage



Apart from the fact that they are dangerous and dumping garbage like this causes the leaching of dangerous chemicals into the soil, it would be unfair to citizens of that neighbourhood to export the city's garbage to their locality. What is needed is dedication and discipline from both the civic agencies and the citizens to effectively implement segregation of waste at source to reduce the amount of garbage that reaches landfills.

One of the big problems of massive urban agglomerations and cosmopolitan cities such as Delhi and Mumbai is that of waste management. Solid waste generated in a city the size of Delhi needs to be immediately reduced, reused, and recycled if we want to save our cities from becoming choked with garbage. The collapse in the Ghazipur landfill that led to the death of

two people is a warning to all civic agencies. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has even issued show cause notices to the Delhi government, the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) and others over the collapse.

This 70-acre garbage dump is situated in the middle of a densely-populated part of the city and has been a disaster

waiting to happen for a few years now. It is estimated that about 3000 metric tonnes of garbage are dumped at the Ghazipur site every single day; in spite of the fact that this landfill was supposed to have shut down in 2002, when it was filled to capacity. The piles of unsegregated garbage lead to the formation of highly flammable methane gas; that has caught fire in pockets, several times, putting at risk the lives of many of the ragpickers who work there every day. Delhi has learnt no lessons from Mumbai, where in March 2016 a massive fire

had broken out in the Deonar landfill that took nearly 10 days to bring under control.

While half-hearted attempts have been made to segregate waste at source and to create waste to energy plants within these landfills, there has been no real change in the way that Delhi deals with the problem of waste management – be it e-waste, biodegradable waste or plastic. As a report in the Hindustan Times has highlighted, 50% of the generated garbage is fit for composting and 30% is recyclable; which means that

only 20% should reach the landfill. Building new landfills is not the solution. Apart from the fact that they are dangerous and dumping garbage like this causes the leaching of hazardous chemicals into the soil, it would be unfair to citizens of that neighbourhood to export the city's garbage to their locality. What is needed is dedication and discipline from both the civic agencies and the citizens to effectively implement segregation of waste at source to reduce the amount of garbage that reaches landfills.

Doklam issue: China's Xi Jinping has a PLA problem

The Doklam pullbacks suggest that the removed chief of the People Liberation Army's joint staff department, General Fang Fenghui, was an obstacle to clinching a deal with India and probably was responsible for precipitating the standoff in the first place.

The Doklam debate has missed one key element: The mutual withdrawal deal was clinched just after Chinese President Xi Jinping replaced the chief of the People Liberation Army's (PLA) joint staff department. This topmost position – equivalent to the chairman of the U.S. joint chiefs of staff – was created only last year as part of Xi's military reforms to turn the PLA into a force "able to fight and win wars".

The Doklam pullbacks suggest that the removed chief, General Fang Fenghui, was an obstacle to clinching a deal with India and probably was responsible for precipitating the standoff in the first place. Fang was fired just days after he hosted America's highest-ranking military officer, General Joseph Dunford.

To be sure, this was not the first time that PLA belligerence in the Himalayas imposed diplomatic costs on China. A classic case was what happened when Chinese President Xi Jinping reached India on a state visit in September 2014. Xi arrived on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday with a strange gift for his host – a predawn Chinese military

encroachment deep into Ladakh. The encroachment, the worst in many years in terms of the number of intruding troops, overshadowed Xi's visit.

It is bizarre that the PLA would seek to mar in this manner the visit of its own head of state to a key neighbouring country. Yet Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's earlier visit to New Delhi in 2013 was similarly preceded by a 19-km PLA incursion into another part of Ladakh that lasted three weeks.

Such provocations might suggest that they are intentional, with the Chinese government in the know, thus reflecting a preference for blending soft and hard tactics. But it is also possible that the provocations underscore the continuing "disconnect between the military and the civilian leadership" in China that then U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates had in 2011 warned about.

Xi's purges of generals and admirals and other reform-related actions have been designed to consolidate his authority over the PLA and ensure that it does not blindside the government. But as Fang's firing and other latest changes in the PLA leadership highlight, Xi is still working to bring the

military fully under his control.

During his 2014 India visit, Xi appeared embarrassed by the accompanying PLA encroachment and assured Modi that he would sort it out upon his return. Soon after he returned, the Chinese defence ministry quoted Xi as telling a closed-door meeting with PLA commanders that "all PLA forces should follow his instructions" and that the military must display "absolute loyalty and firm faith in the party." He has conveyed that same message repeatedly since then, including recently on the 90th anniversary of the PLA's creation. Had civil control of the PLA been working well, would Xi repeatedly be demanding "absolute loyalty" from the military or asking it to "follow his instructions"?

Under Xi's two immediate predecessors, Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin, the PLA gradually became stronger at the expense of the party. The military's growing power has troubled Xi, a former military reservist whose present wife — folk singer Peng Liyuan — is a civilian member of the PLA, holding a rank equivalent to major general.

As part of his effort to reassert party control over the military and carry out defence



reforms, Xi has used his anti-corruption campaign to ensnare a number of top PLA officers. He has also cut the size of the ground force and established a new command-and-control structure.

But just as a dog's tail cannot be straightened, asserting full civil control over the PLA is proving very challenging. After all, the party is ideologically and morally adrift and depends on the PLA to sustain its political monopoly and ensure domestic order. The PLA, with its soaring budgets and expanding role to safeguard China's overseas interests, sees itself as the ultimate arbiter of Chinese nationalism.

The structural change in China parallels what happened in Imperial Japan, which rose dramatically as a world power in

one generation after the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Boosted by war victories against Manchuruled China and Tsarist Russia, the Japanese military gradually went on to dictate terms to the civilian government, with tragic consequences.

The PLA's increasing clout has led China to stake out a more muscular role, including resurrecting territorial and maritime disputes, asserting new sovereignty claims, and using construction activity to change the status quo. It won't be long before the PLA rekindles Himalayan tensions with a new encroachment.

China's internal politics clearly has a bearing on its external policy. China's prospective rise as a praetorian state will adversely affect the security of its neighbours.

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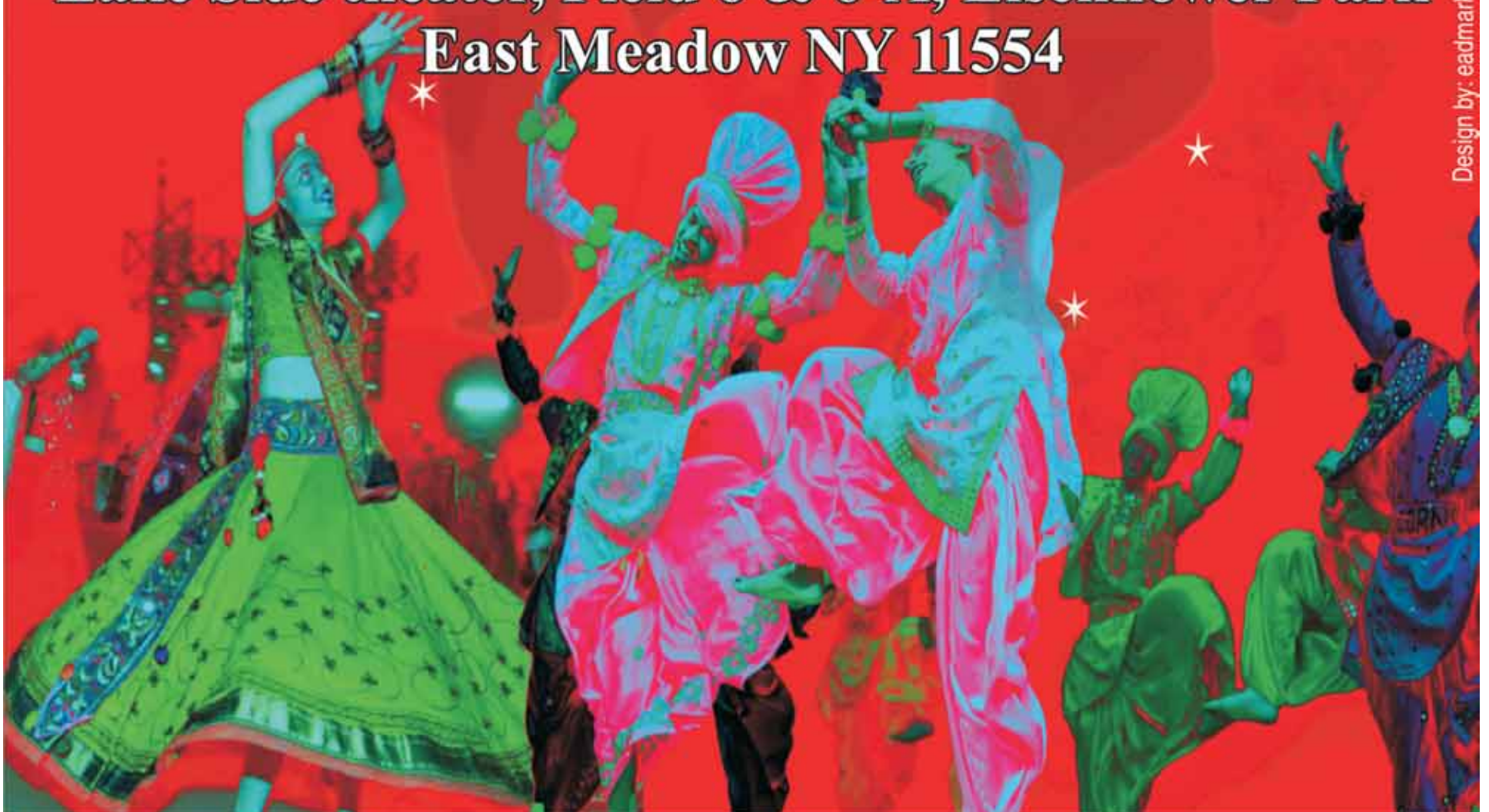
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Why Mobile phone brands in India are moving



zones in all major cities in the country including Delhi, Hyderabad and Bangalore by end of this year. After being present in India since 2014, Motorola too launched six retail set ups simultaneously across the country and the company plans to open 50 more, which are called Moto Hubs, by the end of this financial year. However Motorola does not see it as an offline expansion strategy but an expansion of experience strategy, Sudhin Mathur, Country Head, Lenovo Mobile Business Group, India said, "There is a strong demand from our consumers to touch, feel, and experience our products. The market has become very big, more than 100million customers now buying smartphones and we need to cater to all kind of consumers

through all kinds of channel". With these Moto Hubs across the country, Motorola hopes to create open, engaging hubs for 18 to 30yrs old customers at all buzzing retail sites in India. Known world over as online only brand, Xiaomi too invested in offline stores called Mi Homes in India. After opening about 50 stores in China, Xiaomi brought its first Mi Home in India this year in May at a shopping mall in Bangalore. Even though the Mi Homes in India were a vastly different from the big experiential Mi Homes in China, it was a big move for Xiaomi as the company was seen as one of the most popular online smartphone brand in India. The latest Mi Home however is an experience store in one of the most popular mall in NCR and Xiaomi has already set up five stores and has plans to open 100

more stores in India in next two years. Xiaomi has a bigger reason for propping up offline stores across the country, Jai Mani, Lead Product Manager, Xiaomi India said, "Last year we launched Mi air purifier, I think a lot of people have definitely not bought a product like air purifier online. So if people come to the store to see the phone, they will see the air purifier and see what it looks like so it's a great way for people to experience our products. For those products (non smartphone) offline is really the key experience and MI home lets us control how the products are displayed, and control the experience of the people who walk in the store. It's a great way to reach more people and helps us sell different types of products."

It's surprising how all the major online only mobile phone brands in India that have been known to create virtual stampede every now and then are now moving back to brick and mortar stores. Smartphone brands like Xiaomi, OnePlus, Motorola and others have been extremely popular in India; they have all managed to make quite an impact and

money off of their online only presence. Then you wonder why in the last one year, all of these brands have tried to one up each other in building offline shops in the country. Most recently Coolpad announced the launch of its first experience zone in India and the company is looking to expand its offline presence by opening six exclusive experience

Shell company directors siphoning off funds face up to 10-year jail term

The government has also identified chartered accountants, company secretaries and cost accountants associated with shell firms in certain cases.



The government said on Wednesday directors or authorised signatories of deregistered companies who try to siphon off money from the firms' bank accounts can face up to 10 years imprisonment. Besides, the directors of shell companies that have not filed their returns for three or more years would be disqualified from holding such position in any other firm. The government has also identified chartered accountants, company secretaries and cost accountants associated with shell firms in certain cases. Continuing its crackdown on the black money menace, the government said identification of more shell companies is in progress and efforts are on to find the "actual beneficiaries and persons" behind such entities. The corporate affairs ministry has

struck off the names of more than 2.09 lakh companies from the records as they have not been carrying out business activities for long and banks have been directed to freeze their bank accounts. "In case the director or authorised signatory of any 'struck off' company tries to unauthorisedly siphon-off money from its bank account, he/she may attract punishment of imprisonment of not less than six months extendable to 10 years," an official release said. The government also said that if the fraud involves public interest, the punishment would not be less than three years of imprisonment and the quantum of penalty would be three times the amount involved. Already, the directors or the authorised signatories of such companies have been restricted from operating the firms' bank accounts.

"However, even prior to such action, if they have siphoned off any money, strict action would still be taken against them," the release said. During a review meeting chaired by minister of state for corporate affairs PP Chaudhary in New Delhi on Wednesday, it was also decided that directors of such shell companies which have not filed returns for three or more years, would be disqualified from being appointed in any other company in that position.

Further, such persons would be barred from being reappointed as directors in any of the companies where they had been directors, "thereby compelling them to vacate office". "It is expected that as a result of this exercise, at least two to three lakh of such disqualified directors shall get debarred," the release said. Noting that all efforts are also being made to identify the actual beneficiaries and persons behind shell companies, the government said the profiles of directors are being gathered by the agencies. Details such as background, antecedents and their role in the operations/functioning of shell companies are being compiled in collaboration with enforcement agencies.

"The professionals, chartered accountants/ company secretaries/cost accountants associated with such shell companies and involved in illegal activities have been identified in certain cases," the release said. Action being taken by the apex institutes concerned against such individuals is also being monitored by the ministry.

Sebi warns of rising external debt risks as masala bonds surge

The rupee-denominated bonds, popularly known as masala bonds, are likely to add to the nation's external liabilities even if they don't hold any risks to currency movement says SEBI.



The rupee-denominated bonds, popularly known as masala bonds, are likely to add to the nation's external liabilities even if they don't hold any risks to currency movement, a top Sebi official said on Wednesday.

"When money flows into the country from foreign investments, we are attracting some risks and it is not currency risk alone. Masala bonds don't hold any currency risks but at the same time, the external liability of the country goes up. This needs to be kept in mind," Sebi whole-time member G Mahalingam said here.

"And a huge amount of foreign inflows at a time when the currency has been substantially appreciating is something the regulators must be concerned about," he said, addressing a capital markets summit organised by industry lobby Ficci.

The masala bonds are debt instruments through which designated domestic entities can raise funds by accessing overseas capital markets, while the bond investors hold the currency risk. In fact, the World Bank arm IFC thus far has raised the largest amount through this instrument. According to some estimates, the masala bonds accounted for 39 per cent of the total ECBs of USD 7.39 billion reported by the Reserve Bank in the fourth quarter of FY17, while the approvals for the same rose to USD 2.9 billion over USD 0.8 billion in the third quarter.

Cuddling, saying romantic things to your man may enhance relationship happiness

According to a recent study, for enhancing sexual satisfaction and relationship happiness, behaviours like cuddling, saying romantic things or decorating a room romantically may be appealing, especially for men.



For enhancing sexual satisfaction and relationship happiness, behaviours like cuddling, saying romantic things or decorating a room romantically may be appealing, especially for men, finds a study. “Contrary to some stereotypes, the most appealing behaviours, in addition, they investigated the level of appeal of nearly 50 sexual behaviours. They found that in the more

than 2,000 men and women, who completed the survey, many have engaged in a wide variety of behaviours and that some are fairly common. They noted that although many men and women rated a range of sexual behaviours as appealing and may have tried them in the distant past, fewer engaged in them in the past month or year. The data highlights opportunities for couples to talk more openly with one another about their sexual desires and interests. “Together they may find new ways of

being romantic or sexual with one another, enhancing both their sexual satisfaction and relationship happiness,” they stated. This research has many implications for the future understanding of adult sexual behaviours. Sexuality educators, clinicians as well as people in the general population will now have a better understanding of the prevalence and diversity of sexual behaviours experienced by adults in the U.S. general population. The research is published in journal PLOS One.

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Want to spice things up in the bedroom? Listen to sexy music

The sexier we find the music, more sensual becomes the touch for us, according to the



through a curtain where it was stroked by a controlled robot movement. At the same time they listened to pieces of music, which they later evaluated on a scale of being “not at all sexy” and “extremely sexy”. In one of their experiments that involved a human assistant, the researchers found that the sexiness of music is transferred to the touch experience. Interestingly, when the participants knew in advance that they would be stroked by a robot rather than by a person in the experiment, the music still had the same effect regarding sexiness of touch. Using a robot’s automatically controlled brush did not just ensure

that the duration and intensity of contact was always the same, it could additionally demonstrate that the observed transfer effects from music to touch are based on very basal mechanisms — rather than by a person’s imagination to be touched by a person of a certain sex or attractiveness who listens to the same music. “Music seems to change our perception of touch. Certain features seem to be transferred from music to touch,” Fritz said. One explanation could be that the emotional expression in single musical sounds follows the same dynamics as emotional expression with touch, the study said.

It is a well-known fact that music can evoke a range of emotions. Researchers have now found that it can even influence our sense of touch. The sexier we find the music, more sensual becomes the touch for us, according to the study.

“We have observed that the sexier we perceive music, the sexier we also perceive touch that is administered simultaneously,” said study leader Tom Fritz from Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig, Germany. The research, published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, involved a robot administering incognito touches. Study participants placed their forearm

More reasons to embrace the keto lifestyle. A low carb, high fat diet may be key to long life

A low carb diet also helps increase longevity and improve physical strength, says a recent study.



Consuming a ketogenic diet — which is high fat, low protein, and low carbohydrates — may not only help in weight loss, but also increase longevity and improve physical strength, says a recent study. The study, conducted on mice models, showed a 13% increase in median life span for the mice on a high fat versus high carbohydrate diet. “In humans, that would be seven to 10 years. But equally important, those mice retained quality of health in later life,” said nutritionist Jon Ramsey from the University of California - Davis. In addition, the ketogenic diet increased memory and motor function (strength and coordination), and prevented an increase in age-related markers of inflammation. It also had an impact on the incidence of tumours as well, the researchers said. The older mice on the ketogenic diet had a better memory than the younger mice, which is really remarkable, the researchers said. According to the study, detailed in the journal Cell Metabolism, eating a ketogenic diet ramps up the production of the ketone body beta-hydroxybutyrate acid (BHB), which helps improve memory and increases lifespan. “This study indicates that a ketogenic diet can have a major impact on life and health span without major weight loss or restriction of intake. It also opens a new avenue for possible dietary interventions that have an impact on ageing,” Ramsey said. For the study, mice were split into three groups: a regular rodent high-carb diet, a low carb/high fat diet, and a ketogenic diet (89-90% of total calorie intake). The ultimate goal is to find a way for humans to benefit from BHBs without having to go on a restrictive diet, the researchers said.

Role play, BDSM, and more: Advice every youngster must have for a great sex life

“Some things are better than sex, and some are worse, but there’s nothing exactly like it,” said American actor-comedian WC Fields. We couldn’t agree more. But to have unforgettable sex, you need to have your basics in place (no, what you saw in porn doesn’t count). So, read up before your next hot date.

1) Find out what turns you on
A number of young people are a bit clueless when it comes to what truly gets them going. Spend some alone time exploring and understanding your own body and

its erogenous zones. Let your imagination run wild and discover your fantasies. Don’t shy away from experimenting with kinks either. So the next time you’re in bed with your partner, you can let them know exactly what you enjoy, which leads to better, more satisfying sex.

2) Experiment with BDSM
It might feel like a scary idea at first, but BDSM can lead to some memorable orgasms. BDSM (Bondage, Domination, Sadism, Masochism) involves a dominant partner (referred to as ‘dom’) taking complete physical and

psychological control of a submissive partner (sub). It’s critical to remember that informed and explicit consent is at the core of BDSM, so both partners need to be on the same page. BDSM often involves use of props like leather whips, handcuffs, and leashes. It’s important that you engage in BDSM with a highly trusted partner who respects you. Also, decide on a safe word beforehand – at any point during intercourse if you feel like stopping, say the safe word. It should act like a signal to stop.

Parineeti Chopra gets trolled on Instagram

Parineeti Chopra gets trolled on Instagram. Bollywood celebrities are not new in getting trolled on social media and such incidents are increasing day by day. Recently Priyanka Chopra got trolled for Syrian visit and now her cousin Parineeti Chopra gets trolled on Instagram. Recent Tourism Australia has appointed the stunning Bollywood actress – Parineeti Chopra as the first Indian woman ambassador to be a part of the 'Friend of Australia'

(FOA) advocacy panel. So she was taking a break from the shoot, as she is currently in Australia on holidays. Parineeti shared some pictures on her Instaram account and after that she gets trolled on internet. A few of the hate comments read, "Ma'am pahle aap jyada khoobsurat thi" while another read, "Aap ki face bhi isi ke jaisa deikh raha hai... dieting band kar di jiye. This is not the first time that the actor has been a victim of internet trolls. Opening up about her weight

loss journey, Pari in an earlier post had written, "I was constantly made fun of, but the person I was, I generously laughed with them. Today, many people ask me what triggered the weight loss; did I give in to the "Bollywood pressure"? To that I say – thank god I became an actor and had that pressure!" On the work front, Parineeti is currently busy shooting for 'Golmaal Again' directed by Rohit Shetty along with Ajay Devgn, Arshad Warsi and Tusshar Kapoor.



Sonakshi Sinha urges fans to clean Mumbai beaches



Bollywood actress Sonakshi Sinha is using her star status for something good. The 30-year-old-actress has urged her fans and followers to clean up the beaches in Mumbai. Taking the matter to Twitter, she tweeted, "Hope there comes a day when we dont mess it up to begin with! Come on guys, join in to #freethebeach!" Alongside her tweet, she shared a poster of the event, which read, "Join the citizens... Gandhi Statue, Juhu beach, September 6. Sonakshi Sinha urges fans to clean Mumbai beaches. This is not the first time a B-town celebrity has campaigned for the beach clean-up. Last month, actress Dia Mirza, along with her producer-husband Sahil Sangha, was seen as part of the initiative. Sonakshi Sinha urges fans to clean

Mumbai beaches. It should be noted that Sonakshi will soon be seen in the thriller film 'Ittefaq', directed by Abhay Chopra. The movie is an adaptation of the 1969 film by the same name. The film will also star Sidharth Malhotra and Akshaye Khanna.

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan BALD photo goes VIRAL

A photo of Aishwarya Rai Photoshopped perhaps can be breaking the internet sometimes do more where she is seen damage than without hair. yes, without good. Aishwarya Rai hair . The message Bachchan BALD photo behind this picture is that goes VIRAL This is not the gorgeous Aishwarya Rai first time Aishwarya has had donated her been a target to such fan-gorgeous locks to God, to made hoaxes. Few seek blessings for an months ago there was news eternal beauty. Aishwarya claiming that owing to Rai Bachchan BALD growing tensions and photo goes VIRAL The discord with her in-laws i.e story behind this picture the Bachchans, Aishwarya is that this is a had deliberately overdosed photoshopped picture. In on tranquillisers at her reality this picture was residence, in an attempt to clicked outside a temple. end her life! Aishwarya Rai



Bachchan BALD photo Rai Bachchan BALD goes VIRAL Apparently, photo goes VIRAL In her bold scenes and other news hoax was that she is pregnant . Well, on screen (remember Ae all this is rubbish . Dil Hai Mushkil?) was the Aishwarya is not pregnant and this picture is also a hoax.

Ram Rahim's special relationship with Rakhi Sawant

Ram Rahim-Rakhi Sawant relationship : Ram Rahim who has been jailed for 20 years will not be able to make a film now. Cine And Tv Artistes Association (CINTAA) has canceled his work permit. Not only has this, but Indian Film & Television Directors' Association (IFTDA) terminated the membership of his adopted daughter Honeypreet along with Ram Rahim. ram rahim-rakhi sawant relationship Now Honeypreet will not be able to make the film, but for some time Ram Rahim had a very

close relationship with Bollywood. ram rahim-rakhi sawant relationship According to information, in the success of a film of Ram Rahim, Rakhi Sawant looked on a regular platform took selfie with Ram Rahim. ram rahim-rakhi sawant relationship After getting the punishment for Baba, Rakhi had said that Ram Rahim was very good friends of her. In the next movie they can get a chance to play. Ganeshji will release them soon. ram rahim-rakhi sawant

relationship There are many pictures of Ram Rahim and Honeypreet is getting viral on social media, in which both are showing up with many Bollywood stars. ram rahim-rakhi sawant relationship The political leader of Ram Rahim was also something that all the leaders of the party were drawn to the Sacha Sauda. ram rahim-rakhi sawant relationship Along with many politicians, Baba Ram Rahim has a very close relationship with Bollywood.

Sunny Leone and Daniel Weber with Nisha look awesome in these pictures

Sunny Leone and Daniel spotted at airport. They were not alone . Nisha was also with her parent . Nisha was wearing a denim top and pink pants with her hair tied in a small bow. Daniel hold her and Sunny also was with them . Sunny was looking too gorgeous in a formal dress . Sunny and Daniel are giving an example of good parents . Both of them take care of their baby girl . When talk about Nisha Daniel said, " When she came home, I think that's when it dawned upon her, that she is not

going back. Until then she thought she was going on a road trip. But we have read up and consulted our friends about how to cope with her at this stage, and we have accepted that it's going to take her some time to adjust in this new environment." Well, it is so good to see how Sunny and Daniel are doing their best to keep Nisha Kaur Weber comfortable and happy. We wouldn't mind to see more of their pics after this private outing!

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Kangana Ranaut onslaught: Hrithik Roshan, Aditya Pancholi, Adhyayan Suman

While Aditya Pancholi has threatened legal action against Kangana Ranaut, Hrithik Roshan has refused to react. Adhyayan Suman claimed he had no idea about what Kangana

Almost a year after raking up a controversy over her alleged relationship with Krrish 3 co-star Hrithik Roshan, Kangana Ranaut revisited the public spat last weekend when she gave three explosive interviews talking about a monogamy others, Hrithik Roshan, Aditya Pancholi and Adhyayan Suman. Kangana claims she has been in a relationship with all three. While Aditya Pancholi has threatened legal action against her, Hrithik simply walked away when asked about Kangana. Adhyayan Suman, on the other hand, has claimed he does not know about the interviews! In her interview with Rajat Sharma, Kangana said, "He

(Hrithik) sent me a notice seeking an apology and asked me to organise a press conference to clear his name. He said he will date the pope but not me. He also threatened me to leak mails and do other things if I don't apologise." In her interview with Rajeev Masand, she further said, "He runs away when he sees me. In fact, when we broke up in 2014 and after that one year when he was harassing me and stalking me, I complained to his father. I told him that his son is harassing me, stalking me, has hacked my account and he's not letting me get into any other relationship. So his father said I'm going to arrange a meeting for you. Since then, I'm hoping to get a meeting with him to have a two-word conversation with him and ask him that he's telling the world he doesn't know me." When asked about Kangana, Hrithik walked away from the reporters in a recently uploaded video on YouTube. Talking about Aditya, she told Rajat Sharma, "He got an apartment for me but didn't allow my friend

to come there. It was a kind of house arrest. Then I went to meet his wife. His daughter is a year older than me. My film Gangster was about to release then. I met his wife and asked for her help. She said to me that they are happy whenever he is not at home otherwise he raises his hands on domestic helps and others around. It's actually good for us if he is not around, so I can't help you." Reacting to the allegations, Aditya told Bollywoodlife, "She is a mad girl, what to do, did you see the interview? Didn't you feel like some mad person was talking? Who talks like that? We have been in the industry for so long, nobody has ever spoken anything so evil about anyone. What should I say, she's a mad girl. If you throw stones in mud, it will only spoil your clothes." "I am going to take a legal action against her. She is lying that's why I am taking legal action against her. I don't know about other people, but as far as my story goes and what she has spoken about me, she has said

all lies. She has to prove that I have done that. My family is very much affected by it. My wife and I will take legal action against her," he added. Adhyayan Suman had earlier accused Kangana of practising black magic and had even physically hit him. Kangana told Sharma that beating him up wouldn't have been a bad idea. "He was 95 kgs and I was of 49 kgs. How could I ever hit him? I wouldn't be able to? However, now that I look at it I should have hit him," she said. When Indian Express contacted Adhyayan, he told them, "Sorry haven't heard about the interview ...been too caught up with the more important things in life... and I am not interested in knowing about it either." After being told what the Queen star has said in her interviews, he added, "It's ok for people to have opinions and at this time I don't have one. Will talk soon. Need to get back for my shot."

After slamming Kangana Ranaut's 'current circus', Sona Mohapatra blasts celebs, paid

Singer Sona Mohapatra, who made headlines of her own after writing an open letter to Kangana Ranaut, slammed celebrities and their paid PR armies in a series of tweets Tuesday.

Singer Sona Mohapatra began Monday by writing an open letter to Kangana Ranaut in which she said the Bollywood star was guilty of "doing a disservice to feminism" by "washing her dirty linen" in public and reviving her fight with Hrithik Roshan. On Tuesday, after facing backlash for voicing her opinions, she took to Twitter to slam "paid PR" and the "celebrity circus trap". In her open letter, which the singer had posted on her Facebook page, Sona said "Your success doesn't need this tabloid trail. Your well thought out & superbly worded open letters of the past, fearless interviews addressing larger issues, taking a stand, taking legal recourse are welcome. The current 'circus', not." She was addressing Kangana. She posted a couple of tweets in defence of her letter too. She'd ended the letter by calling out "the so called

'journos' hankering after this masala" at whom she blew her nose with an emoji. It's the same journalists she appears to be targeting in these tweets. The Simran star has been making headlines recently, by revisiting several feuds she has developed over the years - her mud-slinging with Hrithik Roshan, allegations against Aditya Pancholi and Adhyayan Suman, and verbal fights with the co-writer and director of her new film. She'd even written an open letter of her own following her onscreen spat with filmmaker Karan Johar on his talk show, Koffee With Karan. Kangana had called the director a "flag-bearer of nepotism" in a fiery appearance on the show, and in the letter, addressed her Rangoon co-star, Saif Ali Khan, who had sided with Johar. Dear Kangana, I have always cheered loudly, in private & in

public for you. Long, long before you turned queen et all but your current run across the airwaves regurgitating personal details of your love life over & over again, washing dirty linen in public & more so as part of a professional PR campaign before your film release is in bad taste. No two ways about it. Also, it does a big dis-service to the cause of feminism & fair play. Wish you well & wish you would rise above this muck & make your point through actions & your work. Your success doesn't need this tabloid trail.



When the North Koreans aren't conducting nuclear tests, they're watching films like Baahubali, Krrish

The biannual Pyongyang International Film Festival has screened films like Baahubali, Krrish and Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani. We asked North Korea for more

While they're not celebrating 'successful' hydrogen bomb tests, North Koreans are apparently watching Bollywood hits like Bajirao Mastani and Krrish.

The Pyongyang International Film Festival, which celebrated its first year of existence in 1987, has had a long history of screening Indian films. Their website - which compiles a list of films screened at biannual event - mentions Ranbir Kapoor-starrer Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani and Hrithik Roshan's Krrish as having been screened at the 2014 edition (in the Informative Screening category), while Ranveer Singh, Deepika Padukone's Ram Leela, and Sunny Deol's Singh Saab the Great were screened in competition the same year.

"It is a very positive way of cultural engagement and showing

North Korean citizens another view on the world," Nicholas Bonner, a China-based filmmaker who helps "coordinate foreign films shown" at the festival told us through email. "The audiences love them," he said. The 2016 edition included an even bigger slate of Indian films. The Tamil film, Kanavu Variyam; Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Ram Leela follow-up, Bajirao Mastani; Akshay Kumar's Gabbar is Back; SS Rajamouli's Baahubali: The Beginning and Kangana Ranaut's 'Many Weds Manu Return' (Google translate flummoxed, perhaps) were screened in the Informative Screening category. However, the obscure film, Ramsingh Charlie was the only Indian addition to the competition lineup.

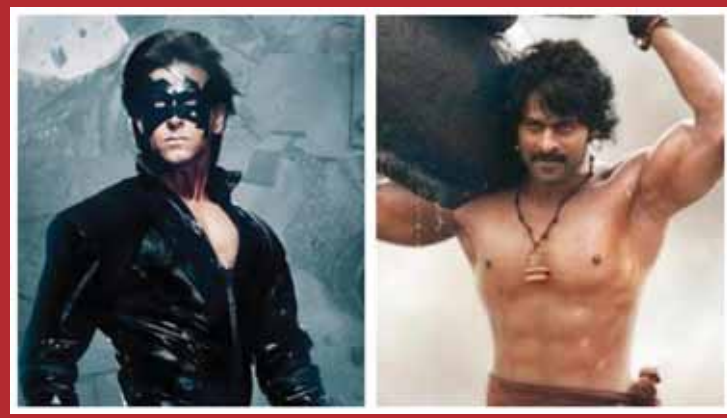
The festival would like to screen more Bollywood and 'Malayalam' films, Bonner said,

"however it has been very difficult in finding a sales company interesting in supporting a small cinema (sic)."

It's still unclear how these films are sourced. Bonner identified himself as one of the co-directors of a film called Comrade Kim goes Flying, a film the Toronto International Film Festival declares the first "Western-financed fiction feature made entirely in North Korea".

According to a New York Times article published in 2012, Bonner "steered (the North Korean writers) toward comedy and away from the more predictable propaganda line of triumph through hard work."

For the longest time, though, the Pyongyang International Film Festival showed mostly propaganda films. The few international titles that passed the thorough screening process -



films like Gurinder Chadha's Bend it Like Beckham - were heavily censored to suit the insular North Korean tastes.

Like most outside media, films too are restricted in North Korea. And foreign films about North Korea are even less welcome. It was rumoured that the portrayal of their leader, Kim Jong-un, in the 2014 Seth Rogen comedy,

The Interview (he died in a scene scored to a Katy Perry song), prompted hackers to steal thousands of confidential documents from Sony Pictures, the film's home studio. Threats of a terror attack followed, which resulted in the film's theatrical release being pulled. It was finally released via home video and on streaming.

Varun Dhawan's October girl, Banita Sandhu: Shoojit Sircar reveals how she was discovered



Remember the stunning model from the DoubleMint ad last year who went on to become a sensation of sorts? Now, the same girl, Banita Sandhu, from Wales (UK), is set to make her big Bollywood debut in Shoojit Sircar's October, co-starring Varun Dhawan. There has been a lot of buzz about Banita and it is only now that her identity has been revealed. In fact, Shoojit reveals he took his own time telling Banita that she has

been chosen for the project.

Shoojit says, "Everybody loved Banita in a chewing gum commercial that I had directed. It had almost 40 million hits. While I was shooting the ad film, Juhi (Chaturvedi; writer) and I were also working on the script [for this film]. So, one day, I clicked a picture of Banita and sent it to Juhi saying, 'She has the potential to fit into the character that we are looking at.'" Until then, the film-maker hadn't told Banita that she was being considered

for the film. He says, "I didn't pursue it further at that point, as we were still working on the script. Then, we locked the script and Varun was finalised. We did look at other actors [for Banita's part], but then one day, I called her and told her that I may be casting her in the film, and that she should start doing workshops," he says. The Piku (2015) director admits that although Banita had been given the news, the film's makers "weren't absolutely sure until that

point". He says, "But slowly, Juhi, Ronnie (Lahiri; producer) and I zeroed in on her and were sure that, 'She is the girl we should go for'. My casting director also felt that she was the right person for this character." The film-maker adds that the project will go on the floors within a few weeks. "We are still working on finer details, but most probably, we should start in October," he says. Be it Minissha Lamba in Yahaan (2005), or Ayushmann Khurrana and Yami Gautam in Vicky Donor (2012), Shoojit Sircar has a knack for finding newer faces. "Please don't say that; I don't have any such knack (laughs)," he says, adding that what he always hunts for is the 'feel' and 'vibe' in an actor.

So, what made him choose a newcomer, when he could have easily worked with an established

actress? "It has never mattered to me if I am working with established or non-established actors. The demands of the script is all that matters. The script required a certain face, vulnerability and innocence, so we did many auditions," he says.

Shoojit admits that "established names" were also considered. "But Juhi, Ronnie and I thought that Banita is perfect for the character. In the past, if I have worked with Minissha, Yami, Nargis Fakhri in Madras Café (2013), Deepika (Padukone) in Piku (2015), or the three girls in Pink (2016); they worked as characters and not just because they were established or non-established stars," he says.





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