

The South Asian  
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Voice of South Asian Community

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# A Zillionaire's Solution

## Tax the Rich and Save the Economy



STORY ON page 24

**Wish You**  
a  
**Very**  
**Happy**  
**Diwali**  
To all  
**Readers**



### PM Narendra Modi facing backlash as discontent over India's slowdown deepens

(News Agencies) For the first time in his three-and-a-half year rule, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is facing sustained discontent over his economic policies as growth slows, job losses mount and distressed farmers protest.



Four senior members of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party have hit out at the government, emboldening the country's weak opposition and challenging the previously unstoppable leader to find quick fixes before the 2019 national polls and a raft of state votes. And as criticism of the Modi's economic management intensifies, the usually loud voices of his supporters are falling silent. India lost its "fastest-growing major economy" tag as growth slipped below 6 percent in the latest quarter. (Contd on page 25)

## Nassau County Executive election update

U.S. Senate Democratic Leader  
**Chuck Schumer Endorses Laura Curran for Nassau County Executive**



Court Officers Benevolent Association Endorses Jack Martins for Nassau County Executive



Cassandra Lems, Green Party Candidate for Nassau County Executive, announced her support of the New York Health Act



(By SS Thind) Mineola, New York : Nassau County Executive candidate Jack Martins was recently endorsed by the Court Officers Benevolent Association of Nassau County, Inc. "On behalf of the Court Officers Benevolent Association of Nassau County, I am pleased to announce our endorsement of Jack Martins for Nassau County Executive," said Billy Imandt, President.

"I am honored to have the endorsement of the Court Officers Benevolent Association," Jack Martins said. "Court officers and all court employees play a critical role in our judicial system. We must make it easier for working families to be able to afford to live, work and raise a family here in Nassau County."

(Contd on page 26)





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# New York State Assembly Honored H.D.H. Mahant Swami Maharaj of BAPS with Proclamation



**Deputy Comptroller Dilip Chauhan Presenting New York State Assembly Proclamation on to His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj of Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS). (BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha)**

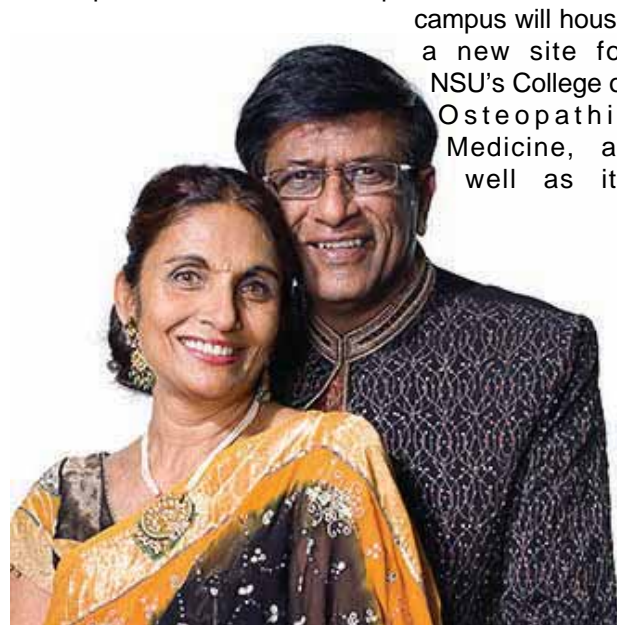


(By Our Staff Reporter) New York : Recently Devotees, community members and dignitaries gathered in presence of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj the current spiritual leader of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. The scene at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Robinsville, NJ. was one of deep joy and excitement, as this is Mahant Swami Maharaj's first trip to North America as Guru of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj was in the final leg of his three-month tour across North America. As part of three-month tour across North America, he visited eight cities in the United States. His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj entourage attended numerous celebrations including the ten-year anniversaries of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandirs in Atlanta, Toronto, and San Jose as well inauguration of the Ghanshyam Maharaj Abhishek Mandapam in Robbinsville, NJ. Special celebration days for children, young adults and women were planned in each location too. Looking at BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha and His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj's extra ordinary humanitarian services towards betterment of mankind, New York State Assembly Honored H.D.H. Mahant Swami Maharaj of BAPS with State Proclamation, which was presented by Shri Dilip Chauhan, Nassau County Deputy Comptroller of minority affairs.

# Nova Southeastern University Receives \$200 Million Commitment from Patel Family Foundation

***\$50 Million Gift plus \$150 Million Investment Will Significantly Expand NSU's Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine and Health Care Sciences; Advance Health Care in Florida and Be-***

(By Our Staff Reporter) Fort Lauderdale and Clearwater, Fla. – Nova Southeastern University (NSU) announces the largest philanthropic gift in its history from Tampa-area cardiologist Dr. Kiran C. Patel and his wife, pediatrician Dr. Pallavi Patel. The commitment will significantly expand its programs in osteopathic medicine and health care sciences, and be used to develop a new 27-acre campus for NSU in Clearwater, Fla. The Patels are renowned in Florida for their philanthropy, community service and entrepreneurship.



existing programs in the Tampa area.

Their transformational commitment will advance health care in Florida and internationally, with a particular focus on multicultural and underserved communities. The goal is to put patients first and integrate medical and health care expertise. "This gift and additional investment will enrich NSU's ability to educate highly-qualified physicians and health care professionals who understand how the medical disciplines can and must work together. These future leaders will represent the cultural diversity of our region, our nation and our world so that they can better serve their patients and communities," said NSU President Dr. George Hanbury.

Their \$50 million gift, one of the seven-largest to any Florida university in history, catapults NSU to more than 84% of its goal to raise \$250 million by 2020 for its Realizing Potential philanthropic

campaign.

This commitment will support the university in several ways, including: "This \$200-million-commitment will make NSU the premiere leader in healthcare education on both the east and west coasts of Florida," said Dr. Hanbury. "I feel that it is more important than ever to advance the current state of health care," said Dr. Kiran C. Patel. "It is rare for someone to have the opportunity to impact the world in this way, and, as an immigrant to the United States, I am particularly honored to be able to make a difference in people's lives around the world. I believe that NSU is the future of multi-disciplinary medical education. Together, we will be able to capitalize on an opportunity that will be beneficial to millions of human lives, many right here in Florida and many others across the globe." "This partnership will benefit thousands of patients, students and doctors," added Dr. Pallavi Patel. "Over the next 20

years, NSU will train thousands of new doctors and other health care professionals who will directly touch millions of lives, making a real difference." NSU is already the top provider of medical doctors and physician assistants in the state with 40% of its D.O. graduates electing to practice in Florida. Sixty percent of these Florida-based physicians practice and treat patients in medically underserved areas. This was a key factor in the Patels' decision to support NSU's osteopathic medicine and health care sciences colleges. Their goal is to be involved in the training and education of generations of physicians and other health care providers who will serve in areas with the greatest need across the country and worldwide. As a result of the Patel Family Foundation's generous commitment, beginning in fall of 2019, NSU has applied for a class of 150 osteopathic medicine (D.O.) students to be taught on Florida's west coast at the new NSU Tampa Bay Regional Campus in Clearwater, while approximately 230 new osteopathic medicine students will continue to begin their studies each year at NSU's Fort Lauderdale/Davie campus. This will significantly grow the number of qualified physicians entering the workforce each year from NSU's Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine. NSU's newly named Dr. Pallavi Patel College of Health Care Sciences graduates more than 1,200 health care professionals each year, helping to fill a critical need in local communities nationwide. The college offers 29 different programs such as physician assistant, anesthesiologist assistant, occupational therapy, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, speech-language pathology and audiology.

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# 17 charged in bust of heroin, cocaine ring on Long Island



MINEOLA, Long Island (WABC) — Authorities on Long Island say 17 people are facing charges for their role in a cocaine and heroin ring that operated in Nassau County. Several of the suspects charged in the indictment appeared in court in Mineola Tuesday morning,

all of them entering not guilty pleas. They face a number of charges stemming from the alleged drug conspiracy in operation from May 2016 to last month. Prosecutors say the investigation used extensive electronic eavesdropping to uncover the ring, and that the

conspiracy has connections to Maryland and Syracuse. As a result of the search warrants executed Tuesday, investigators seized approximately three and a half kilograms of cocaine, four ounces of heroin, approximately \$115,000 in cash, two defaced guns,

money counters, kilogram presses, packaging equipment, a Porsche, BMW, Mercedes-Benz and a Richard Mille watch. In total, approximately five and a half kilograms in cocaine and approximately \$190,000 in cash was seized during the investigation. The arrests

are a result of a long-term investigation by the Nassau County District Attorney's Office. "Fourteen law enforcement agencies collaborated with my office's dedicated investigators on this massive takedown that has dismantled what we allege to be a multi-state, cross-country drug trafficking enterprise that pumped huge quantities of cocaine and deadly heroin into our communities and throughout the northeast," District Attorney Madeline Singas said.

"Our partners at the federal, state and local level worked together seamlessly to uncover the novel smuggling methods used in this 'family business' and to shut it down before more lives were ruined by the poison these defendants supplied." Singas said Etienne, Beaubren and another relative founded the drug distribution operation, which supplied large quantities of cocaine and heroin to 14 members of their crew.

## Firefighter pulls woman from SUV seconds before it's hit by LIRR train

BROOKHAVEN, Long Island (WABC) — An off-duty firefighter is being hailed as a hero after he pulled a woman to safety moments before her SUV was struck by a Long Island Rail Road train late Tuesday night. It happened around 10 p.m. at the crossing near the intersection of Montauk Highway and Arthur Avenue, to the east of the Bellport station, in Brookhaven, in Suffolk County.

Authorities say the SUV was stopped at the crossing when it was struck by another vehicle and pushed onto the tracks. Firefighter Peter Dipinto, who lives nearby, heard the collision and ran to the scene. He found the woman in the damaged SUV with the LIRR train bearing down, and he was able to get her out seconds before the vehicle was struck and thrown 50 feet into the brush. "It was really a bang-bang, 1-2-3 thing," Dipinto said. "But it was scary, because the train was actually coming as we were crossing the tracks. And it was just a very loud explosion." The only injuries reported came from the initial crash, and all were said to be minor. "The gates were coming down at Pete pulled up the scene," Brookhaven Fire Chief Giuseppe Loiacono said. "So he was quick to pull her out, and then the train came through." Dipinto later met up with the woman he saved. Watch the tearful reunion here:

## Exclusive: Man attacked after coming to stranger's aid on Long Island

PORT JEFFERSON STATION, Suffolk County (WABC) — A 20-year-old man is facing assault charges after police say a dispute ended in a double stabbing on Long Island, and now, the best friend of one of the victims who was simply coming to a stranger's aid is speaking out exclusively to Eyewitness News. The incident happened around 9 p.m. Wednesday on Jayne Boulevard in Port Jefferson Station. Authorities say a man was walking along Jayne Boulevard when the driver of

a passing Jeep slowed down and yelled at him. The Jeep followed as the man ran, and police say the driver of the Jeep and a passenger then exited the vehicle and attacked him. According to authorities, two male occupants of the house heard the commotion and came to the man's aid. During the ensuing altercation, the two men who came out to help suffered stab wounds. One of them was 28-year-old Edward Bree, who remains at Stony Brook University Hospital in serious condition.

His best friend, Michael Geiger, told Eyewitness News that Bree was hanging out at his girlfriend's uncle's house when they heard a man running down the street yelling for help. "He goes down there, there are two gentlemen," Geiger said. "He said it wasn't really an altercation, it was more of a scramble. He felt himself get hit. He thought it was just a punch at first. As they were walking away, Eddie's girlfriend noticed that he was bleeding. He lifted up his shirt. He was disemboweled."

Bree's girlfriend's uncle also suffered minor injuries in the attack. He was treated and released from the hospital. The man being chased was not injured and the suspects fled in the Jeep. The investigation led detectives to 20-year-old Daniel Jusino, of Centereach, who is now charged with first- and second-degree assault. Police say Jusino had targeted the initial victim, but they're not saying why. Bree, who has a young daughter, is expected to make a full recovery.

## New York, London police begin investigating Harvey Weinstein amid fourth rape allegation

### Harvey Weinstein is now being investigated amid allegations of rape and sexual harassment.

The case against disgraced Harvey Weinstein took on an international dimension Thursday, with police in New York and Britain launching investigations — while the movie mogul was accused of rape by a fourth person. An avalanche of claims of sexual harassment, assault and rape by the hugely influential Hollywood producer have surfaced since the publication last week of an explosive New York Times report



alleging a history of abusive behaviour dating back decades. On Thursday, American actor Rose McGowan became the fourth woman to accuse Weinstein of raping her. A spokesman for the New York Police Department meanwhile confirmed to AFP it was investigating a 2004 case, but provided no details.

The New York Daily News reported that the case involved aspiring actress Lucia Evans, who earlier told the New Yorker magazine that Weinstein had forced her to perform oral sex on him.

Meantime, a statement from Scotland Yard said the Metropolitan Police were investigating "an allegation of sexual assault by Merseyside Police." It did not elaborate. The Daily Telegraph said the case involved an actor now understood to be living in the Liverpool area. On Wednesday, Weinstein was seen in public for the first time in days when paparazzi descended upon him as he left his daughter's home in Los Angeles. "Guys, I'm not doing OK but I'm trying," he said in a video obtained by ABC. "I got to get help. You know what, we all make mistakes."

## Big Tobacco Companies Set to Run Self-Harming Ads, Not Even Kidding

Yes, you heard that right. The largest tobacco companies in the U.S are set to release self-harming advertisements soon on primetime television thanks to a recent lawsuit verdict. Nothing fancy, the advertisements would be simple black and white ads with a voiceover talking about the harms of tobacco and nicotine.

The ads can be potentially harmful for the tobacco industry's older crowd however they can let out a sigh of relief



as their largest and growing demographic, young people is hugely avoided. The whole reason they're avoided is simply the younger generations don't watch tv anymore. They stream whatever their hearts desire online. Typical Anti-Smoking Advocacy advertisements have very disturbing images as well as messages. Ad executives have been asked how well the black and white court mandated ads would impact viewers. So far, the response has been that the impact should be assumed as poor however you may get a shock impact on viewers simply because most advertisements are not like the black and white ones. Look out on CBS, ABC, and NBC for these advertisements in the next month during primetime.



# How we could have prevented some of Puerto Rico's Misery

The storm left at least 16 dead and the entire island without power; most people won't get their lights back on anytime soon. The cascading effects have been devastating. More than half of residents remain without drinking water. Hospitals cannot function. Supermarket shelves are empty and few gas stations are open. Communication networks are crippled, and first responders are struggling to make contact with residents in remote or heavily affected areas. Credit cards are useless, and ATMs are out of service.

We know how to do better and we can do better. Nobody should die because the power went out.

We need a dedicated national effort to fortify our electrical grids so that they can get back online much more quickly after inevitable, and increasingly severe, extreme weather events. Natural disasters happen,

but often the catastrophes that follow are man-made. And when it comes to the electricity system—the lynchpin upon which so much of our society relies—widespread, long-lasting power outages can quickly devolve into nightmares all their own. Just a few weeks ago, 11 senior citizens died in Florida following prolonged heat exposure due to power outages in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma. Similar catastrophes were suffered in the wakes of many other earlier storms, including Hurricanes Sandy and Katrina.

The centralized electricity grid is widely vulnerable to threats, both natural and manmade. Flooding can submerge and damage equipment, as it did throughout the Northeast during Sandy; heavy winds can rip down trees and power lines, as was seen throughout Florida from Irma; and extreme heat and forest fires can wreak havoc on

transmission lines. Climate change stands to escalate these threats, by contributing to higher seas, more intense storms, worsening wildfires and extended heat waves.

That's why the focus must be on electricity grid resilience. It's impractical and impossible to stop all outages from occurring. But it is possible to design the system such that when the power does inevitably fail, fewer people are affected from the outset and power is restored more quickly for the rest.

In Florida, policymakers directed the state's utilities to "storm harden" their systems following the devastating 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons. One decade and several billion ratepayer dollars later, Irma gave people a chance to see their increased utility bills at work.

The result: an astounding 6.7 million customers—or nearly two out of every three in the state—were plunged into

darkness. Surely evidence of a failed approach, right?

Not quite. When it comes to the cascading failures arising from widespread outages, length of the blackout is a key factor in the severity of the impact. Even though all those Floridians lost power after, the utilities were able to get over one million back online overnight, and millions more restored within a few days with help from crews from across America.

In Florida, that pivot toward improving recovery times has meant, for one, simple upgrades, like replacing thousands of wooden utility poles with concrete that can better withstand hurricane-force winds. In the aftermath of Irma, even though crashing trees and flying debris ripped down power lines, restoration times were vastly improved by a reduced need to replace fallen poles.

Other initiatives can

be more technologically complex. For example, by installing sensors and grid automation throughout the system, utilities can pinpoint when and where an outage has occurred, and re-route systems to reduce the number of people without power. Similarly, flood monitoring equipment can alert a utility when critical infrastructure is at risk of inundation, allowing the equipment to be pre-emptively turned off to improve post-storm repair times.

Tackling a problem this big, however, is impossible for each utility to do alone. Complicating the push for a more resilient electricity system is the fact that proposed interventions can be expensive, and investment dollars are limited. Additionally, the federal government has offered insufficient assistance, leaving states, cities and territories to largely fend for themselves, even though

investing in a more resilient system now can reduce the costs of future relief and recovery efforts.

Utilities' limited funds mean there are trade-offs, so opportunities must be carefully weighed against one another. But the costs of prolonged outages are far-reaching and challenging to quantify, and resiliency metrics are hard to define and even harder to compare. Efforts must also align with other priorities, especially as the power sector undergoes an unparalleled transition to clean and distributed renewable resources.

The fact also remains that some services are far too critical—drinking water, first responders, communications—and some populations, such as the elderly, disabled, or low-income, to tolerate even a day without power. For these people and services, a resilient grid is not enough.

**(Contd on page 25)**



## From Russia With Poison

There is an abiding dream in the tech world that when all the planet's people and data are connected it will be a better place. That may prove true. But getting there is turning into a nightmare — a world where billions of people

are connected but without sufficient legal structures, security protections or moral muscles among companies and users to handle all these connections without abuse.

Lately, it feels as if we're all connected but no

one's in charge.

Equifax, the credit reporting bureau, became brilliant at vacuuming up all your personal credit data — without your permission — and selling it to companies that wanted to lend you money. But it was so lax in securing that data

that it failed to install simple software security fixes, leaving a hole for hackers to get the Social Security numbers and other personal information of some 146 million Americans, or nearly half the country.

But don't worry, Equifax ousted its C.E.O., Richard Smith, with "a payday worth as much as \$90 million — or roughly 63 cents for every customer whose data was potentially exposed in its recent security breach," Fortune reported. That will teach him! But don't worry, Equifax ousted its C.E.O., Richard Smith, with "a payday worth as much as \$90 million — or roughly 63 cents for every customer whose data was potentially exposed in its recent security breach," Fortune reported. That will teach him!

Smith and his board should be in jail. I'm with Senator Elizabeth Warren, who told CNBC, "So long as there is no personal

responsibility when these big companies breach consumers' trust, let their data get stolen, cheat their consumers ... then nothing is going to change."

Facebook, Google and Twitter are different animals in my mind. Twitter has enabled more people than ever to participate in the global conversation; Facebook has enabled more people than ever to connect and build communities; Google has enabled everyone to find things like never before.

Those are all good things. But the three companies are also businesses, and the last election suggests they've all connected more people than they can manage and they've been naïve about how many bad guys were abusing their platforms.

As Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, put it to me, "Up to now these companies have not taken

the threat that Russia and other foreign agents pose to our system seriously enough or invested enough or to really reveal what happened in 2016 — or what is still happening now." Last November, Facebook C.E.O. Mark Zuckerberg dismissed as "a pretty crazy idea" evidence that people were using Facebook to generate fake news to tip the U.S. election. Last week, after disclosing hundreds of Russia-linked accounts — where fictional people posing as U.S. activists spread inflammatory messages about immigration and guns and trashed Hillary Clinton and boosted Donald Trump — Zuckerberg admitted, "Calling that crazy was dismissive and I regret it." One reason Facebook was slow to respond is that its business model was to absorb all of the readers of the mainstream media newspapers

**(Contd on page 24)**

# As we complete 15 Years *Pakistan is mainstreaming jihad by lionising its protagonists*

"Words cannot express the monumental journey that each and every person reading this has crossed through. With this issue of The South Asian Insider, we will mark a fifteen year journey that has brought a wave of information and has amassed everyone together in this community. Few people can claim to have been a part of a tireless effort to soar through the top of the skies of the newspaper industries and be able to remark on it, 15 years later. We believe an order of gratitude is granted to all of you. To everyone who has stayed with The South Asian Insider through our path, thank you. If it was not for each and every one of you today who have supported our endeavours to become a reliable source of information, we would not have been able to voice our appreciation today. We as a family will continue to move forward with every article printed, with every word typed and with every voice incorporated into the publication that has stood to uphold the value of information and knowledge. Because with each idea shared, we as a community continue to move forward. And to all, thank you for sharing this achievement with all of us here today, working towards a new tomorrow."

**-Sharanjit Singh Thind**  
Editor In Chief & Publisher

## They brought a dead language to life'

### *Sanskrit is revived, then dies again in MP village*

The village of Mohad in Narsinghpur district seems unremarkable today, but at the turn of the century it attracted curiosity from across the country and around the world. According to residents and media reports from the time, in a single year Mohad became one of the only places in India where most residents spoke Sanskrit.

"Mohad was an inspiring example for all of us in the area," said Radheyshyam Narolia, 75, a retired deputy director from Madhya Pradesh's agriculture department. "The way they brought a dead language to life was a rare feat."

Interviews late last month with more than 50 families in the village showed that Sanskrit is becoming a dead language in Mohad once again. The swayamsevak who initially popularised Sanskrit died without leaving behind a similarly effective successor; alleged caste discrimination has made Sanskrit seem pointless to many Dalits and OBCs, who make up half the population of Mohad; and the state government, which promised to build a Sanskrit school eight years ago, has yet to do anything concrete.

The push for Sanskrit began in 1996. The initial results were swift and startling. According to Vikram Chouhan, the member of the RSS who oversees Mohad, within a year enough residents were fluent in Sanskrit for it to become the "first language" of the village. That also meant that the villagers could read and write, a significant feat for a state with a literacy rate of only 70%.

HT reported on the improbable success of this endeavour in 1997. Back then, Sanskrit classes were held at the village choupal late in the evening, after the women had finished their chores. The sessions continued well into the night. When HT visited, there were 200 people at a single class. There were a lot of laughs, but Hindi was strictly forbidden. In the morning, kids learned the language in school.

As a result, Mohad gained a bit

of fame. "When the fervour was at its peak, people from Switzerland and many other countries visited the village," said Beni Prasad Patel, the sarpanch of Mohad.

It was Sanskrit Bharti, an offshoot of the RSS, which introduced Sanskrit to the village. The effort was led by Surendra Singh Chouhan, whose education at the Benaras Hindu University and large landholdings in Mohad made him a dominant figure locally. Vikram, the RSS member, is his son, and has tried to continue Surendra's legacy. But "the enthusiasm decreased after the death of Surendra Singh Chouhan, the crusader," said Patel.

Now only a fading memory of the language lingers: asked "tvam nam kim?" (what is your name?), most residents understand and reply accordingly, but conversation cannot proceed much further. According to Patel, only 150 people of the 5,000 in Mohad can still speak Sanskrit fluently.

Learning Sanskrit might once have seemed an opportunity to move up in society, but people from oppressed castes said they'd come to find the language useless. "There was a time when everybody loved to speak in Sanskrit," said KS Chandoliya, a 45-year-old Dalit. "Now, we have realised that even if we learn Sanskrit, the language of the brahmins, the upper caste will never accept us as equals. They have problems in making a Dalit a purohit (priest), so why should we support them in popularising their language?"

Among more than two dozen Dalits in Mohad whom HT spoke to, young people were despondent about the prospects of Sanskrit. "I know Sanskrit and I learned it in school," said Ganesh Jatav, a student in class 11. "I loved the language, but slowly I realised that the language will not help me in getting a job. Also, it is not our language, but that of the upper castes."

(Contd on page 25)

There is no such thing as a born dictator or a born extremist. Circumstances and reactions from the government and society create them. Similarly, by rationalising or championing extremists or terrorists we lionise them; we create more bigots or terrorists masquerading as liberators or protectors of the downtrodden, whereas they are a bunch of violent, vicious people who not only want to overthrow the government but also the very basis of society, as we have known. The recent decisions or intentions in Pakistan are not really about mainstreaming radical extremists, but about lionising them. When you give something an iconic status, only a revolution can produce iconoclasts. Unknown to many outside Pakistan, there is a different revolution that is taking place – not for democracy but for Islamisation of the country. Radicalisation and intolerance in societies do not happen in bursts of tsunamis; they creep in silently at first, and then brazenly. It began virtually; in 1949, when Pakistan's leaders decided that the country's constitution would be based on the Quran and Sunnah. The signs have been there for all those who cared to see. The mosque gradually took control of the narrative; Zulfikar Ali Bhutto declared that Pakistan would be an Islamic republic and had the Ahmadis declared non-Muslim. General Zia-ul-Haq only followed and regimented the belief further. A decade after the siege of the Lal Masjid in Islamabad and the extreme violence that followed, Maulana Abdul Aziz still roams free without any charges against him. Former Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer was murdered by Mumtaz Qadri, his bodyguard with his colleagues watching, for his support to a Christian woman accused of blasphemy.

Today, Qadri is a cult figure with the extreme Right and has a mausoleum named after him, while the Taseer family keeps a low profile. Sectarian violence largely led by Sunni groups continues – against all minorities. For the 2012 bypolls in Sialkot, Nawaz Sharif's PML(N) candidate received the support from the Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamat. Obviously, there was some agreement between the PML(N), a mainstream political party, and the rabidly Sunni sectarian group. When the State or its components nurture and patronise jihadi terrorists, the consequences become unacceptable as the nation is caught in the cycle of isolation and radicalisation. Such a compromise provides no clear exits. The recently-held elections for the NA-120 seat in the Punjab province are a glaring example of the road on which Pakistan may be travelling. NA-120 was a part of the constituency that Bhutto had won with a thumping majority. In the last elections, the PML(N) scraped through with Imran Khan's PTI the first runners-up. What should be disturbing is that two extreme Right-wing parties polled 11% of the vote between themselves. The PPP was only an also-ran. Of these two, Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan glorifies Qadri and opposes the blasphemy law with the use of violence.



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# European Union and India are natural allies

*The discussions and joint statements during the 14th India-EU summit will help us put Pakistan on the defensive on*

The 14th India-EU summit, held in Delhi on October 6, drew attention to an important dimension of India's foreign policy and international economic engagement which normally receives scant public or analytical attention.

EU, with its present membership of 28 countries, constitutes India's largest trading partner, accounting for more than 100 billion euros, in a balanced trade relationship. With investments in India of \$83 billion over 2000-2017, it is 24% of total FDI flows into the country.

6,000 European companies are present in India. The Indian origin community, at 2.1 million, is not insignificant, even though less than the 3.5 million in the US. France, a leading member of the EU, is an important strategic partner, with high technology cooperation in defence, space, and civil nuclear. 50,000 Indian students are in EU in higher education, with 5,000 having been provided ERASMUS scholarships. EU also has a growing voice in international relations, even though on many issues its constituent members retain their independent voice and position. It has been part of the 5+1 talks on Iran, and the Quartet on the Middle East peace. Its members regularly coordinate positions. Germany, now emerging as the leader in Europe, so far prefers to stake a position through EU mechanisms. The European Commission, which was represented by its President, Jean Claude Juncker, enjoys transferred competence on several issues, including trade and agriculture.

It is, therefore, welcome that the process of India-EU summits, which was disrupted after the 12th summit in 2012, is falling into rhythm, with the 14th taking place soon after the

13th in 2016 in Brussels. Separate joint statements were also issued on combating terrorism, partnership for smart cities and sustainable urbanisation, and clean energy and climate change.

There was the inevitable focus on economic issues. The European Investment bank has committed Euros 1.5 billion for the year, with loans supporting the Bengaluru metro project and a solar project. Arrangements were worked out for exchange of scientists and researchers. On the Broadbased Trade and Investment Agreement, however, it was recognised that more preparatory work was necessary. This was expected due to ongoing reassessment in India of existing agreements, Brexit induced uncertainty in EU, and the global flux on trade norms introduced by the Trump presidency in the US.

Engagement with the EU also enables India to

balance some of the unhelpful trends emerging from the US, and to reinforce those that meet its interests. Many of these were reflected in the joint statement issued following the summit.

On Iran, both supported staying with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, since Iran has maintained its commitment, contrary to the now anticipated decertification by the US administration. They also supported the Paris Agreement on climate change, and the EU reiterated its commitment towards \$100 billion climate funding for developing countries.

There was a clear message on connectivity projects (an oblique reference to China's Belt and Road Initiative) emphasising good governance, rule of law, transparency, sustainability, avoiding financial indebtedness, similar to the statement India had issued on eve of the Belt and Road Forum convened in

China.

There were repeated references in public comments and the joint statement to India and EU sharing core values, democracy, human rights etc. These are useful parameters to emphasise when the Asia Pacific and the world has to deal with the consequences of a rising China, which works on different norms. In an op-ed on October 6, Juncker said "European Union and India are natural partners", the "bond is built on our shared beliefs", and that "the strength of the law outweighs the law of the strong" (the opposite of what China is doing in South China Sea), and there was a need to work "with like minded partners". In an interview, published the same day, Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, said that EU wanted to build a strong strategic partnership with India on the foundation of the common values of "freedom, democracy and



a credible, rules-based global order".

In view of their common interest, and also to meet the challenge of China's growing presence, EU also recognised India's interest and role in Africa, expressed commitment to enhance consultation and cooperation, and invited India to participate as an observer at the next EU-African Union Summit. There were specific references to terrorist incidents in India, which India had linked to Pakistan, and Pakistan based terrorist groups and individuals. Several individuals and groups were specifically cited, including Hafeez Saeed, Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, Dawood Ibrahim, LeT,

JeM. EU clearly has come a long way from its earlier reluctance to such specific references, no doubt because Europe itself has now been exposed to repeated terrorist attacks. It was also stated that "responsible states should take adequate measures to ensure that their territory is not used for terrorist activities".

In another oblique negative reference to Pakistan "both sides stressed the responsibility of those who support DPRK's nuclear and missile programmes". Aside from the bilateral advantages from a stronger partnership with European countries, there will also be spin offs in putting Pakistan on the defensive on

## Commentary: Uber's London fight a sign of tech battles to come

If there's been one common thread running through almost every industry in the last decade, it has been how a handful of tech firms have revolutionized how the world does business. There's Google for accessing information; Twitter for sharing opinion and news; Facebook for interacting with friends; Amazon for shopping, AirBnB for places to stay and Uber for getting around.

Until relatively recently, most consumers and governments took this as a positive trend. While there were disputes over individual and limited issues – not least the companies' unwillingness to pay tax or comply with requests from local regulators – they usually were seen as good for the economy and job opportunities. With their slick lobbying and PR operations, the tech entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley were courted by politicians and civil society alike.

That is changing. The decision by London authorities to strip Uber of its license to operate in the British capital is part of a wider backlash in a rapidly escalating

war between governments and the tech firms they believe have become too powerful and contemptuous of rules and democratic authority. Uber and its biggest rival Lyft were ejected from the Texas capital of Austin last year for refusing to fingerprint their drivers. In 2013 in San Francisco and Oakland, tech giants such as Google and Apple's private employee buses, which were illegally using public bus stops, were blocked by protesters. Other cities are clearly watching carefully. New York's city regulators said Monday they were looking at their own probe into Uber, looking specifically at its impact on the city's own yellow cab sector.

Political perceptions of these tech firms are changing too. After the so-called "Arab Spring," many Western governments – and the Obama administration in particular – openly praised the tech firms as being a positive global influence, helping democratize the world.

That assumption unraveled as the same platforms later fueled the rise



of far right parties in Europe and the Trump presidential campaign. Under Congressional pressure, Facebook voluntarily turned over details of 3,000 election-related ads that appeared to have been paid for by Russia-linked buyers.

Such scrutiny may only be the beginning. Increasingly, firms such as Facebook and Twitter are being blamed for seismic changes in Western political systems, accused of allowing themselves to be hijacked by automatic bots and hardliners to radicalize politics and often spread extremism.

Getting too close to tech firms now

brings its own political dangers. U.S. think tanks that happily embraced funding from Google now find themselves criticized for it, accused of reining in any debate critical of the company and its counterparts. Instead of spreading opportunity, such firms are increasingly blamed for killing jobs. Amazon's success is at the heart of what trade analysts referred to as the "retail apocalypse," the shutting of growing numbers of stores across the United States and beyond.

(Contd on page 24)



Richard Thaler has been awarded the Nobel Prize in economics for his pioneering work on decision-making that lies in the space between economics and psychology. The 72-year-old American economist is Charles R. Walgreen distinguished service professor of behavioral science and economics at Chicago Booth School of Business. Thaler co-authored the global bestseller *Nudge* in 2008 with Cass Sunstein, which shows that by knowing



how people think, “choice environments” can be designed that make it easier for individuals to choose what is best for themselves, their families, and society % without restricting freedom of choice. The Nobel committee has credited him with bringing the somewhat controversial field of behavioural economics from the fringes to the mainstream of academic research.

In 1983, when reporters asked Nobel laureate Gerard Debreu to explain his General

## Nobel winner Richard Thaler brought common sense to economics and that's no mean

*The importance of Nobel Prize for economics winner Richard Thaler is when we debate how governments can play a positive role in an individual's life without limiting his/her freedom. The answer is by giving a gentle nudge in the right direction*

Equilibrium Theory in plain English, economists were amused as it was a near impossible task and indeed, Debreu told them so. In a similar situation, Thaler can not only easily explain his work to a man on the street but that

person might remark, “This is just common sense”. Thaler brought common sense to economics % no mean achievement. Standard economic theory is based on the simplifying assumption that people

always behave rationally. Thaler considers the more realistic possibility that people sometimes act “human” and irrational. However, they deviate from rationality in consistent ways, which implies that behaviour can

be predicted, and there are opportunities to design public policy in a way that desired outcomes are attained. The Indian experience bears out the salience of human behaviour in public policy. Traditionally, the

thinking has been that as long as ‘rational’ policies are designed and implemented, all will be well. For instance, if adequate sanitation infrastructure is built, people will use it, and open defecation will be eliminated. In reality, the effectiveness of policy is often constrained by behaviours that are shaped by cultural norms and social conditioning, and are difficult to change in the short run. Many view latrines as ritually impure and prefer to defecate in the open. In such a context, investing in latrines by itself will not improve sanitation % people have to be nudged to use them. Incidentally, a well-known example of Thaler’s “nudge” is how etching flies in porcelain near urinal drains in the men’s rooms at Amsterdam airport reduced “spillage” by 80% as men like to aim at targets! Some of what we call irrational traits are nothing but simple human frailties like procrastination, lack of self-control, and sheer inertia. A simple nudge may help us overcome these problems and also achieve social good.

(Contd on page 24)

## People will go to any length to have a boy: IPS officer Esha Pandey

*On International Day of the Girl Child, Esha Pandey, an IPS officer, writes about the pressure her mother had to face because she had three daughters and no sons. However, today, two of them are IPS officers and one is an MBA graduate.*



My father has three girls. He has always been very supportive and loving for all of us and that shows in how we have shaped up. My mother is a gold medallist in MA Sanskrit and has been working since 1979. My father is the eldest son and was expected to bear at least one boy. Lo and behold he is the father of three girls!

While growing up, I went through a gamut of emotions on every Bhai Dooj or Rakshabandhan. Mind you, not because I missed having a brother, but because my mother was made to suffer. People believed my mother might have an evil eye because she doesn't have boys of her own. Such was the lust for a boy in our society.

Through all this my parents were extremely supportive to all three of us and helped us shape our careers. Today, two of us are proud IPS officers and the youngest one is an MBA. We have chosen our own life partners and our parents couldn't be prouder.

Recently I had a discussion with a group of educated young men and women about this perennial issue. I was surprised to find that this group of people wanted boys as much as that group which troubled my parents, thirty years ago. The difference is they camouflage it very well and do not discuss it. But most wives are fearful of not having a boy and many exclaimed that if the first-born is a boy there is no societal pressure to have a second child. They said that it's not the men that the society questions but women and therefore, they

wanted to have a boy.

My research on this topic has brought out various cliché's of life: people will go to any length to have a boy. It might be 'swarn bhasm' from a baba or a particular setting of the moon that will help you conceive a boy.

I also came across a story where in some thirty five years ago, when society was still very simple and government was paying more attention to steel plants and License Raj, a baba told a very educated lady (who was visiting him after the birth of her second girl) that the Kundali of her eldest daughter is such that she will have five girls and only then a boy. The lady was very troubled because her husband was heir to a lot of property and none of which her daughters could inherit. She asked a midwife about a home remedy to get rid of a foetus and systematically eradicated four of

them without anyone's knowledge. When she conceived for the fifth time, she was a hundred percent sure it would be a boy. It was, but her body failed to carry him till the ninth month, he was delivered in the eighth month and died. She was never able to have children after that.

In this day and age, where women are at the forefront of everything, girls need to be treasured. My women colleagues and I are prime example of how much a girl can achieve with a little confidence and a lot of parental love. The lawmakers have done their bit by making sex determination and abortion illegal and giving tremendous boost to the girl child through various schemes, let us do our bit. Let us become a ray of hope for the girls. Let us save them, let us teach them and give them a better future. #BetiBachao BetiPadhao

# What Happens in Vegas Stays in Vegas, Except Mass Shootings



By Max Thind

First and Foremost, we at The South Asian Insider would like to extend our deepest condolences to those directly and indirectly effected by this national tragedy. What has been labelled the "Deadliest Shooting in US History" may hold up to its name considering 58 people have been killed and more than 500 have been injured. The shooter has been identified as local resident 64-year old Stephen Paddock. Around 10 p.m. Paddock began firing his assault rifle from a room on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Resort at more than 22,000 concertgoers. Paddock took his own life in his room before police could arrive to apprehend him. No reason has been given for why Paddock would commit such an atrocious act. Family members of Paddock said they were shocked by the shooting and that they don't know of a single reason for Stephen to go on this mass murder rampage against innocent partygoers. The Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the shooting without having cited any proof whatsoever. Videos are currently online that show the concert being disrupted by gunfire. When the shooting initially started no one knew it was gunfire, they thought it was fireworks, it was only when the second round of shooting start did they realize the deadly truth. Many of the concertgoers tried to hide wherever possible, people got trampled, even the police for a time were suppressed and hid behind their cars. When police breached Paddock's room using explosive, they found 18 to 20 firearms and massive amounts of ammunition. Is this where the U.S government draws the line and decides to place stricter regulations on our 2nd Amendment right or do we blame the shooter. The following weeks will include intense debates from both right

wing and left-wing lobbyists on gun ownership rights. A big determining factor for whether the guns or the shooter were the problem would be whether the guns were obtained legally or illegally. The situation will develop more over the next few weeks.

**iPhone X Flops, Samsung Wins, iPhone X Hits, Samsung Still Wins**

The iPhone X is a very different device from all the predecessors. From the components to the design and everything in between its just different. A major new component that no other iPhone used was the new vibrant OLED display

play the iPhone X will have. However, Apple doesn't have any experience with OLED, Apple always used their signature retina LCD displays. Who in the world are they sourcing their OLED displays from? That's right, their arch nemesis Samsung Electronics. Out of the \$1,000 Apple sells the phone for, Samsung will take a hefty sum of \$110 for their sums, over 10%. Apple and Samsung have a love hate relationship, although they have their own consumer electronics to sell, they share components as well. Samsung supplies the displays and memory chips for a majority of Apple's phones. Samsung employees even have a nickname for their rival, "LO" which means Lovely Opponent, showing just how intimate and understood their relationship is. This relationship will make Samsung and Apple the most profitable companies in 2017 if everything goes according to plan and neither has a major setback like last year's Note 7 fiasco. Cheers to Mr. & Mrs. Smith (Apple & Samsung if you didn't get our movie joke).

**Cuban Embassy Officials In**

**D.C to be Thrown Out**

The Trump Administration has given notice to the Cuban embassy in Washington D.C to get send half of their diplomats back to Cuba, further staining U.S-Cuban relations. The U.S is doing the same in Cuba, taking out all their diplomats and leaving only emergency personnel in the small nation. One of the key reasons given were that U.S officials in Cuba were succumbing to certain illnesses including nausea, dizziness, insomnia and various other concerning problems. The cause behind these problems have not yet been determined and that has been setting off red flags in Washington. Failure to protect U.S officials in Cuba has been one of the prominent reasons for the ousting of the Cuban officials. That Cuban getaway vacation many Americans have dreamed of may not become a reality for quite some time unfortunately.

**Yahoo Data Breach of 1 Billion Users is Actually 3 Billion**

In 2013 Yahoo succumbed to a data breach from hackers that compromised the personal information of 1 billion users. Turns

out that 1 billion is actually 3 billion, the information stolen includes usernames, passwords, telephone numbers and dates of birth. Yahoo's new parent, telecommunications giant Verizon said the breach was much larger than they initially thought. The new update of conditions was provided by a source outside the company that Oath, the renamed branch of Verizon's Yahoo unit declined to name. Hackers recently have started targeting massive technology companies with an enormous amount of personal data. This can be seen with the recent hacking of credit reporting giant Equifax Inc. The company has been slammed by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) over the handling of the massive data breach which included very personal and harmful information such as social security numbers. Naturally all companies with sensitive information will start to ramp up their security, a sector that will receive tremendous growth within the next decade is cybersecurity as the digital world becomes more complex and deeply ingrained into average life.

## Demonetization A Step.. Black or White

By Sonia Gaba

Which Indian can forget the date 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016, when a historic and crucial decision of government of India was taken in which demonetization of all 500 and 1000 banknotes of the Mahatma Gandhi series' was announced. The bold step taken by the government was meant to drill unaccounted black money on which income tax had not been paid' thus making India corruption free. But.... the step lead to chaos and mess everywhere. Long queues outside the banks.....' difficulty in transactions due to delay in circulation of new currency; burning of cash at many places and discarding the cash...all these scenes seemed defaming the image of Indian economy on world scenario. The government was dreaming positivity in this decision but the impacts painted the whole picture in black leading to results which are speaking otherwise. Common man was the sufferer, especially farmers, taxi drivers and rickshaw



pullers. People were asked to postpone their needs but what about those who were in dire need of money for some medical exigency or who needed money for delivering baby. How could they postpone it, nobody had the answer. On the contrary, the rich got the opportunity to convert their black money into white through their clever tactics.

A report said that rich strata of community sold the banned notes at a discount to brokers, many switched to their relatives and friends to help channel their undeclared cash into the banking system.

The RBI's annual report showed its dividend paid to the government fell 53% to 301 billion rupees in the last fiscal year, partly due to sharp rise in expenditure on printing new currency. Thus the blanket of demonetization which seemed to have white sparkle dragged India to a "Black hole" of more corruption. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) gave its annual report on August 31 that "Almost all demonetized notes have returned to the system" which again proved that currency ban was a failure. Moreover, there was an extra

burden of 79.65 billion rupees as RBI had to spend on quickly printing updated replacements for the 500 rupee and 1000 rupee notes which were abruptly banned. Another step of introducing a higher denomination banknote of 2000 rupees also seemed to promote black money in an easy and prompt way. First quarter Gross domestic product (GDP) data marked a three-year-low of 5.7% versus 7.9% this year before. This all compels us to think that whether **DEMONITISATION WAS A WISE STEP OR MERE A POLITICAL MOVE?**

# Why Delhi Metro fare hike is not a bad idea

**Unlike other public transport utilities and Metros around the world, Delhi Metro raised two-thirds of the cost through a loan from Japan International Cooperation Agency and is committed to paying about Rs 1100 crore annually to the corporation**

When I took the Delhi Metro on Tuesday — the day fare was hiked — I was expecting a substantial dip in the number of passengers in the otherwise cramped coaches. To my surprise, I did not find anything like that. The coaches were full and there was a mad scramble at Rajiv Chowk station among people to board their trains. It looked like any other day on Delhi Metro.

To me, the passengers are not averse to a fare hike, unlike politicians, provided the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) maintains a high standard of ridership quality, which has deteriorated in the recent past. The coaches, especially in the evening hours, are dirty, cleanliness in stations, more so in central Delhi, has gone down, and electronic display board sometimes don't show the correct destination, especially on the Yellow Line, which I take.

From Tuesday, the DMRC increased the fare by Rs 5 for a travel between two to five kilometres and Rs 10 for more than that. There is no fare change for less than two kilometres, which is between two stations.

The DMRC officials say the fare hike was much needed as its financial health was going south because of the low fares as expenditure was rising and it was reflecting on its operational ability. Metro's operating ratio — expenditure for Rs 100 earned — was rising. The ratio has almost doubled since 2009, the last time when the fare was hiked, primarily on account of electricity tariff rising by almost 90% and salary burden increasing by 50%.

This is reflected in the annual reports that show that the gap between revenue and expenses is increasing. The loss (after paying taxes) has jumped by five times since 2011-12, annual reports of DMRC show. Unlike other public transport utilities and Metros around the world, Delhi Metro raised two-thirds of the cost through a loan from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and is committed to paying about Rs 1100 crore annually to the corporation. It

presented a successful public funded model for other cities such as Bengaluru, Lucknow, and Jaipur to replicate, which they had done successfully. And if people in the national capital region need high quality and reliable public transport, Metro's financial concerns have to be addressed even if they pinch their pocket a bit. As a Metro traveller for over five years, I estimate that the impact would not be more than 15% on the monthly travel expenditure of regular traveller. Despite the fare hike, the Metro is still the cheapest mode of quality transport. For a five-km ride, one pays Rs 20 which is even cheaper than the fare of an electric rickshaw or an autorickshaw for that distance. And if the distance covered is longer, the cost is less than Rs 2 per km. For instance, one has to pay Rs 60 for covering a distance of 47.5 km between Samaypur Badli and Huda City



Centre in Gurugram, which no public transport can provide. I fully agree with former DMRC chairperson E Shreedharan that Delhi Metro provides a world-class facility at the cheapest rates. The Capital's Metro is 19 times cheaper than London Metro and seven times than the Singapore one. The fare hike, in

the short-term, can push passengers to shun the Metro for cars but in the long run, people would return to the Capital's popular mode of public transport. Passengers will take the hit but Delhi Metro has to improve on the frequency of trains and management of passengers at security gates to ensure hassle-

free travel. In my view, the additional benefit as the Metro network expands would be tackling Delhi's rising air pollution as the train system is an alternative to personal vehicles. The governments in Delhi and its neighbourhood, however, have to help by providing clean and reliable last mile connectivity.

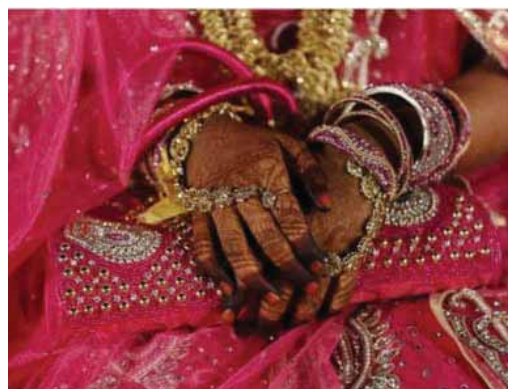
## Make child marriages void: Court

NEW DELHI: Terming child marriage a social evil that endangers the life and health of the girl child, the Supreme Court on Friday said such marriages should be declared void and stringent punishment prescribed for those who promote and such practices. Although the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) bars child marriages, these are held to be valid unless challenged by the minor, virtually giving legal approval to the institution of child marriage till its validity is challenged. Only

Karnataka has amended the Act and declared any marriage of a child, a female aged below 18 years and a male below 21 years, as void. Favouring amendment in the law to declare child marriage illegal, a bench of Justices Madan B Lokur and Deepak Gupta said that other states must follow Karnataka's example. "It would be wise for all the state legislatures to adopt the route taken by Karnataka... and thereby ensure that sexual intercourse between a girl child

and her husband is a punishable offence under the POCSO Act and the IPC," the bench said. SC also suggested that penal provisions should be made stringent to punish members of a family who force a child into a matrimonial alliance. It said the punishment under PCMA was not sufficiently punitive and observed that PCMA was being misused as women promoting child marriages were kept out of the penal provision.

## Government draws SC fire for legitimising rape



NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it was unfortunate that successive governments blinked at the incongruity of Section 375(2) of Indian Penal Code that absolved a husband of rape charges even if he had sex with a wife who was below the age of 18 years+ . Referring to the five-year-old Parliament-

enacted Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, a bench of Justices Madan B Lokur and Deepak Gupta said POCSO Act provides that if a person related to a child below 18 years of age commits a penetrative sexual assault on that child, then he would be liable for aggravated penetrative sexual assault.

"Therefore, if the husband of a girl child commits penetrative sexual assault on his wife, he actually commits aggravated penetrative sexual assault as defined under Section 5(n) of POCSO Act and is punishable by a term of rigorous imprisonment of not less than 10 years and which may extend to imprisonment of life," Justice Lokur said. He said, "The duality therefore is that having sexual intercourse with a girl child between 15

and 18 years of age, the husband of the girl child is said to have not committed rape as defined in Section 375 of the IPC but is said to have committed aggravated penetrative sexual assault in terms of Section 5(n) of the POCSO Act."

The SC found no material difference between the definition of rape under Section 375 of the IPC and penetrative sexual assault in terms of Section 3 of the POCSO Act. "The only difference is that the definition of rape is somewhat more elaborate and has two exceptions but the sum and substance of the two definitions is more or less the same and the punishment for being found guilty of committing the offence of rape is also same under IPC and POCSO Act." The bench said POCSO Act was legislatively intended to override all other laws.

# How placebos work - even when you know you're taking a sugar pill: Oxford academic reveals their unlikely healing power



Sometimes doctors use sugar pills, salt water injections or low doses of medications that have no pharmacological effect. These all have a placebo effect and can be effective for treating many common ailments, especially pain. I learned from personal experience about the power of placebos in a pivotal moment in my 20s — one of those moments that seemed unimportant at the time but, in fact, led to important changes in direction. I'd developed a severe allergy to a cat while training to compete in a rowing competition in the Nineties. I was stuck. I could not sleep or train due to a running nose and sneezing, but I couldn't take the medication I needed because I feared failing a drugs test (I was rowing for Canada).

As a last resort, I accepted my mother's suggestion to meet her friend, who was a herbal doctor. She told me to drink ginger tea twice a day. I doubted that it would work but sure enough, after a day, I felt a bit better. After three days I stopped sneezing almost completely, I slept well and my nose stopped running. This got my mind racing. Could my allergies have disappeared spontaneously? Or did ginger tea work because I believed it might — in other words, had it acted as a placebo? And if it was 'just' a placebo, did that matter if it helped? Searching for answers to these questions ignited a fascination that has shaped my life ever since. As a clinical epidemiologist, I have spent ten years looking at the best quality research into placebo effects and the results have astounded me: reviewing 152 trials involving more than 15,000 patients with a range of illnesses found that, on average, placebos have almost the same effect as 'real' treatments. As a nation we are taking too many pills and research shows this can be deadly. Prescription painkillers kill more people than heroin and cocaine combined in the U.S., overuse of antibiotics is creating dangerous superbugs and 80 per cent of people who take several pills at a time have side-effects ranging from shortness of breath to death. And beyond the research I've lived by my findings: I avoid drugs unless absolutely necessary and have refused knee and back surgery even when doctors strongly recommended it. I am not suggesting rejecting all medicines; that would clearly go too far and many drugs are effective. But the emerging middle way is the use of evidence-based placebo effects and self-healing techniques. I hope that what I've learned will help you experience better health yourself and help others achieve it, too. Most of us do not need medicine most of the time. Many illnesses — back pain, mild depression, minor injuries — go away without it. Understanding how incredible your body is can help you make better decisions about when you really need to take medicine and when it is better to rely on your body's healing powers.

Suppose that you knew your body could produce its own morphine. Would you still take as much aspirin — which can make your stomach bleed — for mild headaches? If you knew having a support network and being optimistic had the same biological effect on depression as a pill, would you be less likely to try Prozac — which can have side-effects from sexual dysfunction to suicidal tendencies? What about the fact that placebo knee surgery is as good as the real thing — would you choose the surgeon's knife before physiotherapy? Debate rages about whether placebos actually work. Some think they are powerful cures for almost everything, while others say they are useless. Amidst these debates, one thing is certain: most doctors use them. A 2013 survey showed 97 per cent of doctors in the UK have prescribed placebos at least once.

## Will pay 50% of funds to run Delhi Metro if Centre pays the rest: Kejriwal

**The Delhi chief minister said his government was ready to take over Delhi Metro provided the Centre was willing to work with it over the funding issue. The CM had termed the new fare hike as 'anti-people' and sought to keep the rates unrevised.**



crore annually for five years to put off the metro fare hike, set to be implemented from Tuesday. Kejriwal has termed as "anti-people" the proposed hike, which will affect an estimated 28 lakh people who take the metro daily in the national capital region that includes parts of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The hike will be the second in eight years. DMRC managing director Mangu Singh met the chief minister on Sunday amid frantic efforts by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government to stop the hike. Delhi transport minister Kailash Gahlot earlier threatened Singh to "remove" him from the post if the fare hike is implemented. "If the central government agrees, the Delhi government would be willing to takeover DMRC. We are confident that we will be able to fund DMRC by improving its efficiency rather than effecting steep fare hikes and provide affordable means of transport of Delhi people," Kejriwal in the letter to Puri. "I can understand your reservation about issuing a direction under the DMRC Act, the simpler course would be to advise the nominees of the central and Delhi government on the board of DMRC to postpone the hike for a few months," Kejriwal added, though such a possibility looks remote. The chief minister took a swipe at the Centre over his frequent allegations that the BJP-led government had been trying to create impediments for the AAP government. "From recent developments, it is becoming evident that the relationship is not one of equal partners since what the Delhi government proposes is often summarily disposed by the central government," he added. The Delhi assembly is likely to pass a proposal against the fare hike on Monday. The proposal was moved by Gahlot on Wednesday.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday offered to take over Delhi Metro and promised to make the capital's most popular mode of mass transport more efficient, his latest salvo in a face-off with the Centre over a proposed fare hike. In a letter to Union housing and urban affairs minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Kejriwal also said his government was willing to provide half of the funds required by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) to meet the gap in operating finances but only if a matching grant is provided by the Centre. The chief minister's offer came a day after Puri said the Delhi government will have to pay Rs 3,000

### India loses fastest growing economy rank; IMF slashes 2017 rate to 6.7%

India has lost its rank as the world's fastest growing major economy in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) tally after it slashed India's growth projection for 2017 by 0.5 percent to 6.7 percent on Tuesday. But an IMF official briefing the media about the World Economic Outlook report called it a "blip" in a longer term positive picture for India. The report projected India to regain the top spot next year with a 7.4 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate. In the medium term, India's growth rate could reach 8 percent helped by several structural reforms, including the Goods and Services Tax (GST), that are underway, the report said. For now, China has edged slightly ahead to be the growth champion with a projected growth rate of 6.8 percent, according to the latest IMF report. IMF's 6.7 percent growth rate projection is in line with the Reserve Bank of India's forecast. But they are at the low end of the spectrum of estimates made by the IMF and four other international organisations with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) putting it at 7.3 percent. The IMF's previous projections for 2017 made in April and July had put India's economic growth rate at 7.2 percent. Explaining the cut, the report said that India's growth momentum slowed because of "the lingering impact" of last year's demonetisation "as well as uncertainty related to the midyear introduction of the country-wide Goods and Services Tax".

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# By 2022, more obese kids than malnourished ones

MUMBAI: In another five years, the number of obese children in the world will outnumber the malnourished ones. A report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Imperial College London, published in medical journal 'The Lancet', stated on Wednesday that obesity rates among the world's children and adolescents+ increased from less than 1% in 1975 to nearly 6% in girls and nearly 8% in boys in 2016. India, however, features as the only undernourished zone in this global childhood obesity map. In 2016, the country was still home to 97 million of the world's

moderately or severely underweight children and adolescents." India had the highest prevalence of moderately and severely underweight under-19s throughout these four decades (24.4% of girls and 39.3% of boys were moderately or severely underweight in 1975, and 22.7% and 30.7% in 2016)," said the report. Experts, however, cautioned that India's malnourished status conceals the unhealthy fact that obesity levels are galloping in several metros and cities. Dr V Mohan, one of the secondary authors of the Lancet study, said,

"Compared to 1975, there is no denying that obesity among children has increased across the world. In India, too, BMI (body mass index) of children has increased, but not to the levels it has in some other countries, say, in the Americas and East Asia." The study, which looked at BMI as a marker of obesity, said BMI among India's boys increased from 15.03 to 16.97 in 2016 while it increased from 15.74 to 16.94 among girls. A senior doctor said these obesity levels are not as worrisome as in some western countries. But Delhi-based endocrinologist Dr Anoop Misra

said the overall India BMI doesn't give the entire picture. "In states such as Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, undernutrition is still a big issue." Dr Misra's previous studies have shown that 30% of urban India's children are either overweight or obese. "This number will grow as the junk food culture seems to dominate," he added. Dr Misra said while obesity levels were lower among children in rural India, many of them who migrate to urban areas tend to become obese more quickly than others. Imperial's School of Public Health professor Majid Ezzati, who is the main author of the



Lancet study, said, "Over the past four decades, obesity rates in children and adolescents have soared globally, and continue to do so." The study said if post-2000 trends continued, global levels of child and adolescent obesity would surpass those for moderately and severely



Delhiites can literally feel the effects of the city's toxic air in their bones.

Doctors at AIIMS say there is a strong indication that pollution sparks a rise in autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis that has witnessed a 20% surge in cases at the institute with winter approaching.

On the eve of World Arthritis Day on Thursday, with the theme 'It's in your hands, take action',

doctors at AIIMS are raising awareness about rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) and encouraging sufferers to take action and make a difference to the quality of life of people

## Feeling Delhi's toxic air in your BONES

**Link found between Capital smog and rheumatoid arthritis that causes the immune system to attack the joints**

with RMDs. The institute has witnessed over 24,000 cases of the disorder with a waiting period of six months for new patients.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic inflammatory debilitating disease triggered by a complex interaction involving genetic and environmental factors that cause the body's immune system to mistakenly attack the joints.

A study was conducted on AIIMS patients suffering from the condition and correlated with air quality and data provided by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The findings showed

that when pollution high, the prevalence of the disease increased in patients.

'We collected the data of air quality from IMD in New Delhi for the past few years and co-related with the patients who got the treatment here. 'It found that when the particulate matter (pollution) in air was high, then more disease activity was found in the patients,' said Dr Uma Kumar, professor & head of the rheumatology department at AIIMS. 'Thus, air pollution is not only responsible for respiratory diseases, but it also contributes to the autoimmune diseases,'

Dr Kumar, adding that post Diwali celebrations, symptoms of the disease worsen in patients. Capital's air quality has been rated one of the worst in the world by international agencies including WHO, with millions of vehicles,

factories, construction sites as well as burning crop stubble from neighbouring states belching out clouds of tiny PM2.5 particles that can be most harmful to health.



## 'I see my child suffer every day'

**Parents reveal toddler's scarred face months after he was burned with acid because his mother rejected a man's advances in India**

A devastated mother has revealed her toddler's scarred face months after he was burned with acid because she rejected a man's advances.

Two-year-old Aditya Raj, from a slum in Gurugram, northern India, was kidnapped by his mother's stalker after she refused to leave her husband and marry him.

The kidnapper poured acid on the boy's face and left him for dead in a bin last December. Three surgeries have saved Aditya's eyesight

but he has been left scarred forever. Revealing his scars today, the boy's mother Soni, 26, said: 'I still cannot get over that day. 'My son was found in a dustbin with his face melting, who does that? It has been 10 months but it still feels like yesterday. I have seen my child suffer every day since. It is unforgettable.' Since news of Aditya made headlines the government and an NGO stepped forward to help fund Aditya's recovery and treatment. Shaheen Malik, the

national co-ordinator of the Human Rights Law Network, said: 'There has never been any compensation policy for male acid attack survivors in the past, even male children.

All policies only help female acid attack survivors. We filed a request in court in order to change the policy and request that Aditya to be helped. Fortunately, our plea was heard and we were allotted a compensation sum for

Aditya.' Aditya has been treated by Dr Avtar Singh Bath, a senior consultant, at BL Kapoor Hospital, in New Delhi, one of India's largest private hospitals, and has operated on his eye and nose.





# 'I wanted to study but my family wanted me to live with a drunkard'

## Indian woman uses Facebook to annul her underage marriage

A young Indian woman has proved in court that she was illegally married off as a minor after using evidence from her husband's Facebook page, a child rights activist confirmed on Thursday.

The girl, 19, appealed to a court in Rajasthan state to dissolve her underage marriage, an illegal but rife tradition in many parts of rural India.

But her husband denied the couple were ever betrothed.

The teenager, aided by an activist, trawled her husband's Facebook accounts until they found the proof they needed that the marriage occurred when she was underage.

'Many of his friends had posted congratulatory messages on his Facebook page,' said Kriti Bharti, an

activist whose Sarathi Trust charity has annulled many child marriages in Rajasthan.

The court accepted the evidence and declared the marriage invalid,' she said of the ruling Monday.

The couple were married at a secret wedding ceremony in Barmer district in 2010 when both were just 12 years old.

Girls married off in Rajasthan often remain with their parents after the wedding ceremony until reaching 18 years of age, when they are sent to live their husbands.

The girl said her parents were planning to force her to move to her husband's house and consummate the marriage.

'I wanted to study but my

family and my in-laws wanted me to live with a drunkard,' she told AFP.

'It was about life and death, and I chose to live.'

She ran away from home to a shelter where

she met Bharti, who helped her begin legal proceedings to dissolve the union.

India's highest court Wednesday declared sex with a minor akin to rape

even if the couple was married, a landmark ruling that closed a legal loophole around child marriage.

Nearly half of all girls in South Asia marry before 18 years of age, according to a UNICEF report released in



**SC Bench:** Young girls are married in thousands in the country, and there is an auspicious day — Akshaya Trutiya — when mass child marriages are performed. Such young girls are subjected to sexual intercourse regardless of their health, their ability to bear children and other adverse social, economic and psychological consequences.

## APEX COURT'S LANDMARK JUDGMENT

Verdict came on a PIL that challenged validity of Exception 2 to Section 375 (which defines rape) of IPC, as it permitted intrusive sexual intercourse with a girl child aged between 15 to 18 years only on the ground that she has been married.

The PIL pointed out the rule's anomaly with Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) under which sexual intercourse with a girl child under the age of 18 years — with or without her consent — would constitute rape.

# Arvind's humble blue 'Kejri-KART' stolen in Delhi as police promise to 'take the matter very seriously'

The iconic Wagon R car, used by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, has been stolen from outside the Delhi Secretariat on Thursday afternoon. After the 2015 Assembly polls, the car bearing registration number — DL 9CG 9769, was being used by one Vandana of Media Cell of Aam Aadmi Party. On Thursday, she had parked the car outside Delhi Secretariat. 'At around 3.51 pm, a call was made to the police control room informing about the incident.

A case has been registered at IP Estate police station,' said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central). The humble blue hatchback, which became synonymous with Kejriwal's 'aam aadmi' image, was being used by an AAP functionary these days.

The car was donated to Kejriwal by Kundan

Sharma, a software engineer, in January 2013. 'We are looking into the matter seriously as the car can be misused during the occasion of Diwali. However, it has been learnt that the car does not bear any government sticker,' said a police official.

The complainant told police that there were some belongings kept in the car. 'All the police stations have been informed about the vehicle theft and the probe is underway,' said the police.

AAP's Haryana convenor Naveen Jaihind has announced an undisclosed amount as reward for whoever finds the vehicle. Jaihind had sought the lucky car for his campaigning when he contested the 2014 Lok Sabha poll from Rohtak.

'I want this car back. There are a lot of emotions, memories attached to it. Whoever returns the car, I will give him a suitable reward, which will be much

more than what he will get from selling the car,' Jaihind said.

Like Jaihind, many AAP volunteers recollect the iconic car for it was there for all the ups and downs of the Aam Aadmi Party.

'I am just praying, it comes back!!#BlueWagonR, AAP leader Vandana Singh, who was using the car, tweeted.

The car was witness to two assembly election wins in 2013 and 2015 and also to the party's poor performance in the Lok Sabha polls.



## West Bengal has 40 per cent child brides: Survey in SC

New Delhi, Oct 12: West Bengal has got the dubious distinction of having the maximum number of married girl children at 40 per cent, a survey considered by the Supreme Court has said. The apex court, which has delivered a historic verdict declaring sexual intercourse with minor wife as rape, quoted the survey in its order, saying

the figure of 40.7 per cent of child brides significantly rises to 47 per cent in rural areas of the populous eastern state. The report said the lowest percentage of child marriages was recorded in Punjab and Kerala at 7.6 per cent. According to the National Family Health Survey 2015-16, the states with second and third highest percentage of brides

under 18 years of age were Bihar and Jharkhand with 39 and 38 per cent respectively. The report was submitted before a Supreme Court bench of Justices M B Lokur and Deepak Gupta, which ruled that sex with a wife who is under 18 years of age is an offense under the Indian Penal Code with an imprisonment of up to 10 years.

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# Middle-class Indian dentist couple win murder appeal after being accused



In the latest sensational twist of a case that has divided India and inspired a movie and a book, an affluent, middle-class couple won their appeal against a life jail term for the murder of their daughter and a servant.

The Allahabad high court acquitted dentists Rajesh and Nupur Talwar after ruling there was insufficient proof that they slit the throats of 14-year-old daughter Aarushi and their Nepalese servant Hemraj Banjade in May 2008.

The couple were not in the packed court for the hearing. They are in jail near New Delhi. Media reports said Rajesh Talwar hugged jail officials after hearing the verdict.

Tanveer Mir, a lawyer for the Talwars, told reporters outside the Allahabad court that the couple would be freed on Friday.

'The High court observed that they have been punished wrongly. They are not guilty,' he said.

'They were only present at home that night as parents and were punished. It was entirely wrong and an injustice against my clients.'

'The court observed that the case against the Talwars was baseless. The evidence was weak,' declared the lawyer.

India has been

riveted by the case ever since the first details of the double murder in the affluent New Delhi suburb of Noida emerged.

The Talwars were convicted by a lower court in 2013 and sentenced to life in prison.

The film 'Talvar' based on the murder packed cinemas in 2015 while journalist Avirook Sen published a bestselling book 'Aarushi' the same year.

The film 'Talvar' based on the murder packed cinemas in 2015 while journalist Avirook Sen published a bestselling book 'Aarushi' the same year.

The couple had always denied carrying out the killings, insisting they are victims of police incompetence and a media witch-hunt.

Aarushi, their only child, was found on her bed in a pool of blood on the morning of May 16, 2008.

Her successful middle-class parents told police

they were asleep in the next room when the murder was committed.

Police initially blamed the missing servant Banjade, only to find his body on the terrace a day later with a similarly cut throat and head wounds.

Investigators then said the Talwars killed Aarushi in a fit of rage after finding her with the 45-year-old servant in an 'objectionable position', suggesting the double murder was an honour killing.

The prosecution in 2013 admitted there was no material evidence against the parents, basing their case on the 'last-seen theory' which holds that the victims were last seen with the accused.

Since the parents' first appearance in court, every development has been given wall-to-wall and often voyeuristic coverage by the media.

The case spawned a nation of armchair detectives debating every

twist of the investigation for or against the Talwars who have become household names. The country's most sensational double murder case has become a 'whodunnit' yet again after the Allahabad High Court overturned the conviction of Noida dentist couple Rajesh and Nupur Talwar for the killings of their teenage daughter Aarushi and domestic help Hemraj.

While announcing the acquittal, the judges said the evidence against the Talwars was circumstantial and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which probed the case, had failed to prove the charges beyond reasonable doubt.

Aarushi, who was soon to turn 14, was found with her throat slit at the family home in Noida on May 16, 2008.

Police initially named missing Hemraj as the prime suspect, until his body was found a day later on a terrace above the girl's room.

His throat was also slit and he had suffered injuries to his head.

Suspicion soon fell on the Talwars with cops saying the murders had been committed with 'surgical precision' and they even cited 'honour' killing as a possible motive.

The case saw a series of twists and turns since the investigation was started by Noida police and later transferred to the CBI. Over the years, roles of suspects, accused and guilty kept changing.

A string of acquittals, starting with Rajesh Talwar's assistant Krishna and two domestic helpers, Rajkumar and Vijay, has ended for now with the parents.

The HC decision, however, has left questions

committed the double murder.

The CBI could now consider the option of appealing in the Supreme Court while, emotionally drained after nine years of trial, the Talwar family thanked the judiciary for the acquittals.

The parents had repeatedly denied the charges against them and insisted that they were victims of shoddy probes and unfair media coverage.

'I am grateful to the judiciary for the verdict,' said BG Chitnis, retired IAF officer and Nupur's father. 'They have really suffered. They are emotionally drained. At my age it was very trying to see my daughter behind bars.'

**I am grateful to the judiciary for the verdict. At my age, it was very tiring to see my daughter behind bars.**

—BG CHITNIS, FATHER OF NUPUR TALWAR



**It's been an exhausting journey for us. We are really grateful to the High Court for having acquitted and ending the injustice meted out to them.**

—VANDANA TALWAR, RAJESH TALWAR'S SISTER-IN-LAW



## Bolly thrillers feasted on mystery

**TALVAR:** Irrfan and Konkona-starrer *Talvar* approached the case from various points of view, with director Meghna Gulzar trying her best to tread a middle ground. But soon after its release, *Talvar* found itself in the eye of a storm and its obliquely classist conclusion was criticised no end. Indeed, the film did make the viewers' sympathies tilt towards the parents, showing in meticulous and painstaking detail how the entire probe was messed up.



**RAHASYA:** The less-famous *Rahasya* too received mixed-to-positive reviews. The film was met with stiff criticism from Aarushi's parents Rajesh and Nupur Talwar, who were awaiting the verdict in the case back when *Rahasya* was announced. The shooting was completed before the verdict in the case arrived, and it could release only in January 2015, after the November 2013 CBI special court verdict was out. Before the release of *Rahasya*, Talwars even filed a case against the film.



## MURDERS WHICH SHOOK THE CITY

- Aarushi Talwar was found killed in her bedroom on May 16, 2008. Domestic help Hemraj, who was missing, suspected as the killer. The next day, Hemraj's body was found on the terrace of Talwars' house.
- Talwars' former domestic help Vishnu Sharma was named a suspect in the case. Delhi Police joined the

Rajesh and Nupur Talwar were made to take lie detector tests. CBI declared it a "blind case". Rajesh was denied bail by a special Ghaziabad magistrate.

Supreme Court rejected a PIL challenging the administration of narco-analysis test on the accused in the case. Consequently, Rajesh Talwar was granted bail.

destruction of evidence. Talwars then moved Allahabad HC for quashing trial court summons. The HC dismissed the plea following which Talwars moved the SC.

On January 9, 2012, SC said the bail granted to Rajesh by the lower court would continue and that he should appear before the Ghaziabad Magistrate on February 4 to face trial

double-murder probe on May 21, 2008.

■ The Talwars came under suspicion as police probed honour-killing angle. Police quizzed Aarushi's close friend. On May 23, Aarushi's father Rajesh was arrested as a key accused.

■ CBI took over the probe in the double-murder case on June 1. Both

■ On January 5, 2010, CBI moved the court to conduct narco test on Talwars. In December, CBI submitted a closure report and gave clean chit to servants, pointed fingers at Talwars.

■ On February 9, 2011, court took cognisance of CBI report and asked it to continue with prosecution charging Talwars with murder and along with Nupur Talwar.

■ Rajesh and Nupur were convicted for the double murder and sentenced to life imprisonment by a special CBI court in Ghaziabad in November 2013.

■ On September 7, 2017, the HC reserved judgment against Talwars and fixed October 12 the date of verdict.

**OMAR ABDULLAH:** Don't know who killed #Arushi & will probably never know but what I do know is the police made a total dogs breakfast of the investigation (sic).



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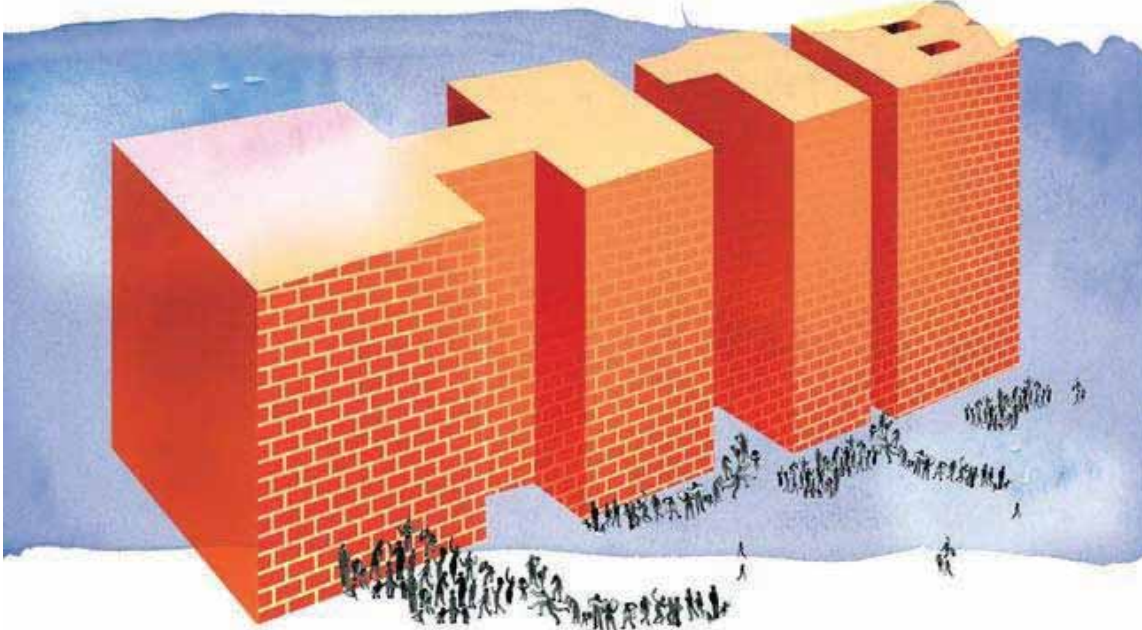
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# Restricted access

*A leaked draft of the order shows that the Trump administration wants to reduce legal immigration to the US.*



In November 2015, Donald Trump sat down for an interview with Stephen Bannon, executive chairman of the Breitbart News Network, a far-right news and opinion site. In the course of the conversation, Bannon made the startling assertion that Silicon Valley has far too many Asian CEOs. An ominous portent of things to come? It certainly seems so today.

Fast-forward to 2017: Trump is the president of the United States, and Bannon, who has been described as a white supremacist, is his all-powerful advisor. Add to this the fact that soon after coming to office, Trump issued a highly-charged and controversial executive order which had Bannon's fingerprints all over it—banning citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries and refugees from all over the world from entering the US. A federal judge in Seattle has since blocked the travel ban. Regardless, Trump is determined to get it passed. Given this recent and not-so-recent history, Indian and American firms that have benefitted from the H1B visa programme are now wracked with anxiety following reports that Trump has another executive order in the works, one that would place severe restrictions on hiring foreign workers. A leaked draft of the order shows that the Trump administration wants to reduce legal immigration to the US. The order directs the secretary of the department of homeland security to promulgate a regulation that would “restore the integrity of employment-based non-immigrant worker programmes” and

“consider ways” to amend the H1B programme so that it is “more efficient and ensure that beneficiaries of the programme are the best and the brightest”.

“With this executive order, President Trump will help fulfil several campaign promises by aligning immigration policies with the national interest and ensuring that officials administer our laws in a manner that prioritises the interests of American workers and—to the maximum degree possible—the wages and well-being of those workers,” the draft states.

Sheela Murthy, an immigration attorney based in Owings Mills, Maryland, has been inundated with inquiries from people worried about the Trump administration's immigration agenda. “It is freaking out a lot of consulting companies and businesses that use H1B workers,” says Murthy. Close to 70 per cent of the H1B visas, currently capped at 65,000 a year by the US Congress, are snapped up by Indian workers.

“The text of the leaked draft suggests that the administration believes that the H1B and other employment-based immigrant programmes have lost their integrity. [This] is very troubling in and of itself because it shows an incredible bias,” Murthy adds. “They want recommendations to make US immigration policy better serve the national interest—meaning it is not serving our national interest right now.”

The sentiment reflected in the draft echoed Bannon's comments in his interview with Trump. Referring to those comments on Asian entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley, Murthy says: “Frankly, it

shows racist tendencies. It is very troubling. This is not what this country is all about.”

But racism is not the primary driver of visa reform, at least not for everyone. The H1B visa programme has for long been criticised as a tool used by US and foreign firms to exploit foreign workers who often receive low wages and few benefits. Employers argue that the visas are important because they allow foreign workers to fill skill gaps in the American workforce. For years, US lawmakers have discussed visa reform. Now, with Trump vowing ‘America First’, and pledging to crack down on the existing visa regime, lawmakers are sensing an opportunity for change.

“Restricting H1B is not a new topic, and fits in well with President Trump's agenda of restricting channels to hire non-American workers,” says Richard M. Rossow, the Wadhvani Chair in US India Policy Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

A slew of legislation related to H1B visa reform is in the works in the US Congress. Chuck Grassley, a senator from Iowa, who is chairman of the US Senate's Judiciary Committee, and Senator Dick Durbin, a Democrat from the state of Illinois, are long-time advocates of H1B visa reform. They have reintroduced a bill, first introduced in 2007, which would prohibit companies with more than 50 employees, of which at least half are H1B or L1 visa holders, from hiring additional H1B employees,

and prohibit the replacement of American workers by H1B or L1 visa holders.

“Congress created these programmes to complement America's high-skilled workforce, not replace it,” says Grassley, referring to the H1B and L1 visa programmes. “Unfortunately, some companies are trying to exploit the programmes by cutting American workers for cheaper labour. We need programmes dedicated to putting American workers first.”

Representative Darrel Issa, a California Republican, has introduced a bill that he hopes will reduce the chances that American workers will lose their jobs to cheap foreign labour because it would raise the salary requirement for H1B visa holders to \$100,000, up from the current \$60,000 annual wage. Representative Zoe Lofgren, a California Democrat, who represents Silicon Valley in the US Congress, has introduced a bill under which employers who pay as much as up to three times the prevailing wage would get first preference to hire workers through the H1B visa programme.

“From an employer's point of view, one of the big issues is whether the minimum salary is going to be raised for H1B workers,” says Murthy. Rossow says he is certain that Indian technology firms are concerned about possible restrictions on the use, and the cost, of H1B visas. He contends there are only three steps that these technology firms can take: “To either adapt by doing more of the work in India; to comply and hire a larger percentage of American workers for their US operations; or to try to change the rules through advocacy.”

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys and Wipro are among the major technology firms that have benefitted from outsourcing. On January 31, shares of these companies took a nosedive on news that Trump was planning changes to the H1B visa system. “TCS does not participate in such industry speculation,” Benjamin Trounson, head of North America corporate communications for the company, said in response to questions from India today. Similarly, a spokeswoman for Infosys, Sarah Vanita Gideon, said the company would not comment on the issue at this time. Spokespersons for Wipro did not respond to a request for comment.

Foreign workers on H1B visas play a critical role in the

## THE H1B NUMBERS

*Around 70 per cent of the H1B visas recently allotted went to Indians*

119,952

**NUMBER OF H1B VISAS**

the US issued in 2015

(Source: Office of Foreign Labour Certification)

TOP 3

**OCCUPATIONS**

for positions certified are computer-related, computer systems analysts being on top

\$130,000

**PER ANNUM**

is the proposed minimum salary for an H1B visa holder, more than double the present \$60,000 wage

\$400

**MILLION PER YEAR**

could be the impact, amounting to about \$4 billion over the next 10 years, as the increase in visa fee has been made applicable for 10 years



US economy. “Technology firms regularly report a dearth of US workers for high-end jobs. If this limits their ability to do business and win contracts, clearly we need to make sure an alternative channel, such as immigration, will allow for businesses to thrive,” Rossow says. “Immigrants have made powerful contributions to the American economy and society through their innovations; this pipeline must also be maintained,” he says, while adding, “I also realise that no programme is perfect, and I'm sure there are helpful adjustments that can be made.” For now, employers and foreign workers may find solace in the knowledge that Trump has not signed the executive order related to the visa programme. The draft that has circulated in the press could still be modified before it gets to his desk. The White House also cannot change the law without Congress support, but it could issue regulations on laws that already exist, says Murthy. As regards the language of the draft order, she adds, “that seems to portend a future that is not very bright”.

# The long arm of the taxman just got longer, and more than 60,000 people have been tagged for audits and investigations post demonetisation.

## IT'S RAID SEASON

Keshav Lal, a Kanpur-based additional commissioner of sales tax, probably did not expect the taxman to come knocking at his door. According to reports, income-tax (I-T) officials found Rs 10 crore in cash and 10 kg of gold during the raid. In a similar story, a general manager of the Uttar Pradesh Rajkiya Nirman Nigam in Dehradun was raided for "misusing his official position" and amassing untaxed wealth. In the past few months, the I-T department has carried out a series of raids like these, across the country. Perhaps for the first time in India's economic history, there is a credible fear that the taxman could actually get you if you're on the wrong side of the law-or even if they have 'a reason to believe' you are. The department, once infamous for inefficiency and corruption, today finds itself at the centre of an ambitious government programme to rid the nation of black money. However, since arbitrary audits can lead to taxpayers getting intimidated-and give them an incentive to hide their wealth-the department has to find a way to hunt down actual evaders while making sure they do not wind up harassing honest taxpayers.

That said, there are reasons for a more proactive I-T department in India. Consider these

points: India's tax-to-GDP ratio, at 16.6 per cent, is lower than the emerging-market economy average of 21 per cent. Some 37 million Indians filed tax returns in 2015-2016. Of these, only 2.4 million declared an income of over Rs 10 lakh. Even so, an average of 2.5 million cars-including 35,000 luxury vehicles-are sold in India every year.

So far, the I-T department has identified more than 60,000 people who have been marked for detailed audits and investigations. To this end, the Finance Act, which was passed by the Lok Sabha on March 22, included a number of amendments to increase the taxman's powers (see box: The Taxman's New Code). Among the new powers granted to I-T officers is the right to conduct searches and seizures of an assessee's property without having to declare the reason for doing so and without being answerable to any authority lower than a high court.

These changes have evoked sharp-and panicked-reactions from many quarters. They have also led to an increase in raids. For instance, in the past two months, some 13 jewellery shops in New Delhi's Greater Kailash market have been raided. These businesses allegedly came under the scanner for remaining open until midnight in the days

immediately after demonetisation was announced on November 8, which was seen as an indication that they were helping those with sacks of unaccounted cash to turn their money 'white'. Some came under the scanner simply for depositing more than Rs 10 lakh into their accounts after demonetisation. "These guys (I-T officials) harass you, they say 'this is how much you deposited (post-demonetisation), and it is not your own money... now pay up,'" says a New Delhi-based jeweller.

According to some of the recently-raided jewellers, officials have been booking assesseees under the Benami Transactions Act if they deny having made any illegal deposits. Under this act, it is the officer conducting the raid who decides if the explanation offered by the assessee is adequate. "Even if the raid reveals no evidence that the money deposited was unaccounted for, or even if the account books corroborate the amounts deposited, assesseees are being forced to 'own up'," says the jeweller quoted earlier. "These changes will only lead to more goondagardi," he laments.

No surprise, then, that there is a frenzy of representations taking place at the Union finance ministry in North Block-from many different stakeholder groups-on possible

misuses of the new law. Their worry is that the I-T department, already infamous for harassment, will become completely uninhibited in its depredations. 'Tax terrorism', as it is being called, is a huge concern for businesses, and there are those within the ministry who empathise. "We are aware that this is a genuine concern," says a senior ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity. "We are putting in place internal checks to ensure that such abuses of power do not happen."

### A Necessary Evil?

It had to be done, say senior officials at the finance ministry who are driving this change. These drastic amendments-in particular, the one doing away with an assessee's right to know why they are being raided-was enacted to counter rulings by the Supreme Court. One case in particular-DGIT (Inv) vs Spacewood Furnishings, in 2015-led to a ruling that assesseees should be provided with the specific information that made the I-T department suspect them of tax evasion, at the beginning of assessment proceedings. This ruling was reiterated in 2016, with respect to another case. These two rulings led to some discomfort in I-T circles. Inevitably, they sought to restore their own discretionary powers regarding the disclosure of 'reason to believe' or 'reason to suspect'.

The move to empower the tax administration also gels with the government's stated agenda of doing away with black money. For its part, the tax administration is working towards putting as much information as possible into the public domain-

## THE TAXMAN'S NEW CODE

The new Finance Act gives sweeping powers to I-T officers

### NOW

- An I-T officer can **conduct a search without disclosing the reasons** for it. The official is not answerable to the I-T tribunal or the assessee being searched
- The search **can only be challenged in a high court or the Supreme Court**
- Entry level officers, ranked **Assistant Commissioner**, can conduct searches

### THEN

- An I-T officer **had to disclose the reasons** for a search to the assessee, as well as to senior officials. All searches had to be approved by the CBDT board
- The search **could be challenged at the I-T tribunal level**
- Only officers ranked **Joint Director** or above could conduct searches

naming and shaming tax dodgers is very much part of the strategy. Post demonetisation, data mining and analytic software has also been deployed to track the money trails of about 1.8 million people who are suspected of having deposited more into their accounts than their income should have allowed. Around Rs 4.5 lakh crore of deposits have been flagged.

So what, if any, checks and balances remain to restrain rogue taxmen from misusing the windfall of financial surveillance in the wake of demonetisation? According to senior ministry sources, the annual performance review of I-T officers has been tweaked to include details on how many orders they issued, if those orders could stand up to scrutiny and details on the due diligence done by the department with respect to those orders. Moreover, a collegium of three commissioners has been set up in each zone to deal with complaints. "A framework of accountability is in place, so we don't have to worry about the misuse of powers," says Has Mukh Adhia, revenue secretary, ministry of finance. "Anybody is free to send a complaint. We would like to know about the black sheep in the department. Even if there are complaints of rude

behaviour, I will take action against them," he adds.

For the government, tracking down the antecedents of these questionable deposits made post demonetisation is a long-term project. It has set itself a deadline of two years to complete the task. Even so, there are already positive signs. According to the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), there was a 21.7 per cent increase in returns received in FY '17. Gross income tax collection grew 16 per cent, the highest in the past five years. The government is also planning to go after shell companies, and a taskforce at the Prime Minister's Office is working on identifying the main promoters of these companies.

Clearly, India needs a stronger tax administration. Along with that, it also needs the administration to be as transparent as possible. There have to be effective checks and balances, because though progress has been made, there are still instances of bribes being demanded and harassment being used as a tool of intimidation by tax officials. "You cannot be a 1970-80s type of an officer and speak harshly [to citizens]. The language and statements should be in line with the new thinking," says a former CBDT chairman. "We have to be a facilitator, and not an enforcement agency? because ultimately, you have to protect the tax-payer."



# Is there more to India unwelcoming Rohingya Muslims than meets the eye?

**Host to 200,000 refugees from across the world, India is vehemently unwelcoming of the Rohingya fleeing Myanmar, even calling them a national security threat.**

On September 30, St Hugh's, one of the colleges in Oxford, removed a portrait of the more renowned old scholars from its privileged place at the main entrance. The reason for the symbolic fall from grace was not announced, but since we are talking about Aung San Suu Kyi, it's a fair guess that this was a reaction to allegations of ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims by the Myanmar army, forcing millions to flee their homes.

This military action came in response to attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a Rohingya insurgent group, on several security checkpoints, killing of scores of police officers first in October 2016 and then August 25 this year when 12 security personnel died in a coordinated attack. Both times, Myanmar's security forces responded with massive "clearance operations" to root out ARSA, forcing over 500,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh. However, KK Sharma, director-general, Border Security Force, points out that only 200 Rohingya refugees have come into India in the past two years of whom only 12 have been apprehended this year. The UN said the military's response was "clearly disproportionate" to the attacks and warned that Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya appeared to be a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing".

The flight of Rohingya from Myanmar has sparked global outrage as over half a million of them have fled primarily to Bangladesh in the past five years. Myanmar, however, found an ally in India. During his visit to the country in the first week of September,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Suu Kyi: "We share your concern about the extremist violence in Rakhine state and especially the violence against the security forces and how innocent lives have been affected and killed." India is actively pursuing a good relationship with Myanmar army officials in the hope that it can enlist their help in acting against militants in India's northeast, many of whom are based in Myanmar's jungles. It's perhaps no coincidence that Indian military forces have conducted two operations against northeastern insurgents inside the territory of Myanmar within a span of one year.

Going by a letter the Union home ministry sent to all states on August 8, it's clear that the Indian government's stand on the Rohingya was formulated

even before the August 25 violence. The home ministry communique said the Rohingya immigrants in India were a potential security threat and a burden on scant resources, and asked the law enforcement and intelligence agencies to take "prompt steps in identifying the illegal migrants and initiate the deportation processes expeditiously". India, according to government claims, is home to 40,000 Rohingya settled in Jammu, Hyderabad, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR and Rajasthan. A majority of them entered the country when Myanmar stripped the Rohingya of their citizenship in 1982.

As per the latest estimates of the refugee agency UNHCR, India has 200,000 refugees, making it the 25th-largest refugee-hosting country. The

country is home to a diverse mix of refugees- Tibetans who came in 1959; Bangladeshis who came in 1971; Chakmas in 1963 and again in the 1970a; Tamils from Sri Lanka in 1983 and 1989, and again in 1995; and Afghan refugees from the 1980s. Refugees have come from all over the world, including Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, Congo, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Sudan and Syria. In 2012, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres lauded India's refugee policy as an example for the rest of the world.

For the first time, the Union government has announced its intent to deport a refugee group-home minister Rajnath Singh called them 'illegal immigrants'-though it's unclear how the government would convince Myanmar to take back people who it does not recognise as its citizens. "Are we going to deport an entire community knowing they will certainly face persecution upon return,

because they may cause a threat to our demographics in the future?" asks Roshni Shanker, executive director, The Ara Trust, Centre for Refugee Law & Forced Migration Studies. "We have never adopted such a stand in the past and it's unclear why the Rohingya as a community are being singled out."

India's reaction to every refugee situation has always been guided by political consideration, not by any constitutional policy as it is among the few countries in the world that neither has a national refugee protection framework nor an immigration policy. India is also not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, or its 1967 Protocol. Nor has India ratified the 1954 UN Convention on Statelessness or the 1961 UN Convention on Reduction of Statelessness. India is under no obligation, therefore, to provide rights set out in the

conventions to refugees. It takes decisions on granting long-term visas to refugees essentially on an ad hoc basis. "Due to such an ad hoc arrangement, India lacks a clear and consistent asylum regime which in turn allows different governments to adopt policies driven by their own political considerations," says Shanker.

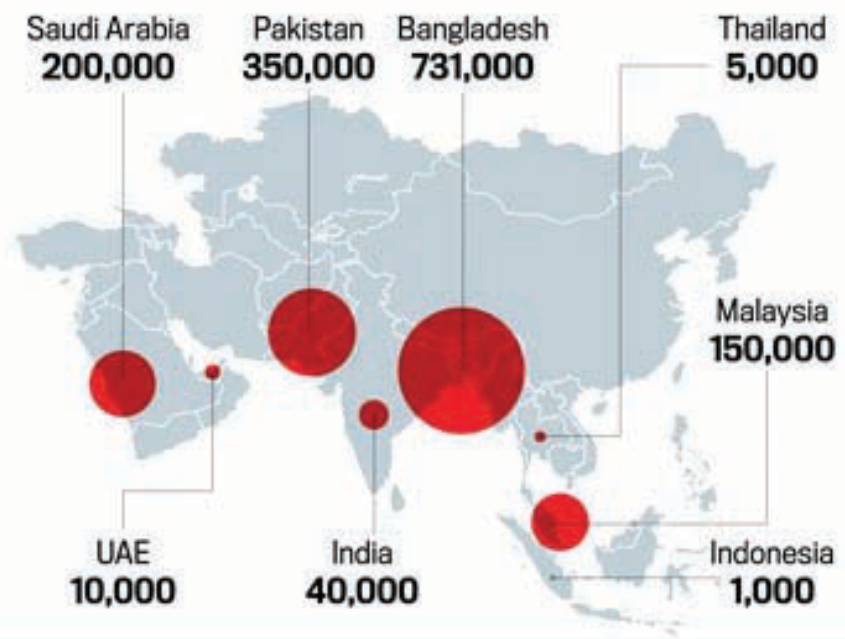
Most human rights activists allege the BJP government's stand against the Rohingya is driven not by security concerns but its anti-Muslim ideology. "If Tamil refugees did not pose any security threat in India, though LTTE recruited heavily from their ranks, why would the Rohingya be any security threat? Just because they are Muslim and not to be trusted?" asks Irfan Engineer, director, Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai.

## WHERE AND HOW MANY

Aid agencies' estimates of the Rohingya global footprint



P.RAVIKUMAR/REUTERS



## STORM OF THE STATELESS

MYANMAR'S NORTHERN RAKHINE STATE WAS HOME TO 1.3 MILLION ROHINGYA

BUDDHIST MAJORITY MYANMAR SEES THEM AS ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM BANGLADESH

STRIPPED OF CITIZENSHIP IN 1982; ROHINGYA MOVEMENT RESTRICTED INSIDE MYANMAR

SINCE 2012, WHEN VIOLENCE ERUPTED, HALF A MILLION ROHINGYA HAVE FLED MYANMAR

THE MYANMAR ARMY OP AGAINST THEM FOLLOWED AN ATTACK BY TERROR GROUP ARSA

# Beyond bullet trains: What makes India-Japan trade partnership a win-win game

**Prime ministers Narendra Modi and Shinzo Abe are betting on high-speed trains to boost the India-Japan economic relationship.**

In picturesque Kyoto—an urban landscape of skyscrapers, centuries-old temples, geisha houses and verdant greens—Prime Minister Narendra Modi is possibly one of the best recognised world leaders. Even the taxi driver refers to an India today reporter as a "visitor from Modi's land". In Kobe, the shop floor of Kawasaki Heavy Industries, which manufactures rail cars, has pictures of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Prime Minister Modi during their visit to the plant in November last year.

In Tokyo, state officials in the transport department, academicians and corporates, all refer to Modi as a man with a vision and the determination to get things done. "I see that Abe and Modi have a relationship of trust, and also that Japanese policy is now very much focused on India," says Masafumi Shukuri, chairman of the International High-speed Rail Association (IHRA), as he shows pictures of Indian leaders who visited Japan to discuss the high-speed rail project connecting Ahmedabad and Mumbai. The mutual admiration between the leaders of India and Japan is a well-known fact, as is the fact that Modi has been a vociferous admirer of Abenomics ever since he was chief minister of Gujarat.

Trade relations between the two countries have also been growing steadily. Japanese exports to India rose from about Rs 22,900 crore (Yen 388 billion) in 2005 to Rs 57,800 crore (Yen 981 billion) in 2015. Currently, about 1,305 Japanese companies have branches or divisions in India. Japan has been at the forefront of India's small car revolution and has also played a significant role in the establishment of the Delhi Metro. Today, it is working towards helping India build a dedicated freight corridor and bring high-speed rail to the country.

Those in the know say that the leaders of the two Asian economies see far-reaching benefits in the two countries engaging with each other. India, looking to upgrade its industries and infrastructure, wants to import and make use of advanced Japanese technology. Japan, dealing with the economic

consequences of an ageing population, is enthused by the enormous market and plentiful human resources India has to offer. This is one of the reasons an India-Japan comprehensive economic partnership agreement was signed in 2011. The agreement covered goods and services, the free movement of visitors and workers, investments, intellectual property rights and even customs procedures. It also sought to abolish tariffs on over 94 per cent of goods India and Japan were trading in, over a period of 10 years. The visa-on-arrival facility that has since been introduced by India for Japanese nationals has also made it far easier for businesses from that country to work in India.

During Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan in 2015, the two leaders had agreed to the goal of doubling Japan's direct investment, as well as the number of Japanese companies working in India, by 2019. Abe stated a target of Rs 2.1 lakh crore (Yen 3.5 trillion) of public and private investment and financing to India, including funds under official development assistance. To satisfy the Japanese expectation of an easy business environment, India has since set up a 'Japan plus' office at the ministry of commerce and industry to serve as a one-stop window to resolve problems faced by Japanese companies.

While trade relations have so far focused on Indian exports of petroleum products, clothing and accessories, iron and steel products and textile yarn to Japan (as well as imports from Japan of machine tools, transport equipment and electronic goods), the next big push to this partnership is expected to come as a result of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail project. On his upcoming visit to India in mid-September, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is expected to travel first to Ahmedabad, for a ceremony to open a training centre for workers on the high-speed rail project. Though the centre is in Vadodara, Modi and Abe will preside over it via video link from Ahmedabad.

This project has enthused a slew of Japanese companies,

both big and small—though their enthusiasm is tempered with caution. Despite the camaraderie between Modi and Abe, and the fact that every meeting between the two leaders is followed by a bevy of official announcements from both sides, officials say that the actual progress of the high-speed rail project has been slow.

Officials with the Japanese government say that while initial communication issues have been resolved and some companies have expressed interest in developing a high-speed rail system in India on the lines of the Shinkansen system, several Japanese firms remain hesitant to get involved. They cite the prevalence of red-tape and bureaucratic delays and the difficulty of finding good business partners in India, as well as the fact that India's land and labour laws are both byzantine and an impediment for business owners. Another note of worry is that several high-profile partnership agreements between Japanese and Indian companies have ended rather abruptly and acrimoniously.

When it comes to the high-speed rail project, there also appears to be some resistance to change among Indian officials. When asked about the project, comparisons are often drawn between the amounts that governments spend on high-speed rail and railway safety. Officials say there was a palpable sense of worry among Japanese officials after the train crash in Uttar Pradesh on August 20, which killed 23 passengers. One of their concerns—aside from those who lost their lives or were injured as a result of the tragedy—was that the accident would once again inflame the debate over spending on high-speed rail versus spending on railway safety. "When your prime minister has decided [to go ahead with the project], then why keep going back to the debate?" asks an official who wished to remain anonymous.

In June this year, Japan's Kawasaki Heavy Industries entered into an agreement with Bharat Heavy Electricals for technical collaboration on the manufacture of steel metro coaches. For the moment, discussions are ongoing about



how to transfer technology and knowledge training. Officials at Kawasaki say that jumping right into high-speed commuter trains is probably not the best idea. "We need to [begin with] commuter trains and the metro. After that, we will work on high-speed railways. We need time. We cannot do this instantly. We have to train people, give them proper instructions. We have just signed the contract—now we are discussing how to do it," says an official with Kawasaki Heavy Industries' rolling stock company.

IHRA officials are also concerned with the Indian government's focus on only three aspects of the project: on time, Make in India and technology transfers. They stress that the most important aspect of high-speed rail is not its production—it is crash avoidance.

The Shinkansen network, which opened in 1964, has a glorious safety record—not a single accident in the 53 years it has been in operation. At the time, Japan took a deliberate decision to boost its domestic economy by developing a high-speed rail corridor rather than a network of expressways. The Japanese are justifiably proud of their 'total system' approach to safety and reliability, with equal focus on hardware and software—including operations, maintenance, personnel training and the development of a mindset focused on safety, healthy management and technical innovation. "All these things have to be in place, and then we have to evolve from there. We call this a 'total system approach'. If we were missing even one of these elements, we wouldn't have established this wonderful record—53 years without any fatalities," says an IHRA official. "Build high-speed rail first, and then let 'Make in India' happen. The Indian intention [appears to be aimed at making] 'Make in India' happen. It is hard to strike a balance between 'on-time' and 'Make in India'. This is an issue that needs to be dealt with."

In India, a national High Speed Rail Corporation (HSRC) has been set up for

the smooth development and implementation of this project. The managing director, Achal Khare, is known as a quick decision-maker who sticks to deadlines. However, delays in land acquisition and objections raised by state development authorities pose formidable challenges. Construction is currently slated to commence in 2018, with operations beginning in 2023. Nearly 80 per cent of the project's total cost has been funded by a loan of Rs 1 lakh crore (Yen 1.8 trillion) from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), to be repaid over 50 years at 0.1 per cent interest.

This is not outright altruism—Japanese companies stand to benefit significantly from the long tenure of this loan, as well as the long timeframe of the project itself. "Japanese companies hope [that this will lead to increased sales]," says Tomoyuki Nakano, director, International Engineering Affairs (Railway Bureau) of Japan's ministry of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism. "For the entire system to be functional, several dozen companies will [need to be involved]."

A task force has also been set up to facilitate private sector participation in this project. It includes representatives from the Japan External Trade Organization, the Japanese ministry of economy, trade and industry, India's railway ministry and the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion. Sub-groups have been established to deal with procurement issues pertaining to rolling stock and railways tracks, as well as to facilitate the civil engineering aspects of this project. But there is still much to be done. A specifically tricky aspect of large-scale projects such as these is land acquisition. Japan started constructing its own high-speed rail network via an aggressive privatisation programme. Japan's National Railways was privatised in 1987, and then broken into 11 smaller regional railway companies. The decision had required great political courage as it led to massive job losses.

# A Zillionaire's Solution

The Republican tax plan is a scam—a massive and destructive financial giveaway masquerading as pro-growth tax reform. Which is why our first response must be to demand not one penny of tax cuts for big corporations and rich guys like me. In fact, if I were Benevolent Dictator, I would substantially raise taxes on myself and my wealthy friends. Why? It is the only way to sustainably grow the economy, boost productivity, increase business opportunities, and create more and better jobs.

Now, I know what you're thinking: That's crazy talk! For decades, rich guys like me have been selling you tax cuts on the merits of pure economic stimulus. The rich are "job creators," we've told you. The more money and incentives we wealthy few have to invest in creating jobs, the better the economy is for everybody—especially you. That's a lie.

There is simply no empirical evidence nor plausible economic mechanism to support the claim that cutting top tax rates spurs economic growth. When President Bill Clinton hiked taxes, the economy boomed. When President George W. Bush slashed taxes, the economy ultimately collapsed. It wasn't until after most of the Bush tax cuts expired during the Obama administration that the post-Great Recession recovery started to pick up steam—an ongoing recovery that, as uneven as it has been, has grown into one of the longest economic expansions in U.S. history.

And then, of course, there's Kansas.

In 2012, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback famously embarked on what he called "a real live experiment," pitting pure trickle-down theory against economic reality. Unfortunately for Kansans, reality won. Kansas has dramatically underperformed its neighboring states and the nation as a whole in economic growth and job creation since slashing taxes on individuals and corporations to as low as zero. Compare that to California, which in 2012 elicited the usual apocalyptic warnings from trickle-downers

by daring to raise its top income tax rate to a highest-in-the-nation 13.3 percent. By 2015, California had the fastest-growing economy in the nation. Kansas? Dead last.

And the evidence is more than just anecdotal. Multi-decade statistical reviews by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, and the highly regarded Brookings Institution have all failed to find any negative correlation between top tax rates and growth. And the same holds true of every other economic indicator the trickle-downers like to go on about: tax revenue growth, investment growth, employment growth, productivity growth, real median income growth. If they show any statistically significant correlation between top tax rates and growth, the slope is positive, suggesting that raising taxes on the rich is actually pro-growth. "The argument that income tax cuts raise growth is repeated so often that it is sometimes taken as gospel," the Brookings authors conclude. "However, theory, evidence, and simulation studies tell a different and more complicated story."

President Donald Trump boasts that the "biggest winners" from his tax cuts for the rich "will be the everyday American workers as jobs start pouring into our country, as companies start competing for American labor, and as wages start going up at levels that you haven't seen in many years." But the Republicans' problem is that they have economic cause and effect reversed: Low wages and rising inequality are not symptoms of slow growth, low wages and rising inequality are the disease that causes slow growth—and inequality cannot be cured by creating even more inequality. In reality, our modern technological economy is best understood as an evolutionary feedback loop between innovation and demand. Innovation is the process through which we evolve new solutions to human problems, while consumer demand is the mechanism through which the market selects and propagates

successful innovations. And it is economic inclusion—the full participation of as many people as possible in as many ways as possible, as innovators, entrepreneurs, workers and robust consumers—that drives both innovation and demand. The more we invest in the American people—in our wages, our education, our health care and our infrastructure—the more dynamic that feedback loop, and thus the faster and more prosperous our economy grows. But the Trump/Ryan tax cuts—which promise to slash rates for the wealthy and the corporations they run—would do nothing to increase innovation or demand.

Today, wealthy corporations and investors already have more money than we know what to do with—literally trillions of dollars of hoarded cash just sitting in U.S. bank accounts doing absolutely nothing—and yes, that includes the several trillion dollars of foreign earnings the Trump administration wants to "repatriate" tax free. The truth is, these "overseas" reserves are largely an accounting trick. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, much of this money is already held in U.S. bank deposits, in U.S. Treasury notes, and in dollar-dominated corporate securities. That's why the most recent time Congress enacted a foreign earnings "tax holiday," far from boosting the economy, the biggest corporate beneficiaries actually cut thousands of domestic jobs, choosing instead to funnel their after-tax windfall into (surprise!) stock buybacks and dividends. Every "\$1 increase in repatriations was associated with an increase of almost \$1 in payouts to shareholders," Harvard and MIT researchers concluded. Obviously, a tax holiday can't possibly deliver an economic boost from bringing home dollars that are already here.

The real problem with our economy is that we are concentrating wealth in the hands of people who aren't spending or investing it, while starving working- and middle-class Americans of

the ability to invest in themselves—not to mention sapping the consumer spending power that accounts for 70 percent of GDP. We rich Americans may not all be idle, but these days, much of our money is—and you will not get it flowing back through the economy again by cutting our taxes even further. I already earn about 1,000 times more per hour than the average American, but I couldn't possibly buy 1,000 times more stuff. I only own so many pairs of pants. My family and I can only eat three meals a day. We enjoy a luxurious lifestyle, but we already own several houses, a private jet and one too many yachts (turns out, the optimal number is two). Cutting our taxes will make us richer, but it won't incentivize me or my venture capital partners to spend or invest more than we already do. What's holding us back isn't a shortage of cash, but rather a shortage of demand—from you. That's why I join the Not One Penny campaign in opposing any effort to cut taxes on wealthy people like me. The American tax code is already rigged in favor of the rich and powerful, and the Trump/Ryan tax plan would make it only worse. If we truly want an economy that works better for all Americans, we need to move in the other direction.

We should create more tax brackets, not fewer, with substantially higher tax rates on our wealthiest households and our largest inherited estates. As for simplifying the tax code, here's an idea: Let's treat all income equally. For example, I'd eliminate the cap of \$127,000 on payroll taxes, apply it to all income, and then slash the rate, increasing the spending power of most Americans. Rich people like me make most of our money from dividends and capital gains, and it's just plain crazy that I pay a lower tax rate on investment income than a truck driver or school teacher pays on their hard-earned wages or a small businessperson pays on her hard-won profits. As for the corporate income tax rate, cut it if you want—but only if those cuts are more than offset by eliminating corporate tax loopholes. As a percentage of federal tax revenue, corporate income

taxes already account for only a third of what they did in the 1950s, despite years of record profits. What corporate America needs and deserves is a fairer, simpler, more predictable tax code, not a cheaper one.

More importantly, what our economy needs now, at this moment in time, is a massive reinvestment in expanding and enriching the working and middle classes. Tax the rich to put money back in the hands of the American people, and corporations will expand production and payrolls to meet the resulting spike in consumer demand. Tax the rich to invest in roads, transit, bridges, health care, schools and basic research, and America will rebuild the physical and human infrastructure on which innovation and thus our collective prosperity relies. Tax the rich not just because it is fair, but because experience teaches us that in America fairness and growth always go hand in hand.

The trickle-down myth on which the Trump/Ryan tax plan relies represents much more than just a fundamental mischaracterization of how market capitalism works. It is, in fact, a scam and an intimidation tactic. When rich guys like me tell you that if you cut our taxes we'll invest in creating more and better jobs, that is a scam. When we tell you that if you raise our taxes (or your wages) you might lose your job, that is a threat. Either way, if we can get you to believe that taxing the rich is bad for you, then we will get richer. The beauty of this con job is that it hides our true intent: We're rich, you're poor, and we'd like it to stay that way. And like any good con, rather than stealing your money, we just persuade you to hand it over voluntarily.

But we've been playing this con so long that we rich folk have started to con ourselves into believing that there is no limit to how much we can enrich ourselves at your expense. This epidemic of greed is crushing new investment opportunities before they can arise. The irony is that it was always you who enriched us, not the other way around. Back when we paid our fair share and invested in growing the middle class, prosperity always



# PM Narendra Modi facing backlash as discontent over India's slowdown deepens

The moderation was partly the result of Modi's boldest moves — demonetization, as well as the chaotic introduction of the goods and services tax that continues to disrupt supply chains. As talk of a stimulus to boost growth sparked concerns of fiscal slippage, foreign investors went on selling spree and rupee started falling. "The act of dissenters has the potential of snowballing out of control," said Sandeep Shastri, a political analyst and pro-vice chancellor at Jain University in Bengaluru. The response of the prime minister and party president Amit Shah "is indicative of the serious attempt at damage control." The criticism of Modi's handling of the economy is mounting, with Yashwant

Sinha, former finance minister under Atal Bihari Vajpayee's BJP-led government, writing a strongly-worded piece saying the economy was in a "mess". In an interview to Bloomberg Sinha said he was the voice of many in the party who wouldn't speak out of fear. BJP leader Shatrughan Sinha backed him. Sinha "has shown the mirror on the economic condition of India", he tweeted, calling it a "matter of grave national importance." Arun Shourie, also a minister under Vajpayee, equated Modi's move to ban 86 percent of the currency in circulation to tackle unaccounted wealth with 'suicide'. Subramanian Swamy, a former Harvard lecturer and BJP lawmaker, warned the economy was heading for

a "major depression". Congress leader Anand Sharma called it "monumental mismanagement" of the economy. Modi hit back. A "handful of people" were trying to "spread pessimism" based on the growth numbers for a quarter, Modi said on Oct. 4, in a rare moment on the defensive. He added his government was fully committed to reverse the trend of slowing growth and "ready to take decisions." And his ministers — including Yashwant Sinha's son, Jayant Sinha — have fallen in behind their leader. "If he is able to resolve the immediate economic challenges, then the impact will be minimal," said Ajoy Bose, a Delhi-based author and political analyst. "The government

and the BJP are aware that public is slowly getting annoyed with them — there is a general perception that instead of getting better, things are getting worse." Jagdish Thakkar, a spokesman in the Prime Minister's Office, didn't respond to calls seeking comment. Apart from political adversaries and party members who may have an axe to grind with him, Modi's ardent supporters are also showing disappointment. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the ideological parent of BJP, has expressed concerns on the impact of government policy on small traders. Modi constituted a five-member panel on Sept. 25 to advise him on economic issues, signalling an awareness of growing

concerns about the prospects of the Indian economy. His finance minister, Arun Jaitley, followed it up by reducing sales tax on about two dozen items last week to ease the GST burden and douse public resentment over a rise in prices. And while Modi is partly responsible for the dip in growth, he can't do much to revive it, said D. H. Pai Panandiker, president of New Delhi-based think tank, RPG Foundation. "Some problems will drag on — unemployment is not going to resolve soon and we need correction of exchange rate and reduction in interest rates. The ball is in central bank's court now." Demonetization and growth slippage didn't affect Modi's prospects in state polls earlier this year. He got a thumping victory in

India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh. Yashwant Sinha called it "good marketing" and said Modi would have to rely on it again as there was hardly any time to fix India's problems before the 2019 polls. "The extent to which the Modi government embraces expensive welfare programs in the 2017-2018 budget early next year will be one indicator of how worried the party is about its electoral chances," Sasha Riser-Kositsky, an Asia analyst with the Washington-based Eurasia Group said via email. "While there is still time for a serious challenger to emerge, the opposition is bereft of both leadership and a compelling platform that it can present as a credible alternative."

and magazines and to absorb all their advertisers — but as few of their editors as possible. An editor is a human being you have to pay to bring editorial judgment to content on your website, to make sure things are accurate and to correct them if they're not. Social networks preferred to use algorithms instead, but these are easily gamed.

On Sept. 28, Twitter executives sat for a briefing for the Senate and House Intelligence Committees. Afterward, The Times

## From Russia With Poison

reported, "Twitter said that it had found about 200 accounts that appeared to be linked to the Russian campaign to influence the 2016 presidential election — a small fraction of the number found by outside researchers."

Twitter's presentation, said Senator Warner, "showed an enormous lack of understanding from the Twitter team of how serious this issue is, the threat it poses to democratic

institutions." It was "frankly inadequate on every level."

And on Monday The Times reported that Google had found evidence that Russian agents spent tens of thousands of dollars buying ads on "its wide-ranging networks in an effort to interfere with the 2016 presidential campaign."

Every week we are coming to realize that we do not know the depth of this Russian hacking — and that the people who did it were incredibly sophisticated, not only about the technology platforms but also about which districts and demographics to target with just the right inflammatory messages.

America's democracy is built on two principles: truth and trust. We trust

that our elections are fair and that enables our peaceful rotations of power. And we trust that the news we get from our mainstream outlets is true and that it is corrected if it is not. And we expect our president to defend both. But today many people are getting news from platforms that are easily polluted by Russian or other hackers with fake news. And our president is a liar who refuses to hold Russia to account for anything. It's a terrible combination.

We can't fix Trump right now. But have Equifax and these big social networks become so much part of the wiring of our lives — and the impacts of their failures so consequential — that they should be regulated in new ways? I don't know, but I know it's time for this

discussion. It's already started.

Said Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar, "We must update our laws to ensure that when political ads are sold online Americans know who paid for them."

These companies make billions selling our data, but they're ambivalent about taking responsibility "for the uses, and abuses, of their platforms," argued the Harvard political philosopher Michael Sandel. "They can't have it both ways. If they claim they are neutral pipes and wires, like the phone company or the electric company, they should be regulated as public utilities. But if, on the other hand, they want to claim the freedoms associated with news media, they can't deny

responsibility for promulgating fake news."

In the early 20th century, added Sandel, "the rise of monopolies and concentrated economic power brought forth an era of progressive reform that regulated railroads, banks and utilities in the public interest. Today, we need a similar spirit of reform. These platforms are so dominant that, like electric wires or telephone lines, we can scarcely avoid using them. But when they allow our personal data — or elections — to be hacked, there's not much we can do about it." "A century ago, we found ways to rein in the unaccountable power associated with the Industrial Revolution," concluded Sandel. "Today, we need to figure out how to rein in the unaccountable power associated with the digital revolution."

## They brought a dead language to life'

No one would accept a Dalit as an astrologer or a pandit. We will have to bow down before the upper caste, whatever skills or knowledge we might have."

Vikram Chouhan has a different explanation for the decline of Sanskrit. "Villagers might feel that caste discrimination led to Sanskrit's decline, but to me the passion died because of the state government's indifference. The government announced construction of a Sanskrit school eight years back. It exists only on paper."

The state government says it is dedicated to promoting Sanskrit, and gives scholarships and other cash incentives to people teaching or studying the language. Yet the Maharishi Patanjali Sanskrit Sansthan (MPSS), which is in charge of implementing the government's Sanskrit policy, still officially recognises Mohad as a 'Sanskrit Gram' (a Sanskrit-speaking village).

PR Tiwari, the director of the MPSS, expressed surprise at HT's findings. "We didn't know that people have stopped speaking Sanskrit," he said. "We are putting a lot of effort to promote the language everywhere. We will check this."

Anil Soumitra, a state-level member of the RSS and a spokesman for the BJP, echoed Tiwari's comments. "If it is happening in a model village like Mohad, it is very unfortunate. We will visit the village and try to rectify the problem."

## Commentary: How we could have prevented some of Puerto Rico's Misery

Diesel generators, which have long-served a backup role when disasters hit, are expensive, heavily polluting, and prone to failure due to infrequent use. And as the long and frustrating lines following recent storms have made clear, maintaining steady access to fuel in the aftermath of a severe storm can be challenging, if not impossible. Microgrids powered by solar and storage, on the other hand, are more reliable during times of crisis,

better for health and the environment, and increasingly affordable. This is thanks to lower costs of solar and storage technologies, as well as the fact that these systems can provide onsite power, generating benefits all year, not just during extreme weather events. So what does this mean for Puerto Rico? Reports suggest parts of the island could remain without power for months, potentially impacting

millions of people. This is unacceptable. Now, as a country, we must pool together resources for a swift response to curtail the devastating crisis at hand. But we must also ensure that as the decimated power grid is pieced back together, this catastrophe — and the far too many that preceded it — were not suffered in vain. The electricity system must be rebuilt for a climate-resilient, clean-energy supporting future, not as a replica

# Commentary: Uber's London fight a sign of tech battles to come

Uber has proved toxic to more tightly controlled taxi industries. The drivers of London's famous black cabs have been particularly hard hit, and their aggressive lobbying of politicians is seen as one of the key factors behind London mayor Sadiq Khan's decision to suspend Uber's operating license.

The decision proved immediately contentious. For all the criticisms of Uber – that it ignores regulators and the employment rights of those who drive for it, and that there have been reports of abuse and sexual assaults by drivers – it has slashed transport costs for its users. It has also provided

opportunities – although without much in the way of job security – for hundreds of thousands around the world. An Uber-launched petition to reverse the London ban quickly notched up 600,000 signatures.

For the firms themselves, this is a familiar dynamic. Facebook, Google and Twitter in particular have been tangling with national governments since they began operating in relatively autocratic countries such as Russia, China and those in the Middle East, where those in authority have long felt threatened by the quick and easy access they offer to information. Sometimes, the tech companies have found themselves blocked outright.

Increasingly, the perception has become that many of these firms are simply willing to push their luck to see what they can get away with. Technology firms do have a difficult balance to strike. Google, Apple and others have long made a virtue of protecting user data against what they see as overly intrusive requests for access by authorities. In some areas, the rights and wrongs are arguable. In others, however – such as the payment of tax – governments and campaigners believe the issues are much more clear-cut.

In many respects, Uber and AirBnB are seen amongst the most egregious examples of companies that have seriously

and deliberately pushing the limits of what is strictly legal. While London's already more stringent taxi regulation means Uber needs a license, in many other cities both it and its drivers operate outside the conventional taxi licensing system. AirBnB lets out rooms in cities that explicitly ban short-term rentals. Both have based their entire business model on working around, if not entirely flouting, pre-existing local regulations. Authorities often seemed to lack the ability, or the political will, to enforce the rules.

The London Uber decision is perhaps the most significant escalation in that war so far. It's not that the firm will necessarily be ultimately banned from the

streets, as it will continue to operate pending an appeal. The most likely scenario is that the firm and regulators reach a deal – although that could be a difficult process.

Early signs are that the firm is indeed willing to compromise. On Monday, its chief executive sent London authorities a contrite letter saying that the firm realized it had to change. Mayor Khan welcomed the statement, saying he favored talks to resolve the issue.

What Khan – a fast-rising star within the opposition Labour Party – has demonstrated, however, is that the firm can only operate if authorities allow it to do so. It is fundamentally replaceable – indeed, that have already been suggestions that a quickly-formed rival with better employment and safety practices might take its place. Something similar happened in Austin: although the Texas state government overruled the ban on Uber and Lyft in May, both companies now face more local competition. Giant tech firms are unlikely to go away. But neither are national or local governments, democratically elected or otherwise. With a host of new technologies coming down the line – self-driving cars, automatic shops, artificial intelligence – many controlled by the same companies, these fights are only going to get bloodier.

## Nobel winner Richard Thaler brought common sense to economics and that's no mean achievement

A study by Duflo et al (2011) on fertiliser use by farmers in Kenya showed that despite clear evidence that using fertiliser at the right time could significantly increase yields as well as their incomes, farmers procrastinate and lose potential gains. Bringing fertiliser to their doorstep at the right time solved the problem, and was shown to be more effective than subsidising fertiliser.

Another important application is savings behaviour. People just lack the

willpower to save. Designing schemes for people to commit themselves to savings plans in advance has been found to significantly enhance savings. Thaler's redesign of 401(k) retirement plan for many American companies changed the default option to automatic enrolment, greatly increasing savings.

Thaler's work with Sunstein triggered a philosophical debate on "libertarian paternalism". On one hand, we do not like an intrusive

government that limits individual freedoms. On the other hand, we want a government that maximises wellbeing of citizens. What should be done when individuals are making decisions that are detrimental to their own interests? In other words, how can government help individuals make the best choice for themselves without taking over the executive function? Their answer is by giving a gentle nudge in the right direction. Some governments like the Obama

administration and the present British government have tried to use insights from behavioural economics in policymaking.

Thaler once remarked to Robert Barro, a mainstream economist and strong defender of the assumption of perfectly rational behaviour: "The difference between us is that you assume people are as smart as you are, while I assume people are as dumb as I am." Today Thaler is a Nobel laureate and Barro is yet to be one.

# Nassau County Executive election update

As Mayor of Mineola, Martins developed balanced, fiscally responsible budgets and debt management plans that substantially reduced Mineola's debt and returned the village to a sound financial footing. He also led the effort to create Mineola's award-winning master redevelopment plan that expanded the village's economic base through smart growth principles.

As a State Senator, Martins enacted an historic series of balanced, on-time state budgets while cutting state taxes on middle class families to the lowest level in 50 years, enacting the state property tax cap and delivering record state funding for Nassau County schools. Last week, Martins was honored to receive the endorsement of former New York Governor George E. Pataki and has also been endorsed by Congressman Peter King.

Jack Martins is the Republican, Conservative and Reform Party nominee for Nassau County Executive. Jack is a former three-term New York State Senator, the former Mayor of Mineola, and he lives in Nassau with his wife and four daughters. Jack Martins is focused on making Nassau County a better place to live, work and raise a family. As Nassau County Executive, Jack is committed to

ending the corruption that has compromised the public's trust in government, protecting local property taxpayers and creating an economic renaissance to provide a brighter future for the middle class. The election is November 7, 2017.

**U.S. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer Endorses Laura Curran for Nassau County Executive**

U.S. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer endorsed Laura Curran for Nassau County Executive. Senator Schumer has been an unwavering advocate for the people of Nassau County and his endorsement gives Curran a boost of momentum with just over three weeks until election day. In endorsing Curran, Senator Chuck Schumer released the following statement: "Laura has the vision and the right experience to end the culture of corruption and give Nassau County the fresh start it deserves. She believes what I do - that government, at every level, is meant to serve those who pay for it - the taxpayers. I know when she is County Executive she will chart a new path forward for Nassau County, giving it the fresh start it sorely needs. I look forward to helping Laura win this race and working with her when she is the next County Executive."

"After receiving the endorsement, Laura Curran said the following:

"I am honored to have the support of Senator Schumer, who has been a steadfast champion for Nassau County taxpayers on the issues that affect us the most. His commitment to helping rebuild Long Island after Superstorm Sandy, his fight for our fair share of federal funding, and his strong advocacy for our taxpayers are emblematic of the leadership that will inspire me as County Executive. Nassau taxpayers deserve elected officials like Senator Schumer who will stand up for their interests, not just those of the elected and connected. As County Executive, I will put an end to the corruption tax we all pay to uphold a broken system. And, working with Senator Schumer, I know we can win this election, end the culture of corruption, and finally give Nassau County the fresh start it deserves." In addition to the support of Senator Schumer, Curran has been endorsed by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Governor Andrew Cuomo, State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, Congresswoman Kathleen Rice, Congressman Tom Suozzi, former Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, former Congressman Steve Israel, 46 local unions, Planned Parenthood of Nassau County Action Fund Political

Committee, the National Institute for Reproductive Health Action Fund, the National Organization for Women of Nassau County, and EMILY's List.

**Cassandra Lems, Green Party Candidate for Nassau County Executive, announced her support of the New York Health Act"**

No matter whether I am elected or not," said Ms. Lems, "I am lobbying for the passage of the New York Health Act. New York Health would provide universal, comprehensive health care to all New Yorkers without premiums, co-pays, deductibles, or limited provider networks. The reduction in costs for medical insurance and Medicaid costs will profoundly reduce county and school taxes. I would like to know if the other two candidates support the New York Health Act. They did not answer that question during the debate."

Ms. Lems also presented her plan to reform Nassau County's tax system, changes that would be fairer for all residents and would finally put County finances on a firm footing. She urges the establishment of a "county income tax piggybacked to the state income tax." This would be a graduated income tax leading to the "rich paying their fair share and the poor paying less."

# Las Vegas shooting puts American gun laws back in the cross-hairs

**More people in the USA have died of gun violence than Islamic terrorism, which gets disproportionately more attentions from policy makers, at least for a section of Americans blinded by their paranoia about their right to bear arms enshrined in the American constitution to see the need for some common sense reforms.**

It was October 1 in 2015, exactly two years ago, in the face of repeated mass killings."

A very sombre President Barack Obama walked up to the podium in the James Brady Room, the venue for daily White House press briefings named after an official disabled for life in the shooting of President Ronald Reagan in 1981.

"There's been another mass shooting in America," Obama had started, after a shooting in which nine people had been killed. "That means there are more American families – moms, dads, children – whose lives have been changed forever. That means there's another community stunned with grief, and communities across the country forced to relieve their own anguish, and parents across the country who are scared because they know it might have been their families or their children."

Obama's speech could hold true even today, word for word, sentiment for sentiment, frustration for frustration, for those mourning the 50 victims killed in Las Vegas early Monday morning (IST) or those waiting outside the hospital for a word about the condition of their brother, sister, child, parent or friend — more than 400, by the last count released by authorities. "We are the only advanced country on Earth that sees these kinds of mass shootings every few months," Obama had gone on, adding, quoting himself from an earlier interview, "The United States of America is the one advanced nation on Earth in which we do not have sufficient common-sense gun-safety laws — even

There is still no word on the motivation of Stephen Paddock, the 64-year-old white man, local resident, who carried out the massacre, shooting sniper-style from a room up above on the 32nd floor of a hotel. A few more minutes, and the concertgoers would have been on their way home, or hotel, exhausted. There was also no information yet on the kind of weaponry the shooter was carrying, and whether he was licensed to carry and what kind of arms. The Nevada state gun laws are among the most relaxed in the United States, gun owners don't have to register their weapons, they are also free to carry them openly; a permit is needed for carrying concealed weapons though. Las Vegas has only slightly tighter laws. Thousands of people die every year in gun violence in the United States — 12,571 in 2014, 13,500 in 2015, 15,079 in 2016 and 11,652 so far in 2017 — according to the Gun Violence Archive, which tracks gun-related violence and mass shootings (any incident with more than four victims) such as the one that took place in Las Vegas. That is more than the number of victims of terrorism, which gets disproportionately more attentions from policy makers than the scourge of gun violence, at least for a section

of Americans blinded by their paranoia about their right to bear arms — enshrined in the American constitution — to see the need for some common sense reforms.

Gun-control activists are seeking small changes in the existing gun laws to prevent guns from falling into the hands of those incapable of exercising some control over their use, such as those with mental illness like Adam Lanza, who gunned down 20 first-graders and six educators at a Connecticut elementary school in 2012. They have sought background checks for prospective buyers and stricter control on the sale of weapons at fairs and exhibition and a check on military style weapons that can shoot long bursts, causing many deaths

and injuries. They are not seeking, though they often speak of it, a response resembling Australia's in 1996. A mentally disturbed young man had killed 35 people and wounded 23 in Tasmania in what is now known as the "Port Arthur Massacre". A horrified nation responded by tightening gun laws to such an extent a gun-related massacre has not been repeated since. Many other developed nations have similar gun laws, a point made by Obama in the Oregon shooting speech. America remains an exception. The gun lobby, lead by the power National Rifle Association (NRA), has successfully stymied all such moves and attempts, even in the aftermath of the shooting of first-graders at the Newtown, Connecticut school, speaking about which President Obama had broken down, and which had outraged most Americans, even those who owned and loved guns. The NRA has a stranglehold on most conservative politicians and makes its support and endorsement, which matters among conservative voters, incumbent upon their advocacy of gun-rights. President Donald Trump is pro-guns — his two eldest sons Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump are avid hunters — and pro-NRA and he has shown no inclination for any changes in gun laws. Remember the time he suggested, as candidate for the White House, his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton might need to be stopped through some violence to prevent her from taking away the Second Amendment, the law that grants Americans the right to bear arms? Expect no changes from him. But also, as some critics have pointed out, it might take a strong and an unequivocal supporter of gun rights such as Trump to actually push the rest of the tribe along that route, of some sensible reforms.



# Coach Inc. Is Dead. Long Live Tapestry

At Coach Inc., which is famous for its leather goods but has become the holding company of an increasingly ambitious fashion group, the name of the game is now ... Tapestry.

On Wednesday, the accessible-luxury group that owns Coach, Stuart Weitzman and Kate Spade announced its intentions to change the name of its parent to Tapestry Inc., the better to express its new shape as a multibrand entity with a variety of unique properties, as opposed to one dominated by a single brand.

"It's a wonderful metaphor for what we believe in, which is individual threads of different colors all working together to create a picture," said Victor Luis, the chief executive, waxing a little poetic.

Such semantic change has become something of a

corporate trend. The Coach Inc. rebranding follows Google's decision to restructure and name its holding company Alphabet in 2015 and Tribune Publishing Company's reinvention as Tronc last year. Next up will reportedly be the Weinstein Company, as it attempts to distance itself from its disgraced co-founder, Harvey Weinstein. But in Coach's case, the change also reflects what has become an escalating race to create the first American Fashion Group — or, as Mr. Luis styles it, "the first New York Fashion Group." The name change, after all, follows Coach's 2015 acquisition of the Stuart Weitzman shoe label for up to \$574 million and its purchase of Kate Spade for \$2.4 billion in May. And in July, Coach's rival Michael Kors acquired Jimmy Choo (a brand that Coach was reportedly also considering acquiring) for \$1.2 billion. John Idol, the Kors

chief executive, told The New York Times that it was "the beginning of a strategy that we have for building a luxury group that really is focused on international fashion brands." By rebranding Coach Inc., Mr. Luis is hoping to send a signal to potential targets in the \$80 billion global premium fashion market that "this is a home that is not limited to any category, channel or geography."

While Mr. Luis declined to say how many more threads he anticipated adding to his particular tapestry, he did note that one of the requirements for the new name was that it demonstrate inclusivity.

"We embrace our differences, whether they be race, gender, sexual orientation or belief systems," he said. Mr. Luis added that while Tapestry was currently composed of brands based in the United



States, he was open to acquisitions in Europe and Asia.

To that end, the name was also intended to clarify the differences between not only Tapestry and Kors but also Tapestry and potential European competitors like LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton (the owner of brands like Vuitton, Dior, Givenchy and Fendi, and the world's largest luxury group by sales), Kering (Balenciaga, Yves Saint Laurent and Gucci, among others) and Richemont (Chloé, Alaïa, Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels).

## Balyasny, a \$12 billion hedge fund that's trailing its peers, is ramping up for a critical few weeks



Balyasny, a \$12 billion hedge fund, is ramping up for earnings season - and has a lot on the line. The Chicago-based firm has posted slight gains this year but is still losing to competitors, according to a September client letter seen by Business Insider.

The Chicago-based firm's Atlas Global fund gained 0.24% in September, bringing its year-to-date performance to 2.16%. The Atlas Enhanced fund gained 0.41% in September, bringing its year-to-date performance to 3.78%. Those are slight gains for Balyasny. At mid-year, the firm's Atlas Global was close to flat while the Atlas Enhanced fund was up 0.78%, Business Insider previously reported. Still, Balyasny is lagging competitors. The HFRI Fund Weighted Composite Index gained 5.7% this year through September.

Over the summer, founder Dmitriy Balyasny told clients that the stock market was challenging traditional stock pickers. In the letter, which was reported by Business Insider, he said that rise of passive

investing, quant funds and a surge in hedge-fund assets had made the stock market more efficient, leaving fewer easy money-making opportunities.

"We think the challenges, consolidation, and changes in the industry are due to one main factor: There isn't enough alpha to make everyone happy," Balyasny said in the earlier letter. A spokesman for Balyasny didn't respond to a request for comment. In the summer letter, Balyasny also said that the rise of passive investing had given increased importance to certain catalysts, such as earnings releases. Earnings are "extremely important to play - and play correctly - because that is when dispersion is most likely to occur," Balyasny wrote at the time. Balyasny added: "We believe that as we continue to scale up deployment and enter summer earnings season, returns should improve back to our target range," Balyasny said. In a September letter to clients reviewed by Business Insider, Balyasny says it is now

ramping up for earnings season. "We are identifying fresh, variant ideas on both the long and short side," Balyasny wrote, adding:

"We are keeping an eye on the upcoming elections in Japan, the stand-off with North Korea, the possible selection of a new Fed chairman, and U.S. tax reform legislation as potential catalysts for shaking up the low volatility environment. "The September letter indicated that Balyasny's investment picks typically delivered a big chunk of their returns within a month of a position being initiated, but that the firm was also posting gains on positions it had held for a month or longer.

"Year-to-date, 48.4% of our alpha has been made within one month of initiating a position," Balyasny wrote in the September letter. "While most of the alpha has been generated in first month, the 1-3 month bucket has improved considerably as the stock picking environment continues to normalize this year."

## OPEC will take drastic action despite the shale slowdown

WTI recently dipped below \$50 per barrel for the first time in a month, erasing the strong September rally. It's no coincidence that after two weeks of price declines, OPEC has tried to talk up the oil market again, hinting that more drastic action



could be forthcoming. Echoing the world's top central bankers, OPEC's Secretary General said that the oil cartel might need to take "extraordinary" measures to balance the oil market next year. "There is a growing consensus that, number one, the re-balancing process is underway," OPEC's Mohammad Barkindo told reporters on Sunday in New Delhi. "Number two, to sustain this into next year, some extraordinary measures may have to be taken in order to restore this stability on a sustainable basis going forward."

As always, OPEC is vague on the specifics, but the working assumption is that the group will agree to an extension of the cuts until at least mid-2018, or perhaps even as late as through the end of the year. There's been some discussion about deeper production cuts, but there aren't a ton of analysts who see OPEC going that far, despite Barkindo's cryptic language. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia engaged in a bit of its own psy-ops with the oil market on Monday, saying that it was taking "unprecedented" steps to cut its oil exports. Saudi Aramco said it would lower exports by 560,000 bpd next month, "the deepest customer allocation cuts in its history."

The comments are consistent with the country's longstanding pattern of trying to jawbone the market when it wants higher prices. Based on Monday's activity, the effort didn't work. "The fact that we did not get any significant strength from the Saudi news is rather disheartening for the bulls," Stephen Schork, an analyst and author of the Schork Report, told the WSJ. "The market is very skeptical of this." Of course, real cuts to oil exports will be felt if they are carried out, but after a few years of getting jerked around by every utterance from OPEC, the markets want to see proof in the pudding. Aggressive rhetoric no longer moves the market the way it did a year ago, so we'll have to just wait and see what OPEC does at its November meeting.

## Why hydrogen water is the new health fad



Hydrogen water is the latest wellness trend to hit the US and UK. After vitamin-fortified water, health buffs are now buying hydrogen-enriched water with much-touted benefits such as reducing inflammation, wrinkles, bone loss and helping metabolise fat and glucose faster. These benefits can be achieved by chugging just about 500 ml (two glasses) of hydrogen-rich water a day, much less than the recommended 8 to 10 glasses a day of regular water, say studies. Regular water which has two molecules of hydrogen and one molecule of oxygen is neither alkaline nor acidic. But when it is infused with hydrogen — by either adding magnesium or through the process of electrolysis — it becomes rich in antioxidants. A 2013 review published in the journal Medical Gas Research found that when ingested hydrogen acts as an antioxidant, mopping up free radicals — inflammation-causing molecules linked to everything from accelerated skin ageing to cancer. While the US and UK are new to this trend, the Japanese have long been advocating use of hydrogen-rich water, or the Shin'nooru solution, as they call it.

## Do you eat healthy?

**Beware, you may still develop deficiencies and fall sick**

Nowadays, people are becoming obsessive for losing weight and switching to healthy eating. But most people don't know what they actually are eating and this has become a common problem. A study has found that an obsession with eating vegetarian food may be endangering lives, reports The Independent.

Nutritionist Patrick Denoux believes that a purely vegetarian diet can lead to B12 deficiency which can cause various health problems. B12 is not made by the body and most people get the required nutrient from animal products like eggs, dairy products, meat or fish. If untreated, a vitamin B12 deficiency can lead to

vision loss, weakness, tiredness and light-headedness, heart palpitation, nerve problems, depression and memory loss. Earlier studies suggested that children who lacked this vitamin perform poorly in cognitive tests. The other issue with healthy eating is that it could be leading to orthorexia nervosa — a term first coined by physician Steven Bratman in the year 1990. Someone suffering from orthorexia is imprisoned by a range of rules which they impose on themselves. Orthorexia is not part of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, set down by mental health professionals in the United States that is also widely used



as a benchmark elsewhere. Experts believe that orthorexia sufferers could be treated with cognitive behavioural therapy, which may involve learning how to deal with situations that can cause anxiety about eating, relaxation techniques and discussing excessive beliefs.

## Want that glowing, healthy skin this Diwali? Then stop stressing out

**You don't want a dull face, especially during festive season. Here's how to save your skin from side-effects of tension.**

You can buy designer clothes for Diwali and wear the best of gems and baubles, but if your skin isn't healthy and glowing, you won't be able to look your best for festivities. We often blame bad diet and genetics for our skin problems, but stress equally harms it. In fact, with our increasingly hectic lifestyles, it has become a major culprit. Dermatologists Rajat Kandhari and Lokesh Kumar tell us how stress impacts our skin, and how to fix

the problem. Cortisol disturbs the hormonal balance in the body. So, stress becomes one of the major reasons for acne breakout, as it causes inflammation of the skin. It can also upset the balance of good and bad bacteria in the gut, causing acne and pigmentation on the neck. Fix: Avoid anxiety food such as sugar. Drink loads of water and consume a high-fibre diet. Your skin specialist will prescribe topical and



oral medicines, depending on the severity of your acne.

2) Dryness: When you are stressed, you drink less water, and consume more tea and coffee. This causes dehydration, leading to dry skin. Stress also increases the level of hormone cortisol, which reduces the skin's ability to retain water, again causing dryness.

Fix: First and foremost, consciously drink more water when you are stressed. You can opt for warm water to calm you down, besides it also helps your skin. Go for foods and drinks rich in antioxidants. Prunes, blackberries, amla juice, pomegranate, and green tea are all good choices.

3) Fine lines: When feeling stressed, we tend to frown or purse our lips. Facial muscle tension can cause wrinkles and fine lines. Cortisol also causes an increase in blood sugar, which through glycation (the bonding of a sugar molecule to a protein or lipid molecule without enzymatic regulation) harms collagen. Fix: Take a deep breath, and relax your facial muscles, especially those around the eyebrows and cheeks. Chewing gum can also help.

## Trying to lose weight ?

Here's how you can consume fewer calories in a day



**If you wish to shed those extra kilos, then skipping your breakfast and fasting until lunch may help you eat around 353 fewer calories every day, a recent study has found.**

skimmed milk and 375ml of orange juice, for three days. Their overall diets were assessed via food diaries, while their physical activity levels were determined by acceleration devices. The results revealed that skipping breakfast causes people to eat 353 fewer calories a day. Although people eat around 115 more calories a day when they have breakfast, that meal alone contains on average 468 calories. The researchers noted that they do not know why eating breakfast is associated with a lower likelihood of being overweight or obese, or whether eating breakfast can be used effectively as a weight-control strategy. The findings are published in the Journal of Nutrition.

While there are many local superfoods that help you get in shape, sometimes skipping a meal may also help you trim your waistline. A recent study discovered that skipping your breakfast and fasting until lunch may help you eat around 353 fewer calories every day. According to researchers, fasting until lunch causes people to eat around 353 fewer calories a day, a study found. Study author Dr Keith Tolfrey said, "There is a common belief that breakfast is the "most important meal

of the day". However, around one third of children and adolescents in many countries skip breakfast regularly. The findings from the Universities of Loughborough and Bedfordshire support a growing body of evidence that restricting calories, via fasting, boosts weight loss by reducing people's calorie intake and regulating hormones involved in fat storage. The team analysed 40 girls aged between 11 and 15 years old. The participants ate no breakfast or 6.3g of Weetabix with 188ml of semi-



### Salt in the air

After taking a dip in the Dead Sea, **Jacqueline Fernandez** took to Instagram to share pictures of herself with unit folk covered in mud. The mineral-rich black mud is considered therapeutic. The actor is in Israel to shoot a song sequence for Tarun Mansukhani's *Drive* with co-star Sushant Singh Rajput.

### Under the Tuscan sun

**Priyanka Chopra** is shooting in Montepulciano in Tuscany, Italy, for *Quantico*. Pictures from the shoot did the rounds of social media yesterday. PeeCee's knotted shirt and thigh-high slit skirt set temperatures soaring.

### First glimpse

Yesterday, **Kapil Sharma** unveiled a teaser of his upcoming production, *Firangi*. Set in the British Raj, the film stars Ishita Dutta and is directed by Rajiv Dhingra. Television's funny man is currently undergoing ayurvedic therapy in Bengaluru to tackle health issues. He is expected to bounce back for the film's promotions post Diwali. The film releases on November 24.



### Who's the lead girl?

Aamir Khan has reportedly said that **Fatima Sana Shaikh** is the heroine of *Thugs of Hindostan* with Katrina Kaif only doing some songs in the film. The actor mentioned it during media interactions for *Secret Superstar*. Buzz is that Mr Perfectionist's remarks have not gone down too well with Kat. His comments don't come as a surprise. Fatima is his *Dangal* (2016) girl.

### Cold stares, hot discussions



A birdie from the set of *The Great Indian Laughter Challenge* chirps about the icy cold vibes that **Tabu** and **Parineeti Chopra** shared. They were on Akshay Kumar's show to promote *Golmaal Again*. The two did not interact with each other. **Ajay Devgn**, who was seated between them, would have surely felt the chills that were enough to form a glacier.

### He is 51, she is 18



**Milind Soman** attended a fashion event in New Delhi with rumoured girlfriend **Ankita Konwar** on Wednesday. He posted a selfie with her on Instagram and wrote, "Photo of the day." According to onlookers, the two walked hand-in-hand. Some fans posted comments such as, "You both look iconic together," while others asked, "Is she your daughter?" Milind is 51 and Ankita is 18. The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of.

### Caring for kids

**Pooja Hegde** turns a year older today. The *Mohenjo Daro* (2016) actor is not in a party mode. She has teamed up with an NGO to spend time with underprivileged children. Pooja will cut a cake and distribute goodies among them.



### A special celebration



**Rakul Preet Singh** celebrated her birthday earlier this week by visiting a Delhi orphanage. This was her way of bringing sunshine into their lives on her special day.

### TELLYTATTLE No longer whitewashed



**Meghna Malik** has shed her white robes in the second season of *Naa Aana Is Desh Laado*. The actor has opted for dark, solid colors to reprise her role of Ammaji. The colours of her robes may have changed, but her character remains colourful. She has upped her menacing and scheming act on the show.

### She has lost it



**Hina Khan** (Akshara of *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai*) was mostly seen in saris and traditional wear on the show. In *Bigg Boss*, the actor has been sticking to Western wear. We hear Hina hit the gym with a vengeance post her outing in *Khatron Ke Khiladi*. She is said to have lost seven kilos. Before entering the house, Hina personally chose the outfits she would wear on the show.



*Happy Diwali to all readers  
of The South Asian Insider Weekly  
and South Asian Community*

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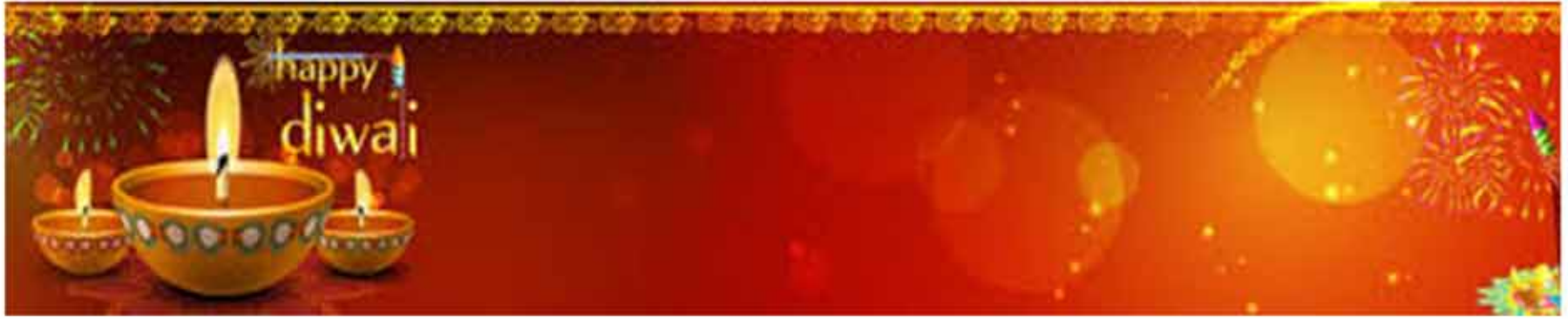
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