



# Trump administration targets 'sanctuary' cities in latest wave of immigration arrests

(News Agencies)The Trump administration has arrested hundreds of undocumented immigrants in cities that are hostile to the federal government's deportation crackdown, the latest salvo in a growing battle over sanctuary jurisdictions. Federal officials said recently that "Operation Safe City" specifically targeted some of the fiercest opponents of President Trump's immigration policies, including New York, Los Angeles, Baltimore, and Washington. In all, 498 immigrants, including 28 in Baltimore and 14 arrests in the District, were taken into custody in a four-day operation that ended last week officials said. Just under two-thirds of those arrested had criminal records in the United States. "We are never going to stop enforcing the laws that we're authorized and required to do," said Matthew Albence, an executive associate



## ICE chief pledges workplace crackdowns

(News Agencies) Washington, D.C. -The Trump administration's top immigration enforcement official on Tuesday said his agency will vastly step up crackdowns on employers who hire undocumented immigrants -- a new front in President Donald Trump's hard-line immigration agenda. Acting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director Tom Homan spoke

(Contd on page 26)

## Hawaii judge blocks Trump's latest travel ban

(News Agencies) Washington, D.C.- A federal judge in Hawaii has blocked President Donald Trump's revised travel ban one day before it was set to take effect. Judge Derrick Watson said the travel ban -- Trump's third version of the policy -- "plainly discriminates based on nationality."

The President's executive order "suffers from precisely the same maladies as its predecessor:

(Contd on page 26)

director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "If we need to go into these locations every week, we will go into these locations every week to remove these public safety threats." The arrests were a provocative move by an administration that has attempted to penalize jurisdictions that refuse to cooperate with federal deportation efforts but has met with resistance at every turn.

(Contd on page 26)

## India Ranks 100th On Global Hunger Index



(News Agencies) India ranks below many of its neighbouring countries. India has a "serious" hunger problem and ranks 100th out of 119 countries on the global hunger index -- behind North Korea, Bangladesh and Iraq but ahead of Pakistan, according to a report. The country's serious hunger level is driven by high child malnutrition and underlines need for stronger commitment to the social sector, (Contd on page 26)

## Homeopathy is 'QUACKERY'

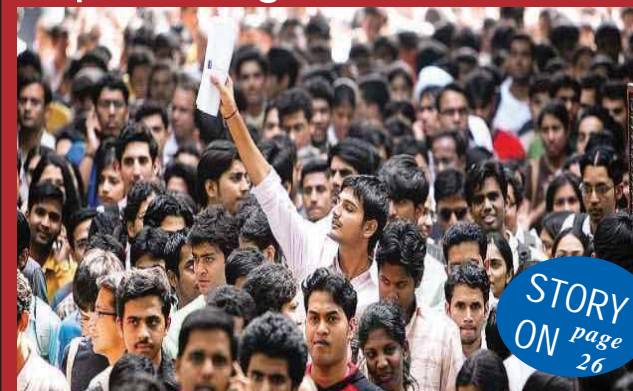
Experts warn the controversial practice is 'unethical', 'outrageous' and 'scientifically implausible'

(News Agencies)Homeopathy is 'quackery' and the widely disputed principles it revolves around are 'unethical and outrageous', researchers claim. British scientists argue it's 'scientifically implausible' the controversial practice, used by 500 million people across the world, has



any effect. Experts at Royal Veterinary College London made their conclusion after reviewing more than 50 animal trials over three decades. The new study follows the NHS' proposed decision to ban dishing out homeopathic remedies as part of a major cost-cutting drive. Homeopathy is said to work, including using herbal medicine, to help the body heal itself - but critics have long been sceptical. Professor Peter Lees, who led the research published in Veterinary Record, said: (Contd on page 25)

## Depressing Window To Middle Class



Weak private investment, automation and redundant skills are gnawing at white-collar jobs. A political hot potato is in the moulding.

STORY ON page 26





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# Grand Garba and Cultural Festival held at Melville, Long Island



Chauhan. While Presenting a Nassau County Proclamation Deputy Comptroller Chauhan stated that Navaratri marks a special time that symbolize the triumph of good over evil, find purity and seek new beginnings, today I feel very honor to recognize legend in Indian folk music and garba, Atul Putohit with Nassau County Proclamation for his outstanding contribution to spread Indian Culture in the world through Gujarati Folk Music and Garba, As we all know he is a legend in Indian Folk Music and we all grew up listening his tunes. While accepting an Honor Atul Purohit stated I am very humbled on receiving the Highest Honor from Long Island's Nassau County. I believes that Mataji has showered immense blessings on me and I will continue to do aradhna of mataji through his garba.

(By our staff reporter) Long Island, New York- As the Navrtri festival is currently underway, tens of thousands of Indian-American across New York came together at Garba and Cultural festival was organized jointly by Be United

the National Promoter Amit Pathak and Dream Merchants Meetul Patel and was locally supported by Bharatbhai Goradia. Mitul Patel and International Bollywood Promoter Bharat

Garba events happen in New Jersey and it was our dream to organize a major garba event in Long Island, NY so that the locals can get an opportunity of witnessing it without traveling long distances. We were able to organize the biggest ever

gathering in the history on Long Island, NY. Event was attended by thousands of Garba Lovers as well as Special Guest Bollywood TV Star Sanjeeda Sheikh and Deputy Comptroller of Nassau County Hon. Dilip

## 25-Year-Old Indian Origin Woman Left To Die In Blazing Car After Accident In New York

The driver left the woman passenger to die in the fireball after hailing a cab to take himself to a hospital, it said.



New York : A 25-year-old Indian-origin woman was left to die in a blazing car following a fiery crash in the US, police said. Harleen Grewal was burned to death on Friday after Saeed Ahmad, 23, slammed his luxury Infiniti 35G into a concrete barrier on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, the New York Daily reported. The driver left the woman passenger to die in the fireball after hailing a cab to take himself to a hospital, it said. When firefighters put out the flames, they

found a badly burned woman in the

passenger seat. She was pronounced dead at the scene. While the car was still in flames, Ahmad took himself to Maimonides Medical Center, police said. He was being treated there for burns to his arms and legs, the report said. Cops caught up with him at the hospital and charged him with

manslaughter,

criminally negligent homicide, leaving the scene of an accident, aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle and speeding. His arraignment was pending in Brooklyn Criminal Court, the report said. Ahmad had been allegedly driving in and out of the traffic on the expressway before his car hit the barrier, it

said. Ahmad, who lives in Flatlands, admitted to having a few drinks before the crash but was not legally drunk when his blood was tested at the hospital, police said. Ahmad's brother Waheed, however, claimed that his sibling had tried to rescue the passenger. "He said the girl that

was in the car was stuck in there and he tried to get her out, that's why his arms were burned." The grieving boyfriend of Grewal, who worked for a catering company, said she always looked out for others. "She would do anything for people," Karan Singh Dhillon was quoted as saying.

was in the car was stuck in there and he tried to get her out, that's why his arms were burned." The grieving boyfriend of Grewal, who worked for a catering company, said she always looked out for others. "She would do anything for people," Karan Singh Dhillon was quoted as saying.

## Famous bollywood Singer Neha Kakkar to perform live during shows in US



(By Vijay Shah) New York-Neha Kakkar, a well known Indian Film Industry female singer, will be performing in concerts all over USA to be organized by Na-

tional Promoter Pria Haider Productions. A Press Conference to announce Neha Kakkar show was organized recently in Jackson heights, Queens. It was announced



that Neha Kakkar show is on November 5th at Colden Auditorium where Neha Kakkar with Tony and Sonu Kakkar will be performing live. The Concert is Co-sponsored

and supported by Utshob.com, Nasrin Ahmed-The Lawyer, Shahnawaz Inc., Taj Diamond Inc., Premium Sweets and few other Jacksons' Height Businesses.

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# High Schoolers Protest After Teacher Tells Student To Speak 'American'

## *The teacher told students that soldiers weren't "fighting for your right to speak*

(News Agencies) New Jersey high school students on Monday decided to walk out in protest after a teacher last week insisted that a student speaking Spanish should instead "speak American."

Students at Cliffside Park High School in Cliffside Park, New Jersey, recorded a teacher on Thursday insisting that United States soldiers were not fighting for the right to speak a language other than English. Junior Vianery Cabrera, 16, told NBC Latino that she was discussing the New York Yankees in Spanish with a friend when

the teacher snapped.

"They're not fighting for your right to speak Spanish," the teacher says in the video. "They're fighting for your right to speak American."

In the video, the teacher kicked the students out and yelled that they were being "disrespectful" as they grabbed their belongings and left the classroom. After the video spread, more students became angered and about 100 students chose to walk out on Monday in protest. Vianery moved to the U.S. three years ago from the Dominican Republic and is more

comfortable speaking Spanish. The teacher insisted that if Vianery wanted to speak her language, she could do so in Spanish class. So Vianery was kicked out for not speaking "American."

"I laughed, because, first of all, that's not a language," Vianery told NBC Latino. "I have the right to speak Spanish. I have the right to speak English. I have the right to speak whatever language I speak, and that's my right. There's no law that says that I should or I must speak English." A Snapchat video of the incident circulated on Monday, and students

took a stand by walking out of school. About 100 students left on their own, and then a fire alarm was pulled forcing the entire school to evacuate, NBC Latino reported. On Monday evening, the Cliffside Park School District's Board of Education held a special meeting in closed session, NorthJersey.com reported. The school's principal previously threatened any students who chose to walk out with suspension, but Superintendent Michael Romagnino did not confirm whether students would be punished.

# Trump makes false claim that former presidents didn't call families of slain troops



(News Agencies) WASHINGTON — President Trump defended his slow public response to the deaths of four U.S. soldiers in Niger this month by claiming that most of his predecessors never called the families of service members killed in action.

"If you look at President Obama, and other presidents, most of them didn't make calls, a lot of them didn't make calls," Trump said Monday. "I like to call when it's appropriate, when I think I am able to do it." It was Trump's first public statement about the Niger incident, in which an Army special forces unit was ambushed by Islamic extremists in the western African nation. And it brought an swift and strong reaction from aides to former President Barack Obama. "That's a (expletive) lie," said Alyssa Mastromonaco, Obama's deputy chief of staff, on Twitter, calling Trump "a deranged animal." Trump later backed off his own statement later during an

impromptu and freewheeling session with reporters in the White House Rose Garden. "President Obama I think probably did sometimes, and maybe sometimes he didn't. I don't know. That's what I was told," he said. "Other presidents did not call. They'd write letters. And some

presidents didn't do anything." Recent presidents have acknowledged the sacrifice of fallen soldiers in different ways — and usually with little fanfare. President George W. Bush met personally with more than 450 families of service members who died in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and wrote to more than 4,000 of them, according to newspaper accounts at the time. Obama met with families at Dover Air Force Base, where the military mortuary is located, and also wrote letters and made phone calls. In 2011, he reversed a long-standing policy and began sending letters of condolence to families of service members who committed suicide while deployed to a combat zone. Asked to clarify Trump's

statement later, press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the president wasn't criticizing his predecessor, but "stating a fact."

"When American heroes make the ultimate sacrifice, presidents pay their respects. Sometimes they call, sometimes they send a letter, other times they have the opportunity to meet family members in person. This president, like his predecessors, has done each of these," she said. Anyone who claims previous presidents called every family, she said, is "mistaken." Trump has criticized Obama's handling of service members killed in action before. In 2012, he suggested on Twitter that Obama was "too busy playing

golf" and sent form letters to families signed with an autopen. The Obama White House said the letters were form letters but that they were each hand-signed.

Trump said he wrote personal letters to the families over the weekend and at some point will call the families. "I felt very, very badly about that. The toughest calls I have to make are the calls where this happens," he said. "I want a little time to pass. I'm going to be calling them." The Army said four soldiers were shot and killed while on a reconnaissance patrol 13 days ago on Oct. 3. They were serving in Niger as part of an operation to train local forces to combat the Boko Haram terror group, which has ties to the Islamic State and al-Qaeda.

## **New York City jihadi who used the 'Al Qaeda playbook' is found guilty of planting Chelsea pressure cooker bombs that injured 31 people**



(News Agencies) A federal jury has convicted a man of planting two bombs on New York City streets, including one that injured 31 people when it detonated.

Jurors in Manhattan on Monday found 29-year-old Ahmad Khan Rahimi guilty of all charges, including counts of using a weapon of mass destruction and bombing a public place.

He was convicted on all eight counts after a short but tense trial in which prosecutors accused his attorneys of using the 'Al Qaeda playbook.'

The Afghanistan-born man living in Elizabeth, New Jersey, faces a maximum punishment of life in prison. Over the course of Rahimi's two-week trial in New York, jurors heard testimony from multiple people who were injured by the bomb, made using a pressure cooker and a cell phone timer, that exploded on Manhattan's West 23rd Street. One woman testified that she was nearly blinded when a piece of shrapnel struck her next to her eye. Another man described the sound of the explosion as 'doomsday.' Jurors heard from law enforcement officers who were at the scene of the West 23rd Street blast,

and who removed an unexploded pressure cooker bomb found on nearby West 27th Street. Others testified about fingerprint and DNA evidence linking Rahimi to the bombs. Prosecutors said Rahimi considered himself 'a soldier in a holy war against Americans' and was inspired by the Islamic State group and Al Qaeda to carry out the attacks on September 17, 2016. He planted two pressure-cooker bombs in the Chelsea neighborhood after years of reading jihadist propaganda. One bomb on 23rd street in Manhattan exploded, while another on 27th street did not. He was also accused of planting bombs in New Jersey at a charity race in Seaside Park, but that didn't hurt anyone. Defense attorneys did not challenge much of the government's evidence but urged jurors to acquit Rahimi.

# The Supreme Court verdict on firecrackers needs to be lauded not criticised

*In the sound and fury around the ban, what has been missed is that the petitioners have not just sought interim relief against the use of fireworks but also wide ranging relief through “prevention of harmful crop burning, dumping of malba and further steps towards environmental purity”*

What are residents and citizens of a democratic country to do when an unrecognised national medical emergency creeps up on them in stealth mode and their elected legislators fail them, their local and central governments fail them and everyone, from makers to enforcers of the law looks the other way?

As a law-abiding citizen, the only thing to do is to approach the courts – and perhaps, the fourth (and fifth) estates. So why is there so much criticism of the latest Supreme Court judgement banning licences to sell fireworks in the Delhi in NCR region? Its not as if this was done suo moto.

The Court has responded to the appeal of some of the youngest and most vulnerable citizens of the country and instead of being criticised, needs to be applauded for standing firm in the face of jostling lobbies from every direction. The appeal was first filed in 2015, and the honourable court ruled to ban the licence to sell crackers in November 2016, and that too, only post-Diwali. Those children are now around three years old, their little lungs already blackened by the continued pollution that already exists in Delhi's air plus the and additional PM2.5 and other pollutant spikes of two Diwalis.

Traders, manufacturers, distributors — anyone with intelligence should have seen the writing on the wall, even as they began filing appeals against the petition after the November 2016 judgement was delivered, hoping to get a stay. They chose not to – everyone assumes that courts will take decades to deliver judgements, and the firecracker lobby probably thought the same. But no matter. For most, its seasonal business, and they will recover.

The only criticism of the Supreme Court that would be fair to make at this point would be one which points out inconsistency in its own benches on the same petition. One bench imposed a ban on the licence to sell firecrackers in November 2016. A different bench lifted it in Sept 2017 and

a third one pushed the date out to November 1, 2017. It is this flip-flop is what has caused needless losses to some traders who rushed to buy stocks during the brief lifting of the ban, and now may be unable to offload those easily, as well as stoked controversy right before Diwali. Like in the medical profession where one doctor will hesitate to pronounce a second opinion on diagnosis made by another in his fraternity or denounce a colleague, even if justified, no two judges will like to disagree publicly with each other's judgements. However, these are nuances that shouldn't be important when looking at the bigger picture – the overall health of a collective people. What is more important is that the latest judgement reimposing the ban — although currently just a temporary one until November 1 — is a genuine attempt to cut through all the distractions and delays to try and find out what exactly is at stake. Thus, it is the bounden duty of others imploded in the judgement, especially the Central Pollution Control Board, which has let too

much slide on its watch, to help the courts take this experiment to its natural conclusion. One of the first things it needs to do is to prepare itself — ensure all its monitors are working, are calibrated and ready to take on the burst of PM2.5 that a post-Diwali atmosphere is bound to have.

Additionally, although only the sale of crackers is banned, not its bursting, it is the moral duty of all of us Delhi and NCR residents to refrain from bursting even one cracker during this Diwali. It is important for the court to get a clear and accurate picture of the air quality post-Diwali this year and measure it against earlier numbers in order to put at rest once and for all the view of some that crackers do not contribute to PM2.5.

If the grouse of the BJP and the Hindutva demographic is why Diwali is being singled out, the answer to that is because it is a festival celebrated by the largest majority in the country and maximum numbers of crackers are burst on one single evening. Once it is established to the Supreme Court's



satisfaction that there is indeed a huge spike post-Diwali, it is possible that most high courts could even follow suit and ban firecrackers — not just for one festival or in one state, but across the country and across all festivals, including not just Christmas, Eid, Guru Poorab and others, but also cricket matches, weddings and other celebratory events. This will ensure no community feels discriminated against. We need to refocus on the fact that this is a medical issue, not a communal one. We are an innovative people — surely we can find alternatives like laser shows — equally marvellous and so much more green and less noisy to celebrate with. No citizen or resident should have a problem with that — in any case, the right to life precedes our right to religion. We have to be alive first, to choose which religion to

practice!

Some people are hijacking a purely medical issue and converting it into a political debate. Others are using it to polarise an already divided civil society along communal, regional and religious lines. This isn't about north, south, east, west, Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. Actually, this isn't even about firecrackers. That is just one small part of it. In the sound and fury around the ban, what has been missed is that the infant petitioners have not just sought interim relief against the use of fireworks but also wide ranging relief through “prevention of harmful crop burning, dumping of malba and further steps towards environmental purity,” according to the petition. Banning sales of fireworks is just the interim relief that the honourable court has granted while it mulls the other, bigger issues.

## What statistics don't tell

**NDA government promised to transform India in 60 months. Forty months down the road, the future looks bleak and bluffing through the jugglery of numbers continues.**

Whenever we dwell on economic woes confronting ordinary people and the mess that has set in because of untimely or ill-conceived decisions of the finance ministry, the response we get is: India is the world's fastest growing economy. As if that washes away the sins of thoughtless policy prescriptions. We are told that India's GDP is growing at 7 per cent. Is GDP only a number without a human face? If a 7 per cent GDP growth helps in making the rich richer and leaving the poor impoverished, then such rhetoric is tantamount to deception. Any attempt at self-praise by comparing our growth figures with the Chinese GDP is also an act of self-deception. China is a

\$11.8-trillion economy as compared to India's mere \$2.45 trillion. So if India grows at 7 per cent and China grows at 6.7 per cent, but from a much higher base, to claim that we are the fastest growing economy is, to say the least, misleading. The US with a \$19 trillion economy can hardly ever grow at more than 3 per cent. Also in per capita terms, the income of Indians in nominal terms is \$1,850; China's comparative per capita income is around \$8,500.

The real question for all economists is to demonstrate how India's GDP has helped people at the bottom of the pyramid. Now let us look at some numbers. Of the 24.7 crore households in the country, the number of rural households is

16.8 crore and the number of urban households is 7.9 crore. With an average of 4.8 persons living in a rural household, the number of persons living in rural households will be 80.64 crore. Keep in mind that India's population is almost 130 crore. Ninety-two per cent of those living in rural households (74.18 crore) earn less than Rs 10,000 a month. Of the 37.92 crore living in urban households, 26.4 per cent (10.01 crore) live below the poverty line. Consequently, around 84 crore people in India live life on the margins. The total population of the US and Europe put together is around 75 crore. We should not only be worried for our poor but need to do something radical to bring cheer to their lives — and not resort to

empty rhetoric and renaming schemes.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi committed that he would transform India in 60 months. Forty months down the road, the future looks bleak and bluffing through the jugglery of statistics continues. Recently, a BJP leader pegged the country's growth at 3.7 per cent instead of 5.7 per cent in the last quarter. The government may dispute his claim. Unseemly bickering that reduces the level of political discourse will continue but the reality of the desperation of those who have lost livelihoods and are unable to afford two square meals a day cannot be wished away with vacuous sound bites on television channels.

(Contd on page 24)

## Hold app-based taxi firms accountable for offences by drivers

***There has been a spike in complaints of alleged harassment by app-based cab drivers. Just because these companies did not have headquarters in India it should not be difficult to hold them accountable for crimes committed by their drivers***

It is a judicial intervention that could impact the lives of thousands of taxi users in urban India and pave the way for enhanced safety and better service standards. During the hearing of a matter related to the implementation of the victim compensation scheme and women's security, the Supreme Court on Thursday said it would look into a plea to regulate app-based taxi service providers such as Ola and Uber to hold them accountable for offences committed by the drivers of their vehicles. "The issue of regulating public transport, including Internet-based taxi services, will be taken up on December 7," said a bench of Justices MB Lokur and Deepak Gupta.

The court made these observations when senior advocate Indira Jaising, the advisor to the court in the matter, pointed out several instances of crimes committed by drivers of these services. Jaising said Uber was recently banned from plying in London after it refused to subject itself to the jurisdiction of the local courts. She added that just because these companies did not have headquarters in India it should not be difficult to hold them accountable for crimes committed by their drivers.

There has been a spike in complaints of alleged harassment by app-based cab drivers. Earlier this week, stand-up comic Mallika Dua said her cab driver became abusive when she requested him to raise the air-conditioning. Last year, a driver was held for the alleged molestation of a 23-year-old Belgian tourist in New Delhi and in June 2016, the Delhi Police arrested a 40-year-old driver for making obscene gestures in front of an additional sessions judge who had hailed a ride after finishing work. It is necessary to have some regulatory framework for the companies running these services. Making app-based cab service companies accountable for offences committed by their drivers will help reduce these offences. Once such guidelines and regulation are in place, they will benefit the consumer, act as a deterrent against bad behaviour and also create greater confidence in their business.

## Congress is showing signs of revival but big challenges remain ahead of 2019 test

***Rahul Gandhi's US tour and Congress' social media efforts are positive signs for the Opposition; but the party has real challenge to overcome and, more crucially, sustain this momentum till the 2019 polls***

Over the past few weeks, the Congress, which has been unable to show much energy post its 2014 debacle, has finally been getting key elements in place to emerge as a strong and credible Opposition. Rahul Gandhi's United States tour revealed a relatively neglected, thoughtful and focused side of him to audiences. He was seen as candid about the failures of the Congress, conscious of the challenges before India, and aware of the centrality of economic growth and job creation. But the test was whether he would be able to sustain the momentum. Early evidence suggests he is taking greater responsibility in the party; he has travelled twice to Gujarat on yatras to build support for the party in the run up to the state elections, once to Amethi, and once to Himachal Pradesh in a little over a fortnight. But beyond the individual, the Congress has also woken up to the social media game, and for the first time in years, is creating counter narratives on Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. Remember, it was on social media that the BJP was able to carve out a distinct space in the run up to the 2014 general polls. This has coincided with challenges the government is facing on the economy.

Whether the Congress has created the discontent or is merely tapping into the discontent remains an open question. This is however not to suggest that the Opposition is back, for the Congress has real challenges to overcome. Its organisational elections have not yet reached a logical conclusion; Rahul Gandhi's communication skills need further refinement and public outreach must be more consistent; the Congress organisation is weak even as the BJP has created among the most formidable election machines any party has had so far; the Congress has not been able to create a younger generation of leaders from backward communities, the OBC groups in particular, which the BJP is systematically wooing; it remains dismally weak in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh which are so important on the national stage; and, it has not yet made decisions on leadership in key poll-bound states.

## Iran-U.S. relations: On dangerous footing

By refusing to certify the Iran nuclear deal, which curbed its nuclear programme in return for lifting global sanctions, U.S. President Donald Trump has put the two-year-old pact on dangerous footing. Under American law, the administration has to certify that Iran is technically in compliance with the deal that was struck between Iran and six other world powers, including the U.S., every 90 days. All other signatories, as well as the UN, insist that Iran is fully complying. But Mr. Trump, who had during his election campaign threatened to tear up the deal and as President continued to call it the "worst agreement in American diplomatic history", disavowed it days before the next certification was due. From its early days, his administration has taken a hawkish line towards Iran, imposing new sanctions on its missile programmes and joining hands with its regional rivals in West Asia. But even as he withdrew certification, he did not scrap the deal. Instead, he passed the buck to U.S. lawmakers. The Republican-controlled Congress now has 60 days to decide whether sanctions should be reimposed. It is unlikely to do anything radical in the near term as any sweeping legislation would require bipartisan support in the Senate. Nonetheless, the damage Mr. Trump's decision has done to the agreement and to American diplomacy in general is huge. He appears to be driven by political calculations rather than a realistic assessment of the agreement, which, by its own standards, is working.

With the withdrawal from the certification, Mr. Trump has put the final nail in the coffin of an Iran-U.S. reset that had appeared possible during the Obama days. Now the threat of sanctions will hang over the nuclear deal. This is a boon for hardliners in Iran, who have suffered a political setback in recent years. The deal became possible only because the reformists and moderates rallied behind President Hassan Rouhani's agenda, despite strong opposition from the Iranian deep state. Even Mr. Rouhani, who promised a solution to the nuclear crisis, got the deal done and won re-election this year, will now find it difficult to mobilise public opinion behind the agreement in the light of continued U.S. hostility. The larger question is, what kind of example is the U.S. setting for the global non-proliferation regime? The Iran deal, despite its shortcomings, was a shining example of the capacity of world powers to come together and sort out a complex issue diplomatically. It assumed greater significance given the recent wars and chaos in West Asia. It should have set a model in addressing other nuclear crises. Instead, by going after Iran even though it complies with the agreement, the U.S. is damaging its own reputation.



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# Lesbian role in 'Varta re Varta' speaks to honest self-acceptance

## Gujarati web series crosses stares unblinkingly at cultural taboos

Being a lesbian in India is something that is kept under a rug, but being a lesbian in Gujarat is something that is swept under a rug that doesn't even exist, meaning it is an absolute taboo: It doesn't exist and shouldn't exist – except it does in "Varta re Varta."

I recently just finished filming season two of this series, the first Gujarati web series. I had never worked on anything that represented my own Gujarati culture. And a Gujarati web series? I had never even heard of such a thing. So when I was approached by award-winning director Jay Parikh, I was all in!

It was really nice to get in touch with my culture, eating bakarwadi, gatyiya and relearning my language. I speak fluent Gujarati and although I grew up in Australia, my parents always spoke to me in Gujarati. It is still my first language. What surprised me was that even in Gujarat we have different dialects and accents. The way we pronounce certain words is different place to place. Jay had my co-star, Priyank Thakker, who plays my brother, relearn Gujarati with me. He wanted us to sound like Gujjus from Anand, where our characters are from.

I had to start training myself to say "shu" when my natural tendency is to say "su." It took a while, but Jay was persistent with us and I am very grateful for that.

Working on "Varta re Varta" was a grueling yet an exceptionally rewarding process. It was very important to me that I met with Jay's vision. He is a great director, he calls himself an "actor's director" and I absolutely agree. He gives you freedom to be creative. He nurtures you and then lets you go. He has put his heart and soul into this project and his passion has only fueled me through this journey.

Jay originally had a lead male in mind but after he met me he changed the script. I guess he saw potential in me. Jay actually called me to ask if I was OK playing a gay woman. I said yes. I thought it would be a good challenge for me as an actor and an opportunity to grow as a human being too. From the beginning, I was stuck in the mindset that this is a story about a gay woman coming out. Over time working with Jay, I realized it's not even about that. It never was. This story is for people who are hiding their true identities to

the world and most importantly, to themselves.

When you strip the film of the characters, costume, production and design, you are left with the essence. What is the core of the story? It's not about a girl who comes to LA or her troubles with being gay. It is about self-acceptance. This is an issue a lot of people have – myself included. When I first started realizing that my true calling was to become an actor, I denied it because I couldn't accept myself for it. Gujarati girls aren't supposed to act. I tried steering my path towards business and science but hated it. Eventually I had to accept that this is who I am. Once I was able to accept that, I stopped worrying what others think and opened up to my parents. To my surprise, they supported me. I know not all parents will be accepting of their kids becoming actors but mine did, and I am truly blessed for that. A lot of the time we are fearful of what others think so we don't let ourselves be who we are meant to be. But once you are comfortable with yourself, the rest usually falls into place. Even if there are some who disapprove, it doesn't matter. Most importantly you are in



peace within. I firmly believe this series is not just for women in India who are in the closet, it's for anyone out there who is learning to accept their true selves. "Varta re Varta" is the story of an Indian girl from Anand, Ria Desai (yes she is named after me, Jay suggested that). She arrives in LA to pursue her dreams of acting. She explores her sexuality and discovers that she is a lesbian. Her life is running smoothly until her younger brother Ronak shows up at her doorstep as a surprise. He has moved to America for engineering and is now living with his sister. Ria's life has turned upside-down. She is living a secret life and trying to hide it from her brother, so

he won't tell the family. Along with self-acceptance, the story explores the brother-sister relationship between Ronak and Ria. "Varta re Varta" is a dramedy, spoken in a mix of Gujarati and English, it is meant to appeal to a wide audience. You will find yourself either be reaching for another tissue or holding your belly from laughing. The characters are great. Ria Desai is the simplest of them all, although her life is complicated. The characters around her are the colors in her life. Jay and I have had long talks about our hopes with this series and at the end of the day, if we are even able to change one person's life, we will have done our jobs as artists.



In the last week of June 2017, China's military entered into the Doklam region, bordering the state of Sikkim in northeast India, further than their positions and started construction. India's forces moved forward to prohibit the efforts. After 10 tense weeks, the situation in the region, a tri-junction of Bhutan, Tibet (China) and India, got resolved. China stopped the construction in the region and soldiers of both countries returned to the positions they held previously. This is certainly a huge victory for India, both in foreign policy and military, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Doklam is an area with a plateau and a valley, lying between Tibet's Chumbi Valley to the north, Bhutan's Ha Valley to the east and India's Sikkim state to the west. This is a territory of Bhutan, a small Himalayan nation that does not have formal diplomatic relations with China. According to the Treaty of

## Resolving 10 tense weeks in Doklam Face-saving solution surfaced as New Delhi held firm

Friendship between Bhutan and India signed on Aug. 8 1949, Bhutan agreed to let India "guide" its foreign policy and both nations would consult each other closely on foreign and defense affairs. Thus, Bhutan's safety and diplomatic relations was under India's protection and guidance. Till 1972, Bhutan did not have foreign relations other than with India. The relations got further relaxed in the 2007 India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty, according to which the two sides have agreed to "cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other."

Doklam region has been strategically important for China because if China gains the control of the region, India's Silguri corridor or chicken-neck region that connects India's northeastern states with the rest of India can be under the range of China's direct attack. Chinese sudden incursion in the area was an attempt to make deeper inroads in a shorter time assuming democratic India's leadership would take a longer time to respond and

India's defense forces may be less prepared. However, contrary to the expectations, India under the leadership of Modi and counsel of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, responded firmly and immediately with giving a free hand and resources to India's army.

Unfortunately, for China, Doklam region is a very peculiar area where India has an upper hand and China is on a receiving side. When India's soldiers surged ahead to defend Bhutan's territory, China raised high-pitched psychological warfare via media with a dual focus: demoralize India's population and create international pressure. As Michael Kugelman, deputy director and senior associate for South Asia at the Wilson Center, noted, "the Chinese media has been noticeably sharp and strident." The Global Times of China publicized a high-pitched rhetoric terming India as an aggressor and asking it to back off. It also raised questions about India's legal ground, the Indian military's ability to defend and threatening a wider war similar to the 1962 war.

India's opposition leadership initially

got confused. On July 11, Rahul Gandhi privately met Chinese envoy Luo Zhaohui and, later, opposition raised the Doklam issue in India's parliament. On Aug. 3, India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj confidently replied to the opposition that India stands with Bhutan and would resolve the matter diplomatically with China. India's leadership, and Ministry of External Affairs maintained a very composed and firm stand that China should stop the construction and go back to the original post. India's military dug up and held positions so that China's forces would not make any progress.

On the diplomatic front, even though China continuously questioned the legitimacy of India's actions under the British Qing Dynasty Treaty back in 1890 and termed India as aggressor and tried to play a victim card, China did not find much international support. By contrast, India received both vocal and silent support from various nations. During the period of the same 10 weeks, India was also engaged in a trilateral naval exercise at Malabar, with the U.S. Navy and Japan.

(Contd on page 24)



# Sex with minor wife is rape: SC ruling puts rape and child protection laws in sync

*The Supreme Court has upheld the rights of girls who are married between the ages of 15 and 18 years and in doing so has harmonised the IPC with POCSO Act, Juvenile Justice Act and Prohibition of Child Marriage Act*



A measure long overdue finally becomes the law of the land. In landmark ruling, the Supreme Court of India on Wednesday did what the legislators have shied away from doing for many years — it has criminalised sex between a man and his minor wife (girl child). The apex court has not just assailed and set aside the definition of rape under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) but has also done away with the unnecessary and artificial distinction between a married girl child and an unmarried girl child in the rape law. So far, according to the rape law — the age of consent is 18 years, meaning

that sex with a minor girl is rape. But unfortunately, in the same breath the law also protected sexual intercourse between a man and his wife being a girl between 15 and 18 years of age. It took away from a girl child who is not mentally and physically mature enough her right to decline sex with her husband. Before this verdict there also existed duality between the rape law and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO). 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. Despite progressive legislations like POCSO and Juvenile Justice Act, which protect rights of children, girl child/child brides who otherwise are treated as minors under various laws were afforded no protection under the IPC. What is also appalling is that while the government took steps to do away with the social evil of child marriages and enacted a law, it did not bring corresponding changes in the rape law as both the laws disagreed on the

age of consent. Now the top court has upheld the rights of girls who are married between the ages of 15 and 18 years and in doing so has harmonised the IPC with POCSO Act, JJ Act and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act. What this judgment has achieved is that it has come to the rescue of girl child or child brides who would have been otherwise degraded, humiliated and destroyed. According to government data, 46% of women in India between the ages of 18 and 29 years were married before the age of 18 years. It is also estimated that there are about 23 million child brides in India.

## If the dead could speak, Aarushi Talwar would ask some tough questions

*Questions are bound to be raised about what the Talwars were punished for? If the dead could speak the teenager is likely to ask the Indian judiciary some tough questions.*



If only the dead could speak. In case nature granted them this ability, I am sure Aarushi Talwar would come back from the dead and look India's judiciary in the eye. She is likely to ask them some really tough questions. Even if the

almighty had planned such a tragic end for me, isn't it the failure of our law and order machinery that nobody has a clue about my killer? Why did senior officers of the Uttar Pradesh police fail to make a breakthrough? Why has the CBI been

unsuccessful in unmasking the murderer? Is it incompetence or sheer lack of will?

Aarushi's murder also proves that an anarchist and immoral mob mentality prevails in the world's largest democracy. It seems we are all living in a gigantic, loud and noisy drum-house where some people are trying to make a feeble but ineffective plea for truth and justice.

Today, when I dig into the inbox of my memories once again, I realise that since May 2008, a suspense thriller has been taking shape before us. One day comes the news that a 14-year-old girl has been found dead in her bedroom in her Jalvayu Vihar home. A probe begins to find out who killed her. By evening the police realise that Hemraj, the domestic help, is missing. Assuming that he was the murderer, the

speculation starts. The next day Hemraj's body is found on the terrace of the apartment. The girl is killed in her bedroom and the domestic help's body on the terrace. There is no sign of a robbery. The neighbours next door don't have a clue about what happened. Who killed these two? When were they killed and why?

There was as much speculation, as there were questions.

At that time the Mayawati government was in power in Uttar Pradesh. She was very sensitive when it came to crime. Senior officers based in Lucknow began to apply pressure on the local police. Regional police chiefs from Meerut also jumped into the fray. Every day a new theory was floated. People talk about a trial by media. But all kinds of insinuations were being fed to them.

(Contd on page 24)

# *There's no shortcut to growth: Indian economy's revival will need more than temporary stitches*

**An analysis of latest Labour Bureau points to an absolute decline in formal employment between 2013 and 2016, for the first time in many decades**

(Insider Bureau) This past week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's newly appointed Economic Advisory Council held its first meeting to discuss ways to revive economic growth and accelerate creation of new jobs. Going by news reports, the Council appears to be in no hurry to recommend quick fixes. It has refrained from responding to demands for fiscal stimulus or cuts in interest rates. Instead, it has chosen to look deeper into issues in key sectors and explore solutions in consultation with agencies and authorities administering those sectors.

This is a good start for the Council. As this column has argued earlier, the problems confronting the Indian economy at this point are largely structural, not cyclical. There are no easy answers or quick solutions. It will be prudent to think through what needs to be done and how. Moreover, if the objective is also to create and sustain jobs that the country needs, it is important to ask why employment generation lost pace even through the

years when the economy grew rather fast.

Labour Bureau data point to a steady deceleration in employment growth through 2001 to 2010, stagnation in the following three years and a contraction in jobs since 2013. To be sure, there are issues with the data, especially on account of its coverage being limited to the formal sector and smaller sample sizes. Still, a comparison of the data over time throws up some interesting trends.

In the early years of the millennium, employment growth was driven by rapid expansion in sectors such as construction, food and food products, basic metals, machinery and equipment, IT outsourcing and financial and communication (mobile phone) services. These sectors also drove the broader economy that posted the best growth in the period between 2003 and 2008. But the pace of employment generation even in these sectors also slowed because of a secular increase in mechanisation and automation. Some of these sectors tend to employ fewer incremental labour as

their scale grows.

As a result, when a financial crisis hit the world economy in 2008 and these sunshine sectors, some of which were riding on the back of global demand, began to slow down, new employment opportunities shrunk. The Indian economy was growing, but was not creating jobs. The years from 2010 to 2013, came to be known as a period of jobless growth.

India had responded to the 2008 crisis with significant fiscal stimulus through across-the-board tax concessions and increased social spending. Those measures did help businesses keep their bottom lines healthy and the GDP bounce back to high growth in 2010-11, but as is evident now the impact was temporary.

The structural weaknesses, in fact, worsened in the following years. In an article disaggregating the performance of manufacturing sector over the past five years, I had pointed out how nearly half a dozen sectors had slipped into a contraction mode. They have been hit

by multiple factors, from finance crunch to cheaper imports.

In other words, the best performing sectors during the boom years have come to be worst performing now. The resulting loss or lack of jobs has not been offset by new jobs in sectors or economic activities that might be getting reckoned as top performers in recent years. The implication of this is corroborated by a recent analysis of the Labour Bureau data by Vinod Abraham, who teaches economics at Thiruvananthapuram-based Centre for Development Studies. Abraham estimates an absolute decline in formal employment between 2013-16, perhaps for the first time in the history of independent India. The point that I am trying to make is that the Indian economy faces some serious constraints to grow at an accelerated pace. The prime minister's advisory council is aware of this and is willing not to give into short term temptations, but that isn't going to be enough. Others in the government will have to be sensitised.

## *Women are becoming the driving force for Saudi Arabia's progress*

*As Saudi Arabia embarks on implementing its strategy of women's empowerment, Saudi women no doubt will continue their magnificent achievements, and further their leading role in the advancement of our country*

(Insider Bureau) In a move lauded worldwide, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud recently issued a royal decree allowing women to obtain driving licences.

Saudi Arabia is committed to the Sustainable Development Goal of gender equality and is making significant strides in this domain. Each step in the right direction means more progress and can make a world of difference. It continues to fulfil its dream of prosperity for all as it unlocks the talent, potential, and dedication of its young men and women.

The year 2017 has indeed been a landmark year for Saudi Arabia. In April, United Nations member states elected Saudi Arabia to serve on the UN Commission on the Status of Women. In July, girls in Saudi Arabia were allowed to receive physical education lessons as part of the curriculum in public schools. A month later, Saudi Arabia's justice ministry approved four landmark

decisions in support of women's rights pertaining to protecting minors, divorcees, women who have custody of their children and law graduates who have not been able to practise their profession yet due to male lawyers' arbitrariness. The government has also established 64 centres and 17 committees to safeguard women against violence. And in September, for the first time women were present at the King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh.

The royal decree is part of promoting physical, psychological and social well-being of women. At the core of this endeavour lies the belief that women empowerment provides the necessary foundation for a prosperous society and sustainable development.

Vision 2030, the kingdom's blueprint for long-term economic and developmental goals, aims at increasing women's participation in the workforce from the current level of 22% to 30%. The National Transformation Program

complements the Vision 2030 with the strategic objective of increasing the percentage of women occupying top positions from 1.27% to 5% by 2020.

The private sector registered a 130% increase in the number of working Saudi women during the last four years. In fact, 30% of the total Saudi work force in the private sector is now represented by women. Today, more Saudi women than men are attaining university degrees. The educational reforms have produced a new generation of women with high degree of training, education and knowledge who are now assuming their rightful place in society. Several initiatives taken by the government are aimed at furthering the cause of women's empowerment by creating more vocational training programmes and job opportunities.

For example, Saudi Aramco, General Electric and Tata Consultancy Services opened the first all-female business process services centre in Riyadh with over 1,000 female



employees. The centre serves as a building block to localise the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Aramco, in cooperation with Princess Nourah University (PNU) and Wipro Arabia Limited, also inaugurated the first all-women business and technology park in 2016, aiming to provide employment for 20,000 women over the next decade. Work from home projects are also being encouraged in a bid to help women overcome the challenge of commuting to work. Such projects are likely to generate over 140,000 jobs by 2020.

Women in Saudi Arabia have also broken the proverbial glass ceiling: Rania Mahmoud Nashar, chief executive officer (CEO) of Samba Financial Group, became the first woman to head

a commercial bank in the kingdom; Latifa Homoud Alsabhan is serving as the chief financial officer (CFO) of Arab National Bank; and in February, Sarah Al-Suhaimi, CEO of the National Commercial Bank, became the first woman to chair Tadawul, the country's stock exchange.

Keeping in line with the policy of women's empowerment, a host of other opportunities are being provided to women in the domain of education, healthcare, employment and political participation. In 2013, 30 women were appointed to the Shoura (consultative council) and in the 2015 municipal elections, women voted and ran for office for the first time.

# Iran nuclear deal: Donald Trump's actions will isolate and harm US credibility

*The Iranian nuclear deal was solely aimed at alleviating international concerns about Tehran's nuclear programme. Donald Trump's criticism of the deal citing Tehran's human rights record, support to terrorist networks or ballistic missile programme is blatantly unfair*

(Insider Bureau) Ending weeks of speculation, United States President Donald Trump laid out a major re-orientation of US policy towards Iran and the wider region. As part of this new strategy, Trump refused to certify that 'Iran is taking measures to terminate its illicit nuclear program'. Under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act 2015, such a presidential certification is required for continued suspension of American sanctions on Iran. Trump has gone against the advice of his closest advisers including secretary of defence General James Mattis, secretary of state Rex Tillerson and even the commander of the US Strategic Command, General John Hyten. The president's refusal however will not translate into an immediate reimposition of sanctions on Iran. The US Congress has 60 days to debate the issue and then decide on reimposition of economic sanctions.

In a bid to pressurise the Congress and American allies, Trump indicated that the US could unilaterally walk out of the Iran deal in case a solution could not be found by working with the Congress and US allies. However, neither the Congress nor US allies seem to be taking Trump's bait. The European Union, Britain and France have expressed their commitment to full implementation of the Iran deal. Trump is unlikely to find any support in Moscow and Beijing.

The joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA), which was concluded in July 2015, was not a bilateral agreement between the US and Iran but a multilateral agreement reached after two years of intensive negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 (US, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany). Further, it was incorporated into the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. The bottom line is that if Trump carries out his threat and terminates US participation in the deal, he would damage America's international credibility and leadership. Such an action would isolate the US among its allies with the exception of Israel and Saudi Arabia who would support Trump's gambit.

Going through Trump's

statement, very little of it is specifically about Iranian violations of the deal apart from two specific allegations. Without providing any details, Trump stated that Iran has exceeded the limit of 130 metric tonnes of heavy water on two occasions. On both these occasions, Iran has shipped the excess stock of heavy water to Oman and the same has been verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Trump also alluded that until recently, Iran had failed to meet American expectations in its operation of advanced centrifuges. However, here also Iran has remained true to the provisions of the deal and has agreed to limit its research and development efforts on advanced centrifuges.

A large portion of Trump's tirade against Iran was restricted to Tehran's support to terrorism, human rights abuses, its expanding ballistic missile programme and allegations of collaborating with North Korea. It is prudent to recall that the

JCPOA, popularly known as the Iran nuclear agreement, was limited to the Iranian nuclear programme and did not delve into Iran's role in the various crises in West Asia or Tehran's ballistic missile programme. In fact, the limited scope of US's negotiations with Iran were the result of decisions taken during the Bush administration. Trump should re-look at past American decisions before terming the Iran deal as one of the "worst and most one-sided transactions" the US has ever entered into.

The Iran deal was very successful in blocking the uranium and plutonium route available to Iran to build nuclear weapons. Prior to the agreement, Iran was operating close to 19,500 centrifuges, had a stockpile of about 7,000 kg of low-enriched uranium hexafluoride gas (UF6), stockpile of 200 kg of UF6 gas enriched up to 20%. It was also working on starting its heavy water plant at Arak.



As part of the agreement, Iran gave up about two-thirds of its centrifuges, shipped abroad 95% of its stockpile, including all weapons-grade fissile material, accepted to 300 kg limit on its entire uranium stockpile for 15 years. Iran also agreed to modify the Arak heavy-water reactor thereby blocking the plutonium route to producing fissile material for nuclear weapons. Tehran also agreed to one of the most intrusive IAEA verifications regime accepted by any country.

The most important achievement of the agreement was increasing the break out time (time required for Iran to build nuclear weapon) from two months to 12 months. This was the result of the restrictions imposed on Iranian nuclear

programme.

It is possible to point out flaws in the Iranian deal. Like most international agreements, the agreement too is far from being perfect. Given that negotiators have to accommodate competing concerns of various actors and seek to achieve the "best possible" agreement, international multilateral agreements seldom are perfect. The Iranian nuclear deal was solely aimed at alleviating international concerns about Iran's nuclear programme and the possibility of Tehran building a nuclear weapon. Criticising the agreement for not being able to improve Tehran's human rights record, curb its alleged support to terrorist networks or limit Iran's expanding ballistic missile programme is blatantly unfair.

## Don't penalise farmers for Delhi's air pollution

*As farmers seek monetary help, and have openly flouted the ban imposed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on burning of paddy straw, a direct confrontation between the agitating farmers and the government is on the anvil.*

(Insider Bureau) Not to take any more risk with human health, the Supreme Court has reinstated the ban it imposed on sale of fire crackers in the Delhi-NCR region. The "direct evidence of deterioration of air quality at alarming levels" that the Supreme Court cited to justify the ban has another player. Paddy stubble burning by farmers during the same period in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and in the outskirts of Delhi, has also been blamed for choking the Capital. What forces farmers to burn the paddy stubbles is the short window available between the harvesting of paddy and the sowing of the next wheat crop. In a fortnight or so, farmers have to harvest the crop, market it, and also undertake sowing operations for the next rabi crop. Burning of paddy straw therefore is the easiest way out. Unfortunately, farmer's compulsion that leaves him little option but to burn the crop residues has not been understood properly. Instead of helping the farmers, the entire effort is to coerce them into submission.

An estimated 20 million tonnes of paddy straw is burnt in Punjab alone. As the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had observed: "70% of the land covered by agricultural activity was put on fire by the

farmers of Punjab who burnt farm residue," further adding that stubble burning shoots up the carbon dioxide levels in the air by 70%. "The concentration of carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide rises by 7% and 2.1% respectively, triggering respiratory and heart problems. Also, it was stated that soil loses a significant amount of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium and sulphur, the total loss of nutrients being estimated at 1.5-lakh tonnes per annum. Farmers are aware of the environmental fall-out. But they need monetary help. Punjab farmers have been demanding Rs 6,000 per acre as a compensation package for the additional costs they have to incur to take measures that prevents burning of crop residues. Instead of providing any financial support, farmers who continue to resort to burning of paddy straw are being penalised, put behind bars, and threatened with withdrawal of farm subsidies. As if this is not enough, a 'red entry' against the plot number where stubble burning takes place is now being initiated in the land records. The farming community is furious. Agitating farmers have now openly flouted the ban imposed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on burning of paddy straw, and a direct confrontation between the

agitating farmers and the government is on an anvil. Already, several farmer unions have given call to defy the ban, and surely the incidences of crop residues being put to fire are also increasing. The confrontation is likely to worsen in the days to come. Knowing that imposing any coercive measure against the farming community already reeling under severe distress will be politically incorrect, the Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh is seeking an incentive of Rs 2,000-crore from the Centre to ensure that farmers remove paddy straw without burning it. "We have demanded that the Centre should give Rs 100 per quintal, which comes to roughly Rs 2,000-crore." And he is right. After all, stubble burning is a socio-environment problem, and the society has to share the burden. Why can't a proportion of the Rs 50,000-crore proposed economic stimulus package be used for address the problem of stubble burning?

It is a question of priorities. Within weeks of the inflation figures showing a rising trend, the government enhanced the dearness allowance (DA) for the central government employees from the existing 4% to 5%. The hike in DA by just 1% creates an annual additional burden of Rs 3,068.26 crore. **(Contd on page 24)**

# 85% Indians Trust Their Government, 55% Support Autocracy, Says Survey

***In India, which has strong democratic credentials since the last seven decades, according to Pew, a majority (55 per cent) of its people support autocracy in one way or the other.***

(News Agencies) WASHINGTON: More than four-fifths of Indian citizens trust their government, but interestingly, a majority of Indians also support military rule and autocracy, a latest Pew survey said today.

"In India, where the economy has grown on average by 6.9 per cent since 2012, 85 per cent (of people) trust their national government," Pew Research said in a report based on its survey on governance and trust among key countries across the world.

Notably, in India, which has strong democratic credentials since the last seven decades, according to Pew, a majority (55 per cent) of its people support

autocracy in one way or the other. In fact, more than one-fourth (27 per cent) of them want a strong leader.

Nearly half of Russians (48 per cent) back governance by a strong leader, but rule by a strong leader is generally unpopular, it said. A global median of 26 per cent say a system in which a strong leader can make decisions without interference from parliament or the courts would be a good way of governing. Roughly seven-in-10 (71 per cent) say it would be a bad type of governance.

India is one of the three countries in the Asia Pacific region where people support technocracy.

"Asian-Pacific publics generally back rule by experts, particularly people in Vietnam (67 per cent), India (65 per cent) and the Philippines (62 per cent)," it said.

Only Australians are notably wary as 57 per cent say it would be a bad way to govern, and only 41 per cent support governance by experts, the report said. According to the survey, roughly half of both Indians (53 per cent) and South Africans (52 per cent), who live in nations that often hold themselves up as democratic exemplars for their regions, say military rule would be a good thing for their countries.

But in these societies, older



people (those aged 50 and older) are the least supportive of the army running the country, and they are the ones who either personally experienced the struggle to establish democratic rule or are the immediate descendants of those democratic pioneers, Pew said. Only one in 10 in Europe back military rule. Pew said more than

half in each of the 38 nations polled consider representative democracy a very or somewhat good way to govern their country. Yet, in all countries, pro-democracy attitudes coexist, to varying degrees, with openness to non-democratic forms of governance, including rule by experts, a strong leader, or the military.

## 'Nothing has changed since the Delhi gang rape' India's capital shamed as one of the world's worst megacities for sex attacks on women in new poll



(News Agencies) Delhi shares the shame with Brazil's Sao Paulo for being the world's worst when it comes to sexual violence against women.

Five years on from the fatal gang rape of a student on a bus in New Delhi, the Indian capital came out joint top in a Thomson Reuters Foundation's poll on the risk women run of encountering sexual violence from a sample of 19 different cities.

The survey asked 380 experts on women's issues in cities with populations of more than 10 million to assess the risk of sexual violence and harmful cultural practices to women, as well as rank women's access to health care and economic opportunities.

The December 2012 attack of a 23-

year-old woman in Delhi was a watershed in the fight for women's rights in India, prompting thousands to take to the streets demanding action against rising sex attacks.

The public outcry not only forced authorities to strengthen gender laws, establish speedy courts for rape and set up a fund for rape victims, but also opened up the conversation on sexual violence in the largely conservative, patriarchal nation.

However Delhi - a metropolis of more than 26 million people - remains known as India's 'rape capital'. 'I'm not surprised by the results as they're based on perceptions. India and Brazil have seen a lot of media attention on sexual violence in recent years,' said

Rebecca Reichmann Tavares, head of UN Women in India who also worked in Brazil.

'Sexual violence in both these cities is, of course, a reality, but there isn't any definitive data to suggest that rates are higher in Delhi and Sao Paulo than any other city.'

The Egyptian capital Cairo was rated the most dangerous city for women overall and rated third worst for sexual violence, followed by Mexico city and Dhaka.

Tokyo was seen as the safest city for women in terms of sexual violence. Public awareness on sex attacks in Delhi has surged since the Delhi bus attack and thrown a global spotlight on gender violence in the world's second most populous nation.

Indian newspapers offer a daily array of sex crimes. Girls molested in school, professional women raped by taxi drivers while commuting home, village teens duped, trafficked and sold to brothels in the red-light districts of cities.

Brazilians are fed a similar diet, with multiple reports of assaults on women and girls in Sao Paulo - Brazil's most populous city with 21 million people, according to UN figures.

In September, thousands of Brazilian women took to social media

to demand better support and access to justice after a series of sex attacks on buses where the accused were released due to a lack of evidence.

In one case, the released man was re-arrested two days later after he was accused of attacking another woman on a bus. 'I do not believe in the system. If I file a police report, I'm afraid the accused will come after me,' said Clara Averbuck, a writer who was assaulted by a taxi driver and started an online campaign - #MyAbuserDriver - that went viral. In India, authorities have been forced to act.

This includes stricter punishments for gender crimes, a 24-hour women's helpline and fast-track courts for rape cases as well as a fund to finance crisis centres for victims.

Women's desks in many of the city's police stations have been established, thousands of police received gender sensitisation classes, and there is increased patrolling, surveillance and more checkpoints across Delhi at night.

Companies, charities, students and even individuals have also launched countless initiatives - from smart phone safety apps and gender lessons for taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers to women's self-defence classes and female cab services.

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(News Agencies) Rajesh and Nupur Talwar were released from a jail on Monday, four days after being acquitted by Allahabad high court in the murder of their teenage daughter Aarushi and domestic help Hemraj in their apartment in Noida in 2008.

The two, carrying three bags, were escorted by a posse of policemen as they emerged out of Ghaziabad's Dasna jail, and



## Aarushi-Hemraj murder case: Rajesh, Nupur Talwar walk free after 4 years in jail

Dentist couple Rajesh and Nupur Talwar were acquitted last week by the Allahabad high court in the murder of their daughter Aarushi and domestic help Hemraj.

stood for a while as the photographers clicked them.

The Talwars have been lodged in the jail since November 2013 after a trial court in Ghaziabad sentenced them to life imprisonment for the murder of Aarushi and Hemraj.

Rajesh Talwar's brother Dinesh and their lawyers Manoj Sisodia and Tanveer Ahmed Mir

went to the Dasna Jail to receive them.

"The Allahabad high court's decision is a stamp on the innocence of Rajesh and Nupur Talwar. This is what they deserved," said Mir. "It is my humble request to everybody in the media that what was snatched from my clients, please restore that dignity to

them. Please let them live in peace."

The Talwars are expected to go straight to the Sai temple in Noida's Sector 40, after which they will head to Nupur Talwar's parents' home in Jalvayu Vihar Sector 25.

The Allahabad high court overturned the trial court's verdict on October 12 and acquitted

them, giving the "benefit of doubt" to the accused in the face of insufficient evidence.

The court also pointed out "various shortcomings" in the lower court's judgment, while ruling in favour of the defendants who had challenged the verdict.

The judgment brought down the curtains on one of

India's most sensational murder trials that sparked numerous conspiracy theories with many accusing the police of bungling the probe.

The Talwars' 14-year-old daughter was found murdered in her bedroom in their flat in Noida's posh Jal Vayu Vihar – her throat slit with surgical precision – on May 16, 2008. The police initially suspected the missing house help from Nepal, Hemraj, but his decomposed body was found a day later from inside a locked room on the terrace of the building. The police then began to suspect the Talwars and said Rajesh, the father, murdered the two after finding them in an "objectionable" position. The case was later transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation.

The dentist couple will visit the clinic they were helping run at the jail hospital either weekly or fortnightly if the authorities permit. "They have been the backbone of the clinic inside the jail and revived it after they arrived here," said Anand Pandey, a pharmacist at Dasna jail.

## Congress is showing signs of revival but big challenges remain ahead of 2019 test

Rahul Gandhi's US tour and Congress' social media efforts are positive signs for the Opposition; but the party has real challenge to overcome and, more crucially, sustain this momentum till the 2019 polls



(News Agencies) Over the past few weeks, the Congress, which has been unable to show much energy post its 2014 debacle, has finally been getting key elements in place to emerge as a strong and credible Opposition.

Rahul Gandhi's United States tour revealed a relatively neglected, thoughtful and focused side of him to audiences. He was seen as candid about the failures of the Congress, conscious of the challenges before India, and aware of the centrality of economic growth and job creation. But the test was whether he would be able to sustain the momentum. Early evidence suggests he is taking greater responsibility in the party; he has travelled twice to Gujarat on yatras to build support for the party in the run

up to the state elections, once to Amethi, and once to Himachal Pradesh in a little over a fortnight. But beyond the individual, the Congress has also woken up to the social media game, and for the first time in years, is creating

counter narratives on Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. Remember, it was on social media that the BJP was able to carve out a distinct space in the run up to the 2014 general polls. This has coincided with challenges the government is facing on the economy. Whether the Congress has created the discontent or is merely tapping into the discontent remains an open question. This is however not to suggest that the Opposition is back, for the Congress has real challenges to overcome. Its organisational elections have

not yet reached a logical conclusion; Rahul Gandhi's communication skills need further refinement and public outreach must be more consistent; the Congress organisation is weak even as the BJP has created among the most formidable election machines any party has had so far; the Congress has not been able to create a younger generation of leaders from backward communities, the OBC groups in particular, which the BJP is systematically wooing; it remains dismally weak in Bihar and Uttar

Pradesh which are so important on the national stage; and, it has not yet made decisions on leadership in key poll-bound states. Any democracy needs a strong Opposition — to ensure that there are checks on those in power, policies are carefully scrutinised, and people have viable alternatives to consider. Over the next year, the Congress will confront the BJP directly in six states — Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh — leading up to 2019. The party's real test begins now.

## Humour and sarcasm give new edge to Rahul Gandhi's social media campaign

The renewed vigour in the Congress vice president's Twitter strategy is evident in his recent posts.

(News Agencies) Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi is mixing humour and sarcasm more often to pack a new punch in his social media campaigns ahead of elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. Political rivals have often criticised and ridiculed the Gandhiscion for what they say is his failure to communicate well with



the electorate, calling him a confused leader. However, after his recent visit to the US, experts

said Gandhi looked more confident and spoke impressively. The 47-year-old discussed policy

issues, social tensions in India and why dynasties were prevalent in the country, all of which seemed to strike the right note with his audiences. The renewed vigour in the Congress vice president's Twitter strategy is evident in his posts. Gandhi's dig came amid speculation that PM Modi would announce sops for poll-bound Gujarat. The Congress vice president also tagged a Hindustan Times report headlined 'As Gujarat waits for poll date, state gets projects worth nearly Rs 12,500 crore' with his tweet.

(Contd on page 24)

# History lesson for Sangeet Som: Why Taj Mahal needs our loving care

The Taj Mahal, one of the world's most iconic monuments, has been in the eye of a political storm. Here's why it needs constant attention: it has seen a drop in tourists and must be protected from pollution and the ravages of time

(News Agencies) Under the late afternoon sun of an October day, the Taj Mahal rose dazzling and regal, both the subject of awe for the many visitors gazing at its beauty, and a pristine backdrop to the colourful human saga around it. Time has left its sully touch on the monument's white marble façade. The dome especially looks somewhat soiled, as if marked by the muddy palm prints of centuries.

"It is a monument that evokes emotions. I have seen women cry when they see it," says Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) northern region chairman, Sunil C Gupta. The impact must have been more powerful in the past when, as Gruffudd Owen, a 25-year-old journalist from London pointed out, photographs of the monument were less easily available, and people didn't know what to expect. The 17th century monument, built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan as the resting place of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, has been in the eye of a political storm recently, after it was reported that it had not been included in

the Uttar Pradesh (UP) government's list of 'tourist attractions in the state. Earlier, the Taj – a UNESCO World Heritage Site – was excluded from the list of heritage sites that were to benefit from the UP state budget. The state government later clarified that the list of tourist draws referred only to the new projects being promoted by the government and also released a statement saying that the monument and its surrounding areas was also part of a tourism project proposal prepared in consultation with the World Bank. After the recent controversy, chief minister Yogi Adityanath has made a statement to say that the Taj is a part of our heritage and the state is serious about its preservation. But on Monday, BJP MLA Sangeet Som added to the controversy, saying that the Taj Mahal did not deserve a place in history because its creator wanted to "wipe out Hindus". The BJP distanced itself from the comments.

The Taj is protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which, along with the Agra Development

Authority, jointly levies an entrance fee to the monument. But it is the ASI that carries out the conservation work. HT made repeated attempts to get a response from the ASI, but officials did not respond. "The money that the Taj earns goes to the consolidated fund of the government and only a fraction of it is allocated for the upkeep of the building," says conservationist and one of the founder members of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), AGK Menon. "The welfare of the Taj requires a broader civic and multi-layered administrative engagement and merely allocating the ASI some funds for its maintenance cannot suffice as discharge of governance responsibilities." Heritage management specialist and representative in India of the World Monuments Fund, Amita Baig, agrees. "The monument does not exist in isolation of the city and there needs to be a political commitment to invest in Agra in a comprehensive and holistic manner," she says. "The city is poorly developed and there is little thought given to improved



public spaces, roads or even adequate sewage and sanitation much of which will make the city more habitable for its citizens and also an improved environment for the Taj." Much can be done to improve the Taj complex itself, she says, giving the example of "the restoration of the central concourse. Highly polluted water, either ground water or from the river bed, feeds the water channels. To me this is perhaps the most critical aspect as water contamination does impact the sandstone and can be easily addressed," says Baig. She adds, "Much more cutting edge research is needed to understand the changes being wrought in the monument by climate change, increased tourism and not least the impact of the drying riverbed, water contamination etc. Equally micro studies undertaken by scholars or universities could easily provide a more informed basis on which to plan the conservation."

## Journalists' Unions Condemn Defamation Case Filed By Jay Shah Against The Wire



(News Agencies) New Delhi: In a resolution passed on October 15, the Delhi Union of Journalists and the National Alliance of Journalists have condemned the criminal defamation case filed by Jay Shah against The Wire. The BJP president's son filed the case after The Wire published an investigative report detailing the sudden increase in turnover of a company owned by Jay Shah after the Narendra Modi government came to power. This case, the journalists' groups said, is part of a larger pattern of defamation cases being filed to "target journalists and news agencies" and "terrorise or browbeat them". There is something particularly undemocratic about the use of defamation suits and prosecutions when they seek to protect those in power. When used against the media they are even more distasteful, for the aim then is not only to intimidate but also to prevent the people from access to information.

When those close to powerful personages are seen receiving unusual advantages, then the people have a right to know whether the advantages are legitimate or wrought by influence. The transparency that

law enforces on corporates is not meant to be stymied by defamation actions, when information in the public record is reproduced or relied upon in the media.

The government has come out in defence of Jay Shah. And Jay Shah himself has called The Wire report and story "The Golden Touch of Amit Shah" false.

The DUJ demands to know which statement in the report or story is false, for till date there is no clarification on where the falsehood, if any lies.

Conversely, if there is no factual error in the story, it is even more important to know why Jay Shah finds it derogatory— for then, clearly, it is not the media that has contributed to the derogation of his reputation but the factual situation to which he alone has contributed. The DUJ is asking for a clear statement from the Union government on both the aforesaid points. The Union government has stepped in to assert the legitimacy of Jay Shah's business, and therefore it is for the government to tell the people what part of the story is

false and then demonstrate why it is false. If information on the affairs of close relatives of powerful politicians is to be withheld by the media, the only result will be the secrecy of power that will spawn all manner of corruption. If state power is used to maintain defamation suits and prosecutions in order to shroud the affairs of public persons and their close relatives, instead of coming out with the truth in the public domain, it is not only an assault on the press but a direct assault of constitutional democracy itself.

## India's newest weapon: Made-in-India anti-submarine warship INS Kiltan inducted

**INS Kiltan is India's first major warship to have a superstructure of carbon fibre composite material resulting in improved stealth features, lower top weight and maintenance costs.**

(News Agencies) The Indian Navy inducted its newest anti-submarine warfare (ASW) corvette on Monday, boosting the force's capability to detect and target hostile vessels and to provide protection to Indian warships. Defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman commissioned the indigenously built INS Kiltan into the navy at the Naval Dockyard at Visakhapatnam in the presence of navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba. "INS Kiltan strengthens our defence system and will be a shining armour in our 'Make in India' programme as it is totally built here," Sitharaman said on the occasion. Kiltan is the latest indigenous warship after Shivalik class, Kolkata class and sister ships INS Kamorta and

INS Kadmat to have joined the Indian Navy's arsenal wherein a plethora of weapons and sensors have been integrated to provide a Common Operational Picture (COP), an official release said. It is the navy's first major warship to have a superstructure of carbon fibre composite material imported from Sweden, resulting in improved stealth features and lower weight and maintenance costs. INS Kiltan is 100 tonnes lighter than the previous corvettes. INS Kiltan is also the first major warship to have undertaken sea trials of all major weapons and sensors as a pilot project prior to delivery by the shipyard to Indian Navy. It is ready to be operationally deployed.

*On auspicious occasion of Diwali, We wish our leader  
Rahul Gandhi hit home runs in the new inning he begins at  
Congress Party.*



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# Actress, BSF soldier and IT worker

## Depression and anxiety on the minds of many in India



***Traditionally the stigma that our society attaches to seeking psychiatric help dissuades most people from visiting mental health practitioners. Apart from changing this mindset, we need to spend much more on creation of mental healthcare facilities***

It is not a sight we see very often in the Indian context. I am referring to Deepika Padukone speaking openly about her battle with depression a while ago. “When I was in pain, suffering alone... I was going about my day, posing for cameras... signing autographs. What nobody saw was that I would break down for no reason ...getting out of bed was a struggle,” she wrote in Hindustan Times earlier this week. What made a successful actor, the daughter of a badminton world champion, go out on a limb and discuss her struggle to overcome depression? When I was reading about Deepika Padukone’s encounters with mental problems, I was reminded of the virtually unknown RK Shukla.

Unlike Padukone, Shukla never got a chance to face up to his anxieties and survive to tell the tale. Driven to tipping point by workplace stress, the Madhya Pradesh police head constable committed suicide when he was asked to clean drains on Gandhi Jayanti. Two days later, BSF jawan Dharam Singh shot himself with his service rifle at Sukma in Chhattisgarh, a hotbed of Naxalite insurgency. A few months before this, in separate incidents, three other Central Reserve Police Force jawans killed themselves in a similar fashion at camps in Bijapur, Dhamtari and Sukma.

This spate of suicides in the ranks of India’s police and central armed forces reminded me of a statement that BSF director general KK Sharma made during a workshop on mental health a few months ago: More BSF personnel are dying of mental

illnesses than in the line of duty, Sharma had said. What is driving this cycle of depression, melancholy and subsequent suicide? In a demanding profession that entails putting in inhumanly long hours along with the responsibility of safeguarding the nation’s frontiers, the added burden of mental illness could prove to be the proverbial last straw that breaks the soldiers’ back.

Our policemen and soldiers are not the only ones fighting the demons in their heads. India has one of the highest prevalence of mental illnesses in the world, and the highest suicide rate among its youth. So, anybody from the IT professional chasing deadlines, the insurance executive struggling to meet stretch targets, the journalist doing graveyard shifts or that teenager glued to the tablet seated next to you in the Metro — could be nurturing a mental health condition. The incidents of depression have become so frequent that you and I could be walking around with what shrinks describe as a “common mental disorder” — what ordinary folks like us call depression and anxiety — and our loved ones might not have an inkling about it. Or perhaps they want to be deluded into believing that nobody in their family needs help from a psychiatrist.

If you think I am being alarmist, take a look at these numbers. According to WHO statistics, more than 58 million people in India are grappling with depressive disorders. Anti-depressant sales in the country have shot through the roof, growing from Rs 760 crore in 2013 to Rs 1,093 crore in 2016. But clearly, just

medication is not enough to cure or mitigate a mental health condition. Some of this can be blamed on the gap between those suffering from these conditions and the facilities available to treat them. More than 90% of those suffering from mental health conditions don’t even receive elementary mental healthcare in India. The country has only 0.301 psychiatrists for every 100,000 people suffering from mental illnesses. These are just some of the reasons.

Traditionally the stigma that our society attaches to seeking psychiatric help dissuades most people from visiting mental health practitioners. Among these are parents who often ignore danger signals in their children until it is too late. Speak to counsellors in schools and you realise how even the most progressive professionals are most reluctant when it comes to actually seeing a psychiatrist for their child.

But this seems to be changing, though far too slowly. Many more Indians, particularly the well-travelled ones, appear to be catching up with the West when it comes to seeking help. This generation of Indians wielding smartphones is more open to newer approaches to mental health. This along with greater awareness and the proven efficacy of drugs that help you regulate mood swings have all played a part in helping change mindsets.

The other day I was speaking to a psychiatrist friend, a behavioural science specialist based in Gurugram. The next wave of solutions to overcome the gap between mental health practitioners and the millions suffering from

depression in India could come from the Internet itself, he says. Think tele-psychiatry, webinars and anti-suicide helplines: Or being on the couch, virtually. He recalled the case of a 13-year-old from Jammu who called his hospital’s anti-depression helpline to say playing the Blue Whale Challenge was making him suicidal. Within minutes of saying that he had reached a level where he was about to inflict harm on himself, chatting with a counsellor dissuaded the eighth-grader from taking up the next challenge. Within hours, he called back to say he wants the counsellor to speak to his friend as well. Often, a friendly but anonymous voice on the other end of the webcam is all this asocial, net-savvy generation of kids needs to deal with their anxieties.

How invested are we as a nation, in tackling our mental health woes, I asked my friend. He gave me a WHO report. Compared to developed nations that spend more than 4% of their health budget on creating infrastructure for mental healthcare, India’s expenditure is an abysmal 0.06%, less even than Bangladesh (0.44%).

Still, passing the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 (Act) indicates that the government’s heart is in the right place. Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised the need to bring depression out of the closet in his Mann Ki Baat programme. “We (in India) are afraid to talk about it (depression) openly...If depressed, share your feelings with others, it will make you feel better,” he had said.

I tend to agree with the perception that the new mental

health Act is a patient-centric piece of legislation. To begin with, it decriminalises the attempt to suicide, bans the use of electric shock therapy for children with mental conditions and sets out to ensure that the dignity of people with mental illness is dealt with sensitively at all stages of treatment. Also, by recognising the “right to access mental healthcare” regardless of a person’s income, gender, sexual orientation, place of living, or any other factor, it puts the onus of providing mental healthcare on the state by January 2018, when the Act is likely to come into force.

For this to happen, the State will have to really push its boundaries. A 2016 study says India has just 40 mental health institutions (of these only nine are equipped to provide treatment for children). Beyond the creation of physical infrastructure, a greater barrier to breach could still be the psychological one. Awareness programmes that dispel prejudices about going to a shrink and the ease with which a mix of medication and counselling can help people keep anxiety at bay, can help.

It is here that a little nudge from public personalities and experts can help. So, when an Anushka Sharma admits she is on medication for anxiety or a Raju Hirani makes a case for dyslexic children in the film Tare Zameen Par, I, like millions of others, can relate to those living with mental conditions. Once we cross the mental barrier, the real fight against problems like depression can begin in right earnest.

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# Respect has gone up

## How life changed for India's first transgender judge

**Joyita Mondal was one of a string of transgender persons who have risen to positions of prominence in recent years, fighting against bias and discrimination in education and employment.**



(News Agencies) A dip in income that has been more than compensated by a rise in respect -- that's the balance sheet from the last three months for Joyita Mahi Mondal, India's first transgender judge.

On July 8, the 29-year-old attended office for the first time as a Lok Adalat judge in Islampur of North Dinajpur district in north Bengal. She gave up her earlier profession as a hijra who went around collecting money at ceremonies.

"I am really happy as now I get respect from society that I was looking for," Mondal told HT. "In the court, those who come to seek justice now call me sir, or madam."

Earlier, there was nothing but contempt. "People almost treated me as an untouchable, and even passed abusive comments. But now people even come to me often requesting me to mediate in family disputes," she said.

Mondal was one of a string of transgender persons who have risen to positions of prominence in the government and private sectors in recent years, fighting against widespread social bias and discrimination in education and employment. The change picked up pace after the Supreme Court recognised a third gender in 2014 and asked the government to give the

vulnerable community a quota in jobs and colleges. A transgender rights bill is pending before Parliament.

Mondal says she has disposed off four cases related to the settlement of bank loans defaults and tenant-landlord disputes.

"Usually, Lok Adalats have three-judge benches. My fellow judges have always been extremely cooperative and treat me with respect," she added. But the awkward and searching glances have not vanished completely. "Sometimes I can feel negative vibes from those whose cases I adjudicate -- strange gaze, or body language. However, I must add that none of them has

insulted me. At times, a few are just surprised to see a transgender on the chair of judge," Mondal said.

However, she has no complaints. "More time is required for the society to change and we have to give it time." Despite the rise in prestige, Mondal has to endure financial difficulties after giving up a steadier source of income -- that of performing at ceremonies.

She now has to depend on the meagre allowance that she gets for every session of Lok Adalat. But the graduate with honours in history from Netaji Nagar College in Kolkata in 2010 is happy to let more money go for the prestige she has received.



## Will Sunil be Balram now?

### *After Gurdaspur win, Jakhar family is back to the Centre stage*

**The Jakhar clan, a Hindu Jat family, is quite at home in central politics as Sunil's father, Balram Jakhar who died last year at 92, had the rare distinction of being Lok Sabha speaker for two successive terms from 1980 to 1989.**

(News Agencies) Twenty-one years after he first contested a Lok Sabha election -- his 1996 debut from Ferozepur -- Sunil Jakhar is finally in Parliament. In between, he remained a three-time MLA and is the Punjab Congress chief. But the victory in the Gurdaspur LS bypoll marks the return of a Jakhar to where the family belonged for long -- central politics.

This comes also when the party is seeking resurgence, and Sunil, even at 63, may well fancy himself as one of the next generation leaders from Rahul Gandhi's brigade.

The Jakhar clan, a Hindu Jat family with limited prospects in Punjab's political demography, is quite at home in central politics. Sunil's father Balram Jakhar, who died last year, had the rare distinction of being LS speaker for two terms (1980 to 1989). An Indira Gandhi loyalist, he also served as Union agriculture minister in the Narasimha Rao government (1991-96), and later remained governor of Madhya Pradesh (2004-2009).

#### FIRST SHOT

In 1996, Balram had decided not

to contest, and Sunil (youngest of three siblings) almost became the son who took on the family mantle at the Centre. That wasn't to be then.

Sunil attributes that loss to his late shifting by the party from Sikar in Rajasthan -- a seat that fell in the clan's catchment for being part of the Bagri-speaking belt that covers parts of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan -- to Ferozepur. His father had represented Sikar twice. In 1998, Balram returned to electoral politics and won Bikaner in the same belt in a Lok Sabha that lasted a year.

Sunil's Gurdaspur victory too comes merely eight months after a loss on home turf Abohar in the assembly polls after a hat-trick, even though Congress stormed back to power with a thumping majority in the state. And it comes three years after his unsuccessful LS shot in 2014. Sources close to him say he was keen on the 2009 LS contest, when the party was out of power in the state but was riding the positive image of Manmohan Singh at the Centre. That wasn't to be.

He did come close to entering

Parliament in March last year, too, a month after Balram died. Of the two Rajya Sabha seats that fell vacant in Punjab, Partap Singh Bajwa -- who had lost Gurdaspur LS seat in 2014 -- was nominated to one. Jakhar was hoping to make it to the other. But, well, that wasn't to be either. He was willing to wait.

#### ENTRY TO ASSEMBLY

Sunil's first success too had come on a note very different from the initial plan, when he won the 2002 assembly election from Abohar. His elder brother Sajjan Kumar -- who has since chosen to stay behind the scenes -- was considered heir to Balram at the state level, and also remained agriculture minister in the Beant Singh regime. But he had lost in 1997, and the party decided not to give tickets to past losers in 2002.

In the meantime, Abohar's local unit leader Sudhir Nagpal fancied consolidation of the numerically dominant Arora-Khatri vote and staked claim to the ticket. Balram managed it for Sunil, and he won by a relatively thin margin against Nagpal who contested as an independent.

In the assembly two more wins later, Sunil became the leader of opposition. This was a position his father held, too, in 1977 before graduating to central politics in 1980. In that particular part of the script, he has followed in his father's footsteps.

#### WHAT NEXT IN ABOHAR?

Sunil and the eldest brother Sajjan both remained MLAs from Abohar. The third brother, Surender, was a satrap in the farm cooperative movement but never got into electoral politics. He shot himself by accident in 2011.

Among the next generation, Sajjan's son Ajay Vir Jakhar was recently made chairman of the Punjab Farmers' Commission by CM Captain Amarinder Singh, while Surender's son Sandeep has been active in the political field, working for Sunil who remains secretive about his family. But Abohar may now be open to Congress ticket claims by others, particularly from the Arora community whose consolidation was seen as a reason behind Sunil's loss against BJP's low-profile Arun Narang.

# Iran nuclear deal: *Donald Trump's actions will isolate and harm US credibility*

***The Iranian nuclear deal was solely aimed at alleviating international concerns about Tehran's nuclear programme. Donald Trump's criticism of the deal citing Tehran's human rights record, support to terrorist networks or ballistic missile programme is blatantly unfair***



same has been verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Trump also alluded that until recently, Iran had failed to meet American expectations in its operation of advanced centrifuges. However, here also Iran has remained true to the provisions of the deal and has agreed to limit its research and development efforts on advanced centrifuges.

A large portion of Trump's tirade against Iran was restricted to Tehran's support to terrorism, human rights abuses, its expanding ballistic missile programme and allegations of collaborating with North Korea. It is prudent to recall that the JCPOA, popularly known as the Iran nuclear agreement, was limited to the Iranian nuclear programme and did not delve into Iran's role in the various crises in West Asia or Tehran's ballistic missile programme. In fact, the limited scope of US's negotiations with Iran were the result of decisions taken during the Bush administration. Trump should re-look at past American decisions before terming the Iran deal as one of the "worst and most one-sided transactions" the US has ever entered into.

The Iran deal was very successful in blocking the uranium and plutonium route available to Iran to build nuclear weapons. Prior to the agreement, Iran was operating close to 19,500 centrifuges, had a stockpile of about 7,000 kg of low-enriched uranium hexafluoride gas (UF<sub>6</sub>), stockpile of 200 kg of UF<sub>6</sub> gas enriched up to 20%. It was also working on starting its heavy water plant at Arak.

As part of the agreement, Iran gave up about two-thirds of its centrifuges, shipped abroad 95% of its stockpile, including all weapons-grade fissile material, accepted to 300 kg limit on its entire uranium stockpile for 15 years. Iran also agreed to modify the Arak heavy-water reactor thereby blocking the plutonium route to producing fissile material for nuclear weapons. Tehran also agreed to one of the most intrusive IAEA verifications regime accepted by any country.

The most important achievement of the agreement was increasing the break out time (time required for Iran to build nuclear weapon) from two months to 12 months. This was the result of the restrictions imposed on Iranian nuclear

programme.

It is possible to point out flaws in the Iranian deal. Like most international agreements, the agreement too is far from being perfect. Given that negotiators have to accommodate competing concerns of various actors and seek to achieve the "best possible" agreement, international multilateral agreements seldom are perfect. The Iranian nuclear deal was solely aimed at alleviating international concerns about Iran's nuclear programme and the possibility of Tehran building a nuclear weapon. Criticising the agreement for not being able to improve Tehran's human rights record, curb its alleged support to terrorist networks or limit Iran's expanding ballistic missile programme is blatantly unfair. The US has the sovereign right, like all nation-states, to terminate its participation in the Iran deal. It is however likely to find itself largely isolated in such a move with none of its major allies supporting reimposition of sanctions on Iran. In the medium to long term such a move will harm US credibility, worsen the security situation in the region and harm its national security interests.

Ending weeks of speculation, United States President Donald Trump laid out a major re-orientation of US policy towards Iran and the wider region. As part of this new strategy, Trump refused to certify that 'Iran is taking measures to terminate its illicit nuclear program'. Under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act 2015, such a presidential certification is required for continued suspension of American sanctions on Iran. Trump has gone against the advice of his closest advisers including secretary of defence General James Mattis, secretary of state Rex Tillerson and even the commander of the US Strategic Command, General John Hyten. The president's refusal however will not translate into an immediate reimposition of sanctions on Iran. The US Congress has 60 days to debate the issue and then decide on reimposition of economic sanctions.

In a bid to pressurise the Congress and American allies, Trump indicated that the US could unilaterally walk out of the Iran deal in case a solution could not be found by working with the Congress and US allies. However, neither the Congress nor US allies seem to be taking Trump's bait. The European Union, Britain and France have expressed their commitment to full implementation of the Iran deal. Trump is unlikely to find any support in Moscow and Beijing. The joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA), which was concluded in July 2015, was not a bilateral agreement between the US and Iran but a multilateral agreement reached after two years of intensive negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 (US, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany). Further, it was incorporated into the United Nations Security

Council Resolution 2231. The bottom line is that if Trump carries out his threat and terminates US participation in the deal, he would damage America's international credibility and leadership. Such an action would isolate the US among its allies with the exception of Israel and Saudi Arabia who would support Trump's gambit.

Going through Trump's statement, very little of it is specifically about Iranian violations of the deal apart from two specific allegations. Without providing any details, Trump stated that Iran has exceeded the limit of 130 metric tonnes of heavy water on two occasions. On both these occasions, Iran has shipped the excess stock of heavy water to Oman and the

## ***Inside Track: No Midas touch***

**Interestingly, while there have been detailed responses to the article's allegations and a defamation suit by Jay's lawyers, his defenders have avoided mentioning the obvious inaccuracy in the headline, 'The Golden Touch of Jay Amit Shah'**

Amit Shah is rarely available to the media and it requires several telephone calls and messages to get a response from the all powerful BJP president. But last Sunday it was a different story when the website The Wire carried a report questioning the propriety of his son Jay's business ventures. Shah happily spoke to a few editors when they phoned for comments. He told scribes firmly, "I don't live in a glass house, I live in a stone house. I am not afraid of any stone thrown at me."

Interestingly, while there have been detailed responses to the article's allegations and a defamation suit by Jay's lawyers, his defenders have avoided mentioning the obvious inaccuracy in the headline,

'The Golden Touch of Jay Amit Shah'. Anyone who reports a loss of Rs 1.4 crore on an annual turnover of Rs 80.5 crore can hardly be described as having the Midas touch. But which Gujarati entrepreneur would like to admit that he is a flop as a businessman and hence had to shut shop.

### **Culture Shock**

Deepak Babaria, who recently replaced Mohan Prakash as the Congress general secretary in charge of Madhya Pradesh, is an unknown entity for the faction-ridden party in MP. When Babaria, a Rahul Gandhi protégé from Gujarat, arrived at the Bhopal railway station recently, there was a throng of Congress workers from rival groups waiting to receive him. Babaria was taken



aback as Congresspersons jostled with each other to hustle him into their respective cars. At the Congress headquarters, the Kamal Nath and Jyotiraditya Scindia factions came to blows in front of the shocked general secretary. While the name of the new state president has yet to be announced, it looks as if Kamal Nath has already conceded

defeat to Jyotiraditya Scindia, since he knows that Rahul Gandhi will back his younger rival. Scindia, meanwhile, taking a lesson from Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, wants to be declared not just PCC president but also the Congress chief ministerial candidate for next year's Assembly poll.

(Contd on page 25)

# Scientists witness huge cosmic crash, find origins of gold

Even in the normally mind-blowing science of astronomy, this discovery was special. Two months ago, scientists for the first time detected both the ripples in space and time and the light produced and emitted during the same cosmic event: the spectacular collision of two neutron stars. The discovery would soon reveal secrets of the cosmos, including how gold was created.

Neutron stars, formed when massive stars explode in supernovas, are the smallest, densest stars known to exist. A teaspoon of a neutron star has a mass of about a billion tons.

The collision of neutron stars is known as a kilonova — an explosion similar to a supernova but on a smaller scale.

The crash generated a fierce burst of gamma rays and a gravitational wave, a faint ripple in the fabric of space and time first theorized by Albert Einstein a century ago.

"This is the one we've all been waiting for," said David Reitze of CalTech in Pasadena, Calif., calling the collision "the most spectacular fireworks in the universe." "This is extremely exciting science," said Paul Hertz, director of NASA's Astrophysics Division at the agency's headquarters in Washington. "Now, for the first time, we've seen light and gravitational waves produced by the

same event."

This particular violent merger, which occurred 130 million years ago in a galaxy near our own (NGC 4993) and seen from Earth in the Hydra constellation, is the source of the gravitational waves detected on Aug. 17.

The signal arrived on Earth after traveling 130 million light-years. A light-year is 5.88 trillion miles.

This is the fifth source of gravitational waves to be detected — the first one was discovered in September 2015, for which three founding members of the National Science Foundation's Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO) collaboration were awarded the Nobel prize in physics two weeks ago.

Measurements of the light and other energy emanating from the crash have helped scientists explain how planet-killing gamma ray bursts are born, how fast the universe is expanding and where heavy elements like platinum and gold come from.

"This is getting everything you wish for," said Syracuse University physics professor Duncan Brown, one of more than 4,000 scientists involved in the blitz of science that the crash kicked off. "This is our fantasy observation."

NASA's Fermi telescope, which detects gamma rays, sent out the first

alarm. Then, 1.7 seconds later, gravity wave detectors in Louisiana and Washington state that are a part of the LIGO Laboratory detected the crash.

Soon telescopes worldwide were focused on what became the most well-observed astronomical event in history.

This time there was plenty to see, measure and analyze: matter, light and other radiation. The Hubble Space Telescope even got a snapshot of the afterglow.

"The completeness of this picture from the beginning to the end is unprecedented," Columbia University physics professor Szabolcs Marka said. "There are many, many extraordinary discoveries within the discovery."

The colliding stars spewed bright blue, super-hot debris that was dense and unstable. Some of it coalesced into heavy elements, like gold, platinum and uranium.

"We see the gold being formed," Brown said.

The observation settles a riddle that has puzzled scientists for more than 60 years: Where do gold, platinum, uranium and other heavy elements, known as r-process elements, come from? Scientists had long suspected that they originated from colliding neutron stars; they now have visual

evidence.

Perhaps one day the material will clump together into planets the way ours was formed, Reitze said — maybe ones with rich veins of precious metals.

"We already knew that iron came from a stellar explosion, the calcium in your bones came from stars, and now we know the gold in your wedding ring came from merging neutron stars," University of California Santa Cruz's Ryan Foley said.

The crash also helped explain the origins of one of the most dangerous forces of the cosmos — short gamma ray bursts, focused beams of radiation that could erase life on any planet that happened to get in the way. These bursts shoot out in two different directions perpendicular to where the two neutron stars first crash, Reitze said.

Scientists involved with the search for gravitational waves said this was the event they had prepared for over more than 20 years.

"This discovery has opened up a new approach to astronomical research, where we combine information from both electromagnetic light and from gravitational waves," said Nial Tanvir, professor at the University of Leicester. "We call this multi-messenger astronomy — but until now it has just been a dream!"

## Harvey Weinstein, Hollywood's Oldest Horror Story



In her autobiography, "Child Star," Shirley Temple described going with her mother to see her new bosses at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer after leaving Fox.

Louis B. Mayer spirited away Gertrude Temple. The curly-haired superstar — hailed by F.D.R. for helping America get through the Depression — was taken to the office of Arthur Freed, an associate producer on "The Wizard of Oz." After telling her that she would have to get rid of her baby fat, Freed abruptly stood up and pulled out his penis. The 11-year-old had never even seen one before. She gave a nervous laugh, which offended the producer.

"Get out!" he shouted. When she rejoined her mother, an affronted Gertrude told Shirley that she had had

to back out of Mayer's office when he lunged at her.

"Not for nothing was the M.G.M. lot known as the 'factory,' a studio perfumed with sultry, busty creatures with long legs and tight haunches," Temple wrote, "and more than its quota of lecherous older men." Nearly 80 years later, that aroma of perversion and maladroitness clings to Hollywood. Now we are inundated with grotesque tales of Harvey Weinstein pulling out his penis to show to appalled and frightened young women, enlisting the pimping help of agents and assistants to have actresses delivered to his hotel rooms, where he pestered the women to watch him shower or give him a massage or engage in intimate acts. "The ill will towards him for getting away with it all for so long has unleashed something so primitive," a prominent male Hollywood producer told me. "If people could rip him apart, they would. Literally everyone in Hollywood is taking marshmallows to roast at his burning corpse."

Dana Calvo, the creator of "Good Girls Revolt," noted: "We have been saying, just get us in the room. But we meant the pitch room or the editing room or the boardroom. Not Harvey Weinstein's hotel room.

"I do know I will never look at bathrobes the same way. It's the bathrobes versus the pussyhats."

While not a victim of Weinstein's, Calvo worked for Amazon Studios, which was headed by Roy Price until he was suspended on Thursday for sexual harassment allegations. He had already come under scrutiny for being culturally tone deaf, passing on two of the biggest hits of the year, "Big Little Lies" and "The Handmaid's Tale," both of which swept the Emmys for their storytelling about women. And he canceled the popular "Good Girls Revolt" after one season, admitting he had never watched it.

Weinstein, 65, was the opposite, one of the rare men in Hollywood who didn't care about pursuing an audience of 15-year-old boys with comic book movies. He was someone with taste who was trying to make movies with great roles for women of all ages, a top Democratic fund-raiser who was pushing to make Hillary Clinton the first woman president, a man trusted by the Obamas to have their daughter intern at his company.

But he had a diabolical side. He would tantalize actresses with dreams of stardom — in that dewy, fleeting window such hothouse orchids have to take Hollywood by storm. Often the actresses scrambled, trying to figure out how to get out of the room without having their futures shredded by the vindictive satyr, who also threatened to destroy actresses who balked at wearing dresses designed by his wife

Georgina Chapman's fashion label on the red carpet.

He relished the nickname "Harvey Scissorhands," given to him by filmmakers who did not like his domination in the editing room. But the nickname could work just as well for his octopus ways with women, which resulted in lots of hush money being paid out.

And some of his own assistants say they were assailed. One ran out of the room, crying and distraught, after Weinstein pressed her into giving him a massage.

Some who were importuned or pawed, like Angelina Jolie, stalked away and told studio executives that she would never work with the pestilent mogul. Others whom Weinstein asked to give him a massage in his hotel suite refused but continued to collaborate, like Gwyneth Paltrow, who put aside qualms to become "the first lady of Miramax." When David Carr wrote about "The Emperor Miramaximus" in 2001 for New York magazine — several years after the unpleasant experience Paltrow described for the first time this past week to The Times — he quoted her saying: "I think that for every bad story you hear about Harvey, there are three great ones. People are complicated, and nobody's all good or all bad."

(Contd on page 25)

# What statistics don't tell

Did the 7 per cent GDP growth have any impact on their lives? It is ironic that we present a picture of fast-paced economic growth without any reference to the levels of poverty and deprivation of around 85 crore Indians. Not that a large majority of the rest live in luxury. That is limited to a minuscule minority, perhaps the 1 per cent who control 50 per cent of the country's wealth. The rest include government employees, and the honest among them live very austere lives. They find it difficult to send their children to private schools and when confronted with health issues, they cannot afford the best

medical care. Absence of free healthcare and education takes its toll. We, as a society, have been taken over by consumerism and the starry-eyed get seduced by goods and services that are on offer. But they cannot afford such goods and services. That heightens the sense of deprivation, which, in turn, leads to weakening of the moral fibre of middle-class Indians. The result is corruption and increased levels of crime.

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh rightly points out that we need to work out a new design for social and economic policies in order to have cohesive and inclusive

growth. There has to be a judicious mix of high economic growth and a focus on containing the growth of economic inequalities. A supportive environment that allows us to meet these objectives is, sadly, missing.

We do not have to calibrate our wellbeing by embracing an index of happiness but should evolve a method to gauge levels of dissatisfaction within the multi-layered complexity of deprivation in society. Changing the base year from 2004-05 to 2011-12 and altering the elements that go into calculating GDP do not change the lives of those who fear tomorrow's sunset.

Economists can interpret data any which way they like with conclusions that occasionally defy logic. They speculate outcomes with selective statistics. But they are professionals and their conclusions are subjected to scrutiny. Politicians are least bothered about the veracity of data — they are only concerned with outcomes at the hustings. By lacing data with words, they tend to sell dreams. That is why Napoleon characterised politicians as "dealers in hope". The poor get taken in and fall prey to empty promises, for in believing them, they have

nothing to lose.

As we move forward as a nation, our mantra for delivering a better life must be based on principles of equity. Equity must inform every exercise of societal activity. It should be the fundamental yardstick to analyse the country's economic prosperity. What use is a number or a statistic if it does not touch the life of the aam aadmi? The poor cannot consume statistics but will find comfort if these statistics enhance the quality of their lives. A GDP growth of 7 per cent has no perceptible impact on the 85 crore people at the bottom of the pyramid. The fastest growing economy is not fast enough. The pace of poverty and deprivation is moving faster.

## If the dead could speak, Aarushi Talwar would ask some tough questions

Apart from character assassinating the murdered girl, even her parents and family friends were not spared. If you collate the newspaper clippings and news videos of that time, you would realise how our police apparatus is an expert in creating distortions and half-truths out of other people's misery and how the gullible media plays the police's court jester.

In its own estimate, through some calculations, the Uttar Pradesh police had 'solved' the case. But a number of questions were awaiting resolution. So the case was handed over to the CBI. The same CBI which wields the magic lamp, fears nobody and solves the most complicated mysteries like Sherlock Holmes. It is another matter that certain people prefer to call this efficient outfit a 'caged parrot.'

The IPS officer assigned to solve the case was perceived to be brilliant. Being from the Uttar Pradesh cadre, it was believed that Arun Kumar would get to the bottom of the case and catch the culprits. But nothing came of it. The CBI submitted its closure report. It implied it had not managed to put together the evidence, but the court wasn't convinced. So the balance of justice began to tilt the other way. Today, when the Allahabad High Court has conceded that there is not enough evidence against the Talwars and they can walk free, the question is: Is there something that has been buried or suppressed somewhere?

Is there a conspiracy behind

this? Or, have the police and the CBI proved to be ineffectual? Whatever be the reason, one can't deny that the death of a young dream and the transformation of a family's happiness into mourning has been a waste. Questions are bound to be raised about what the Talwars were punished for? They lost their daughter, spent years behind bars, their careers were destroyed and now after coming out of prison, are looking at the challenge of leading the remainder of their lives. It is sad that a number of officers who

scripted this tragic tale were decorated in India and abroad. Better results were expected of them but what happened was the opposite.

Is it not a matter of anger and sorrow that the nation's system which feeds on hard-earned taxpayers' money treats them so cruelly? By this time, when this murder mystery has become an urban legend, if there is anybody who can lift the curtain on this murder, it is Aarushi herself or Hemraj. But what can one do? Unfortunately, the dead cannot speak.

## Humour and sarcasm give new edge to Rahul Gandhi's social media campaign

The tweet came a day after Gandhi attempted a takedown of Modi, US President Donald Trump and Pakistan Gandhi was attacking Modi over his claims of growing friendship between India and the United States.

Trump had earlier lashed out at Pakistan, accusing it of "housing the very terrorists that we are fighting". His criticism of Pakistan came after Modi's US visit in June. The Prime Minister was photographed hugging Trump, who described Modi as a "true friend". The Congress' renewed attempts to revive its dwindling political fortunes are evident in the recent activity of the official Twitter handle of Gandhi's office.

With couplets and sarcasm aimed at Modi, who overshadowed his prime ministerial ambitious in the run-up to the 2014 election, Gandhi has produced some popular tweets. On October 12, quoting a report that read the 'World Bank had downgraded India's growth forecast', Gandhi tweeted: "These pessimists are going global. Why don't they just go away?" This was in reference to Modi's remark that people who constantly looked for lacunae in the government's economic policies were pessimists and should be avoided. A tweet posted by Gandhi on September 27 has been re-tweeted about 6,000 times. "Ladies & Gentlemen, this is your copilot & FM speaking. Plz fasten your seat belts & take brace position. The wings have fallen off our plane," he tweeted, tagging a piece written by BJP leader Yashwant Sinha over India's slowing economic growth. Reports say Gandhi gained more than one million followers between July and September, showing that his new Twitter strategy appears to be working.

## Don't penalise farmers for Delhi's air pollution

If only the government had withheld the 1% increase in DA instalment and instead diverted the resources to address the severe environmental consequences arising from stubble burning, the entire problem could have been fixed by now.

There are two immediate steps the NGT need to ensure. First, ask the government to provide a compensation of at least Rs 200 per quintal to paddy farmers. I am seeking a higher compensation package because the labour costs have already skyrocketed. Also, there is no need to provide any more subsidies for machines like Happy Seeder, Straw Reeper, Chopper, Rotavator etc. Leave it to the farmers. Secondly, make it mandatory for the combine harvester machines to incorporate a bailer, which harvests and bales in one pass. Such a technology is already available for corn. If only NGT had tried to make it mandatory for the combine harvesters to bring in the new technology, crop burning would have been easily relegated to the past.

## Resolving 10 tense weeks in Doklam

Moreover, India invited ASEAN leaders to India's 2018 Republic Day Parade in New Delhi.

The Chinese rhetoric and India's composed but firm response was noticed by various foreign policy experts terming "China's handling as juvenile and India's response as mature."

During those 10 weeks, Modi had instructed MEA and NSA to resolve the issue with negotiations but with a firm stand. India's National Security Advisor met his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi in Beijing. A series of negotiations afterwards seems to have resulted in an agreement by which both the forces agreed to back off to their old positions.

American Foreign Policy Council's expert, Jeff Smith, said that China would not gain much by this situation and would rather help India to be closer with the U.S. and Japan. India's expert analyzed that China would rather have a negative impact in terms of business as well as an international image. India in 2017 is much different than India in 1962 in terms of military, infrastructure and strong foreign relations developed by Modi and Swaraj. Moreover, with winter approaching, India is not backing out. A win-win formula or face-saving formula was needed, accordingly. China stopped the construction and both India and Chinese forces started backing out to their original positions. . This is definitely a major diplomatic victory for India in the international setting wherein India surely earned a respect. This would also be an example to nations neighboring to China facing similar border issues. India and China being two emerging powers in the Asia with a previous history of a war and ongoing border dispute, it would be difficult but important for them to rebuild the relationship on this background and avoid any further escalations.



# Harvey Weinstein, Hollywood's Oldest Horror Story

Other victims, like Rose McGowan, took settlements from the mogul to stay quiet but continued to seethe, until her rage spilled over Thursday when she tweeted — after getting back on Twitter after an absurd banishment by the company — that Weinstein had raped her.

Once more we are in a searing national seminar on sexual misbehavior by men, just like the Hill-Thomas hearings, the Clinton impeachment hearings, the Bill Cosby trial, the downfalls of Roger Ailes, Bill O'Reilly and other harassing big shots at Fox News, and Donald Trump and the fallout from the "Access Hollywood" tape.

How many times do we have to go through this before things really change?

"If you look at The Hollywood Reporter's powerful women list," said Janice Min, the former editor of that publication, "every single one of those women still reports to a man." (By some estimates, there are only six women who have first-look overhead producing deals at the studios.)

Min recalled attending the \$400,000 speech Barack Obama made as an ex-president to an A&E Networks advertising upfront at the Pierre hotel in New York in April.

"Afterwards, amid rapturous applause, he walks right over to Harvey Weinstein and gives Harvey a hug," Min said. "You can see the optics of it all. It makes your head explode if you think of the inability to explode the male network."

Min said that although The Hollywood Reporter tried to get the

goods on "that looming, ominous, bellicose force" named Harvey for many years — "we had white boards full of names of women" — he was a master at protecting himself, just as Hugh Hefner was, by the veneer of power he cultivated, by giving to liberal causes and cultivating friends in the media and politics.

"There probably needs to be some introspection about how certain people who engage in horrendous mistreatment of women can co-opt the media," she mused. "The fundamental predatory nature of Hollywood is young, attractive people — largely females — putting themselves in front of men to be judged and appraised and chosen."

"It is a dark equation. From the moment the proverbial girl gets off the bus, the odds are stacked against her. In Hollywood, unlike at other Fortune 500 companies, the one-on-one meetings take place in hotel suites and bars. It's an exploitative and oddly personal process."

Young actresses (and surely actors, too, with other powerful predators), Min said, knew that "Hollywood is built on nothing but the pursuit of Oscar and Emmy. Harvey had proven time and again he could get you the Oscar that could make your career. It's the difference between being in the reboot of 'Saved by the Bell' or getting 15 million for your next role."

Hollywood is a culture that runs on fear. And it is not like other professions, one top entertainment executive said, because "no one

comes with a résumé. It's about what you look like and who sent you."

There was resentment against Weinstein in Hollywood, not only for the stories bubbling around about women, but the way he humiliated men who worked with him. He even berated a 15-year-old girl at a screening because her parents supported a political candidate he opposed.

Like Trump, that other self-professed predator, there were complaints that in business deals he stiffed people on bills (advertising and public relations payments), and he had a reputation for lying, cheating, taking advantage, acting like a thug. Many in the film community felt he besmirched the Oscars by turning it into a marketing race rather than a contest of quality.

I asked Tim Robbins, who had some unpleasant business dealings with Weinstein, what the moral of this foul, revolting story should be.

"It's not just in show business, it's every business," he said. "It's about men who use power to get an advantage over women. It's gross, it's unacceptable, but unfortunately, it's pretty persistent."

Women in Hollywood say social media, plus the anger about Trump getting into the Oval Office instead of Hillary, were propelling forces in the fire raining down on Weinstein.

"I hope it's a witch hunt," said a top Hollywood woman. "I hope it's a purge. There are people we have to get rid of in our business. Everyone knows them."

## Homeopathy is 'QUACKERY'

'It is scientifically implausible that homeopathy has any effect.'

'It cannot have any benefit and by giving homeopathy you may be withholding alternative drug based products which may have some benefit.'

'Ultimately homeopathy is quackery and using it may prolong suffering and shorten lives.' Homeopathic and herbal remedies have long been prescribed to tackle afflictions such as stress and insomnia.

However, scientists argue they are so highly diluted that little of the substance they contain actually remains.

Its central principle is that 'like cures like', that is a substance which causes certain symptoms can help cure those symptoms. Another concept is based around a process of dilution in alcohol or distilled water and shaking, called succussion. Advocates believe that the more a substance is diluted in this way, the greater its power to treat symptoms.

For example, caffeine (homeopathic name, Coffea Cruda) is a stimulant, and is used to treat insomnia. And hayfever sufferers take a very weak solution of pollen. NHS England chief executive Simon Stevens described homeopathy as 'at best a placebo and a misuse of scarce NHS funds' in July. In the last five years it has cost the NHS at least £578,000, for treatments using heavily diluted forms of plants, herbs and minerals.

NHS England says there is no 'robust evidence' homeopathy works at all and has launched a consultation to stop GPs prescribing it. The plans will see NHS patients have to pay for such remedies, alongside items available cheaply in supermarkets and chemists. A House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report on homeopathy seven years ago said that the remedies perform no better than placebos.

And, a 2015 report from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council looked at the results of roughly 200 studies on the effectiveness of homeopathy.

Through this, they determined that these are no better than a sugar pill, and are not proven effective for any health condition. However, Prince Charles asked for the controversial therapies be made widely available on the NHS and in 2007 lobbied the then Health Secretary to fund them.

## Inside Track: No Midas touch

### First appearance

Many in the BJP wondered whether there lay special significance in the fact that L K Advani, accompanied by his daughter Pratibha and trusted aide Deepak Chopra, was present in Nagpur for RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's annual Vijaydashmi address. Particularly as Bhagwat criticised in veiled terms certain government measures and Advani, who has been ruthlessly sidelined by the BJP, was treated as chief guest.

Advani, in fact, has never attended Vijaydashmi in Nagpur in all his 88 years. Bhagwat had met Advani in Delhi a month earlier to invite him. Baba Nirmal Das of Jalandhar was to have been the chief guest, but he could not attend since he was unwell. So Advani did the honours for all practical purposes, though Devendra Fadnavis and Nitin Gadkari too were present.

### PM ambition

Journalist Kalyani Shankar, in her recently released book The Empress on the late J

Jayalalithaa, suggests that the former chief minister of Tamil Nadu secretly nursed prime ministerial ambitions. When Jayalalithaa met then West Bengal chief minister Jyoti Basu in 1999 to ask whether he was interested in the prime ministership, he responded jokingly, "You are there".

She took him seriously and canvassed Mulayam Singh Yadav for his support for her candidature. According to Subramanian Swamy, Basu wanted him to explain to Jayalalithaa that his comment was made light-heartedly. But no one was inclined to disillusion the Empress.

### Generational shift

Normally, those who contest for the post of president of Delhi's prestigious Gymkhana Club have reached or retired from the top-most positions in their respective service, nothing less than a Lieutenant General in the Army or a full secretary in the civil services. But this year seniors did not contest.

Prashant Sukul, an additional secretary

from defence accounts, stood against Krishan Varma, a retired special secretary of R&AW. The latter was backed by six former presidents of the club. However, Sukul won decisively. Varma canvassed largely the old fashioned way, distributing handouts of endorsement.

Sukul smartly used the social media to convey his message far more effectively. Sukul won overwhelmingly among outstation members and other e-voters. He focused on attracting the youth. Many voters were influenced by their offspring since Sukul, whose own team was relatively youthful, promised to automatically induct the children and grandchildren of members as full members. Of course, those disgruntled outsiders still waiting for membership after nearly four decades, wonder if there can be such hereditary rights in a club founded thanks to the government largesse in granting land in the heart of the Capital.

## Trump administration targets 'sanctuary' cities in latest wave of immigration arrests

Federal courts have largely blocked Trump's executive order in January that threatened to strip federal grant money from such cities and towns.

Hundreds of jurisdictions restrict how much their local officials can cooperate with immigration agents. Some limit their access to local jails or refuse to provide federal authorities with information about immigrants arrested for local crimes.

Administration officials say these cities shield criminals from deportation. But advocates for immigrants say police responsibilities do not include enforcing civil immigration laws

and warn that doing so makes otherwise law-abiding immigrants less likely to report crimes.

"These raids are simply another attempt by the president and his anti-immigrant chiefs to bully cities into undermining the constitutional protections of all [their] residents, irrespective of their immigration status," said U.S. Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-N.M.), chairwoman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Despite the administration's stepped-up arrest efforts, the latest data shows that the number of deportations has fallen over the past 12 months.

In New York City, officials said

Thursday that they would stand by their policy of cooperating with immigration officials only in cases involving individuals who have been convicted of a serious or violent felony within the past five years, or who are on the terrorist watch list.

"New York City has the greatest number of immigrant residents we've had in a century, and are the safest we've been in modern history," said Rosemary Boeglin, a spokeswoman for Mayor Bill de Blasio's Office of Immigrant Affairs. "We will continue to voluntarily cooperate on requests from federal immigrant enforcement within the

parameters of our local laws." Immigration officials said such decisions by cities force them to arrest people on the streets, which could endanger federal agents and the public, rather than focusing their efforts on immigrants who are in jail for local crimes and eligible for deportation.

Officials said there have been 37 assaults against immigration authorities this fiscal year, which began last Oct. 1, compared to nine in fiscal 2016.

During this week's arrest operation, officials said, an armed gang member in Los

Angeles allegedly rammed their vehicles with his own when they tried to arrest him. He was taken into custody. Sixty-three percent of those arrested in Operation Safe City, about 317 people, had convictions for crimes including drunken driving, sex offenses and drug charges. They included a Baltimore woman from El Salvador who had been convicted of first-degree assault, a sex offender from India who lives in Boston, and a Guatemalan national living in Denver who has six drunk-driving convictions. Another 181 people arrested had no criminal records.

## India Ranks 100th On Global Hunger Index

the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) said in its report.

India stood at 97th position in last year's rankings. "India is ranked 100th out of 119 countries, and has the third highest score in all of Asia — only Afghanistan and Pakistan are ranked worse," IFPRI said in a statement. "At 31.4, India's 2017 GHI (Global Hunger Index) score is at the high end of the 'serious' category, and is one of the main factors pushing South Asia to the category of worst performing region on the GHI this year, followed closely by Africa South of the Sahara," it added. As per the report, India ranks below many of its neighbouring countries such as China (29th rank), Nepal (72), Myanmar (77), Sri Lank

(84) and Bangladesh (88). It is ahead of Pakistan (106) and Afghanistan (107). North Korea ranks 93rd while Iraq is at 78th position.

The GHI, now in its 12th year, ranks countries based on four key indicators — undernourishment, child mortality, child wasting and child stunting. The report ranked 119 countries in the developing world, nearly half of which have 'extremely alarming', 'alarming' or 'serious' hunger levels. "India's high ranking on the Global Hunger Index (GHI) again this year brings to the fore the disturbing reality of the country's stubbornly high proportions of malnourished children," the statement said. IFPRI pointed out that more than one-fifth of Indian children under five weigh too little

for their height and over a third are too short for their age. "Even with the massive scale up of national nutrition- focused programmes in India, drought and structural deficiencies have left large number of poor in India at risk of malnourishment in 2017, said P K Joshi, IFPRI Director for South Asia. However, he said that the ongoing efforts are expected to make significant changes in improving the existing situation. Joshi appreciated that India has developed and launched an action plan on 'undernourishment free India' by 2022. The plan shows stronger commitment and greater investments in tackling malnutrition in the coming years. "As of 2015-16, more than a fifth (21 percent)

## Depressing Window to Middle Class

There's an old, economy adage that goes like this: governments mainly lose elections either because of high inflation or high unemployment or both. Job creation for India's burgeoning workforce has always been a pressing problem. In the aftermath of demonetisation, about 1.5 million mainly low-skilled jobs were lost in the first quarter this year, according to one estimate. Yet, it wasn't until India's blockbuster IT industry laid off thousands of workers—the first time in decades—that panic set in. There are telltale signs of a middle-class, urban job crunch. When white-collar jobs disappear, they are more acutely felt. That's because, one, putting a number to formal-sector job losses is easy and, two, they are widely reported. Amid widespread pessimism over jobless growth, the employment of the chattering middle-class looks vulnerable too, as India battles slow growth, poor investment cycles and economic headwinds. A crisis of so-called white-collar jobs—denoting professionals—is a potential political hot potato. The middle class in India is tenuous: with

no strict boundaries, it includes virtually everybody from clerks to bosses in small offices. This smartphone-wielding class shapes public opinion faster than any other social category. Television channels speak their language and the media reflect their views more often than of the abjectly poor. If onion prices rise, for instance, it's the middle-class housewife who is spoken to.

Firms that keep the middle class gainfully employed are battling debts. And across sectors, they are shrinking their wage bills. From IT firms to banks and power companies, firings are taking place, sometimes in a low-key fashion. Automation in the medium term is expected to make up to 52 per cent of current jobs redundant. That's a whole different category of challenge altogether.

Consider this: Larsen & Toubro, a construction giant, retrenched 14,000 employees by the end of 2016-17. Together, the IT industry is estimated to have laid off 56,000. Engineering jobs have declined to. But it's not limited to the IT sector, which is battling the effects of the Trump administration policies to limit

overseas hiring. According to the Aspiring Minds National Emp-loyability Report-Engineers 2016, conducted by an emp-loyability solution firm headquartered in Gurgaon, less than 4 per cent of engineers are employable. While layoffs in the IT jobs are widely reported, less noticed are dwindling core engineering jobs—a big white-collar segment. The reasons could be more structural than just lack of job creation. It may have to do with skewed social aspirations and an inability to diversify technical education, which has caused an oversupply of jobseekers in one field compared to others. For instance, according to the 2011 census, India has 35 doctors for every 100 engineers in the 60-plus age group. The share of doctors to engineers keeps declining across age groups from this "60-plus" age bracket. For the 20-24 year age bracket, this number of 15.7. The Aspiring Minds survey of more than 150,000 engineering students from 650 engineering colleges who graduated in 2015 showed 80 per cent of them remained unemployed in the subsequent year.

## As we complete 15 Years

"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

## ICE chief pledges quadrupling or more of workplace crackdowns

at the conservative Heritage Foundation and was asked whether his agency would do more to target not just undocumented workers, but their places of work. Homan said he has instructed Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the investigative unit of ICE, to potentially quintuple worksite enforcement actions next year. He said he recently asked HSI to audit how much of their time is spent on work site enforcement, and said he has ordered that to increase "by four to five times."

## Hawaii judge blocks Trump's latest travel ban

it lacks sufficient findings that the entry of more than 150 million nationals from six specified countries would be 'detrimental to the interests of the United States,'" Watson wrote.

The second version of the travel ban, issued in March, had barred residents of six Muslim-majority countries -- Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan, Somalia and Yemen. The new restrictions that were set to take effect Wednesday cover eight countries -- Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, Somalia and Yemen. Tuesday's ruling does not impact the restrictions on North Korea and Venezuela.

# Indian-origin teenager becomes UK's youngest millionaire

**An Indian-origin teenager Akshay Ruparelia has become one of Britain's youngest millionaires after his online estate agency business got valued at 12 million pounds**

An Indian-origin teenager has become one of Britain's youngest millionaires after his online estate agency business got valued at 12 million pounds in just over a year.

Akshay Ruparelia, at just 19 years of age, juggled his school work with negotiating property deals for his no-frills business that offers to sell properties for a fraction of the cost charged by established high street estate agents.

This week "doorsteps.co.uk" became the 18th biggest estate agency in the UK – just 16 months after the website went live.

Ruparelia claims to have already sold 100 million pounds worth of properties since he set up his business.

"I got the website up and running and after a couple of weeks a man in Sussex asked me to sell his home and a separate chunk of land he owned beside it.

"I had to pay my sister's boyfriend 40 pounds to drive me to Sussex to take photographs of the house, as I hadn't passed my driving test and didn't have a car," he recalls.

The north London-based schoolboy was able to sell the property and land within three weeks, which

set the ball rolling.

He started his company with 7,000 pounds, borrowed from relatives and now employs 12 people.

In the initial stages of his business, he hired a call centre to answer calls coming in to his work while he was at school and would return the calls after his classes. His model is based on hiring an ever-expanding network of self-employed mothers across the UK, who show clients around the properties he has been asked to sell.

The teenage tycoon believes his model is set to turn the property selling

market away from agents in flashy suits.

"Quite rightly people trust mums. Every mum who works for me will be honest and tell the truth. It is important. For the majority of people selling their home is the biggest financial transaction of their lives," he told the 'Daily Mirror'.

Ruparelia attributes the idea to set up a small business to reading the biography of no-frills airline Ryanair founder Michael O'Leary.

"Mr O'Leary began by selling flights for just 4.99 pounds. His point was that if you can offer customers



something at a price they can't believe and you deliver what you say you will, you hook people in and your business will work," he said.

The schoolboy is now well on his way to support his two deaf parents, who he says are very proud of him.

His father, 57-year-old Kaushik, is a care worker and mother, 51-year-old Renuka, is a teaching assistant for deaf children

and a support worker for deaf children with Camden Council in London.

Ruparelia has got an offer to study economics and mathematics at Oxford University but has decided to put that on hold to grow his business.

He began by paying himself 500 pounds a month from the profits, which he has increased to 1,000 pounds a month and is saving up to buy his first car.

## Procter & Gamble says Peltz loses board seat bid by around 6 million votes



Procter & Gamble Co (PG.N) said on Monday that activist hedge fund manager Nelson Peltz had lost his bid to win a seat on the consumer goods company's board by 6.15 million votes, according to its preliminary tally. Peltz, whose Trian Fund Management LP owns a \$3.5 billion stake in P&G, has sought a board seat in one of the biggest and most expensive proxy contests ever. P&G chief executive David Taylor said last week that Peltz had lost the fight, but Peltz said the vote was too close to call and was not conceding. He had contested the existing seat of Ernesto Zedillo, the former president of Mexico.

Peltz received 973.0 million votes, compared to Zedillo's 979.2 million votes, P&G said in a filing. (bit.ly/2yt33t6) The results were preliminary estimates and subject to change based on certification by an independent firm, the maker of Pampers diapers and Gillette razors said. It is expected to take the independent firm weeks to deliver a final tally. The counting process is made difficult in this case because P&G has a large number of individual investors and many of them voted their own shares instead of having brokerages who hold the shares do the voting. Peltz could not immediately be reached for comment on Monday.

## No Respite For Indian Banks As Bad Loans Hit Record \$146 Billion

New loans grew at just about 5% in the year to March, the lowest growth rate in more than six decades.

A review of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data obtained through right-to-information requests shows banks' total stressed loans — including non-performing and restructured or rolled over loans — rose 4.5 percent in the six months to end-June. In the previous six months they had risen 5.8 percent.

While banks remain the main source of funding for India's companies, the stubborn bad debt problem has eaten into bank profits and choked off new lending, especially to smaller firms, at a time when an economy that depends on them is stalling.

India grew at its slowest pace in three years in April-June - a concern for the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who faces elections in 2019 and has pledged to create millions of new jobs before then.

Banks are having to take higher provisions to account for more defaulters being pushed into bankruptcy. And margins are likely to be squeezed further by proposed new rules to encourage commercial banks to pass on central bank interest rate cuts.

To be sure, the bulk of India's sour loans are in the state banks and stem from lending to large conglomerates, especially in steel and infrastructure. But analysts say the rise in bad loans among small firms, and even retail borrowing, is worrying and will do little to



encourage new loans to help fuel growth.

"On the corporate side, we think it's a recognition cycle which is nearing an end," said Alka Anbarasu, senior analyst at Moody's Investor Service, referring to more bad loans being recognized as such, as banks come under pressure from the RBI and other regulators.

"But it's really those data points beyond corporate that are causing some worry."

Anbarasu forecast weak quarters ahead for banks before profitability picks up, and several senior bankers from public sector lenders - which account for more than two-thirds of Indian banking assets - agreed the months ahead would be strained.

Stressed loans as a percentage of total loans reached 12.6 percent at end-June, according to the RBI data, the highest level in at least 15 years. Part of the issue for banks

and the government is a strict provisioning regime: the RBI wants banks to provide for at least 50 percent of the secured loans to companies taken to bankruptcy proceedings, and 100 percent for the unsecured part.

A dozen of the biggest such cases account for nearly 1.78 trillion rupees, or a quarter of total non-performing assets. For those companies, banks will need to provide 180 billion rupees on top of existing provisions, according to July estimates from India Ratings and Research, the local affiliate of Fitch Ratings.

More than 20 other sizeable companies are at risk of being taken to bankruptcy court. Bankers say these and other pressures - including rising government bond yields that forced banks to post mark-to-market losses - have added to the squeeze, and hit new loans.

# From fidgeting and eating fat to starting the day with apple cider vinegar Experts reveal the top 10 ways to boost your metabolism



(Agencies) From fidgeting and eating fat to starting the day with apple cider vinegar, a leading nutritionist and personal trainer outline the top 10 ways to boost your metabolism. To kick start the fat-burning process, the experts recommend people start the day with a nutritious breakfast, such as porridge, to get the digestion going and help them feel fuller for longer. Trainer Christina Howells also recommends combining high-intensity interval training with traditional

cardio to really make the body work to burn calories. Building muscle could even help you lose weight in your sleep without having to visit a gym, she adds. Dietary changes could be as simple as switching your coffee for a matcha green tea, which, as well as being antioxidant rich, seriously boosts the metabolism, according to nutrition consultant Karen Cummings-Palmer. In a piece for Get The Gloss, London-based Christina and Karen discuss the top 10 ways people can boost their metabolism to help them shed the pounds for good.

**1. Eat in the am**  
Eating a nutrient-rich breakfast shortly after getting out of bed quite literally wakes up your metabolism. Try porridge with almonds and berries, or a spinach and feta omelette with a slice of whole grain toast to get your body going and keep you fuller for longer.

**2. HIIT it**  
Christina said: 'High intensity interval training is a great time efficient means of boosting your metabolism that has the advantage over steady state cardio in preserving muscle tone.'

**3. Make a matcha**  
Karen recommends a good dose of matcha green tea. She said: 'Not only is it a supercharged antioxidant rich drink (about 15 times more than regular green), but it's also a massive

metabolism booster.'

**4. Aerobic amp-up**  
Christina said: 'Aerobic exercise may not build muscles, but it's a sure fire way to boost the engine. 'At rest our metabolism is ticking over but if we rev up the cardiovascular system a notch, this is a super efficient means of burning calories and works to boost your metabolism for many hours after a workout.'

**5. Apple cider vinegar**  
Karen said: 'My clients have great results with apple cider vinegar 'A couple of tablespoons in warm water on an empty stomach about 30 minutes before dinner seems to do the job of both boosting the metabolism and curbing the appetite - so you'll burn a little faster and crave a little less. It's the ultimate win-win.'

**6. Individuality is key**  
Karen said: 'I believe in bio-individuality. We all have different needs but lots of small meals throughout the day does not work for me. 'Whilst it's a perfectly healthy way of eating, I find

that my metabolism works most efficiently when it is fueled by three nutritious meals a day with plenty of time to digest in between. 'Think of the body as an engine, you burn more fuel my putting your foot down and releasing then by coasting for the entire journey - constant grazing is like coasting.'

**7. Life is a gym**  
Karen said: 'Opportunities to work out are everywhere and short sharp bursts several times a day are not only great for your lifestyle (we can all spare five minutes five times a day), but fantastic for the metabolism.'

**8. Fats and greens**  
Karen advises diets high in greens and good-quality protein are better for almost everything, and certainly for the metabolism. Moreover good fats tend to be the best fat burners. So embrace coconut oil, raw nuts and avocados to keep the metabolism fired up and ready to go.

**9. Maximise your muscles**  
Christina advises both strength and body weight training are efficient means

of building and maintaining muscle tissue, which is three times more metabolically active than fat. This means you continue to burn fat, even when you are sleeping! In fact, the average woman in her 30s who strength trains 30 to 40 minutes twice a week for four months, will increase her resting metabolism by 100 calories a day. This means you are resetting your thermostat to keep running at that rate even on the days when you do not make it to the gym! Christina advises three sessions a week working all the major muscle groups.

**10. Move more and fidget**  
People who cannot sit still burn more energy. Christina said: 'Don't just rely on structured exercise. Extra movement requires energy, while sitting on your butt doesn't!'

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## The BEST exercises for your body according to a Harvard doctor – and the good news is that running is not included!

(Agencies) We all know we should be exercising, and many of us believe we need to be pounding the pavements to make a real difference to our health. But that's not so, according to Dr I-Min Lee, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. Long-distance running can be hard on your joints and digestive system, and instead she recommends five other types of workouts. These are detailed in a Harvard Medical School health report called 'Starting to Exercise' which outlines some of the best exercises to carry out. Their benefits include weight loss, muscle building, boosting your heart and brain health and

strengthening your bones – with no collapsing across a marathon finish line needed. **1. Swimming** According to Dr Lee, swimming is 'the perfect workout' because it uses nearly every muscle in your body. Swimming regularly for at least 30 to 45 minutes gives you an aerobic workout – which is linked to raising your heart rate to improving your heart health. It also protects the brain from age-related decline. Plus, swimming is low-impact as the support of the water means its easier on your joints. 'Swimming is good for individuals with arthritis because it's less weight-bearing,' Dr Lee explains. Regular swimming can

reduce the risk of chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke, according to NHS Choices. It can also boost your mood and keep your weight under control. **2. Tai chi** Tai chi combines deep breathing and relaxation with flowing movements. Originally developed as a martial art in 13th-century China, it is accessible for a wide variety of people, regardless of age or fitness level since practitioners go at their own pace. Tai chi 'is particularly good for older people because balance is an important component of fitness, and balance is something we lose as we get older,' Dr Lee said. Indeed research has shown

that the exercise can help people aged 65 and over to reduce stress, improve posture, balance and general mobility, and increase muscle strength in the legs. Some studies suggests that tai chi can reduce the risk of falls among older adults and improve mobility in the ankle, hip and knee in people with rheumatoid arthritis. **3. Strength training** This type of training involves using weight – which can be your own body, free weights like barbells or dumbbells – to create resistance against the pull of gravity. You can also use elastic bands or weighted ankle cuffs. Experts hail this type of exercise as a great way to reduce body fat and increase lean muscle mass



as well as develop strong bones and increase your metabolism to help you burn more calories. According to the Mayo Clinic, strength training can reduce the signs and symptoms of many chronic conditions, such as arthritis, back pain, obesity, heart disease, depression and diabetes. The current national guidelines for physical activity recommend

strengthening exercises for all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms) at least twice a week. One set – usually 8 to 12 repetitions of the same movement – per session is effective, though some evidence suggests that two to three sets may be better. Your muscles need at least 48 hours to recover between strength training sessions.

# 'Padmavati' experience extremely exhausting: Deepika

(Agencies) Padmavati experience extremely exhausting. Actor Deepika Padukone said she feels extremely fortunate to have teamed up with Sanjay Leela Bhansali for the upcoming "Padmavati", shooting for which has been an "exhausting" experience. The 31-year-old actor has previously worked with Bhansali in "Goliyon Ki Rasleela: Ram Leela" and "Bajirao Mastani". Deepika said playing Queen Padmavati has been one of the most memorable roles of her career. "I feel extremely fortunate to have worked repeatedly with someone like Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Over five years and three

consecutive films, back to back, in extremely challenging, empowering and powerful roles that he is known to give women. "Padmavati" has been an extremely exhausting experience... We shot non-stop for almost seven-eight months. I feel certain characters don't leave your system," she said. The period-drama features Shahid Kapoor as Maharawal Ratan Singh, Rajput ruler and husband of Padmavati, played by Deepika. Ranveer Singh, will be seen as Alauddin Khilji, the Delhi sultan, who falls in love with Padmavati. Deepika was speaking at the launch of

veteran actor Hema Malini's biography "Hema Malini: Beyond the Dream Girl". Hema recalled shooting for Gulzar's "Meera" on a minuscule budget, in which she played the titular Rajputi princess who is devoted to Lord Krishna. Deepika added the budgets have surely increased today but a filmmaker would still need more money to justify his vision completely. "Padmavati" releases on December 1. Padmavati experience extremely exhausting.



## Hema shares 'warm' relation with stepson Sunny

(Agencies) Veteran actress Hema Malini says she shares a "beautiful relation" with her stepson Sunny Deol. After her 2015 accident, Sunny was the first to visit and take care of her. During the launch of her biography "Beyond The Dream Girl", written by

Ram Kamal Mukherjee, unveiled by Deepika Padukone, Hema shared one of the unspoken chapters of her life — her relationship with her stepsons. She said: "Everyone wonders what kind of a relation we (she and Sunny) are having. It is very beautiful and cordial. Whenever it is necessary he

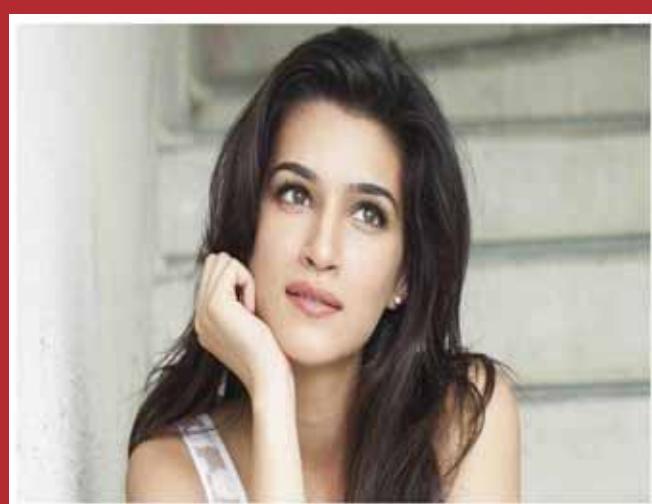
an interactive session where both shared how their journey was similar and yet different, given the fact that they were set in separate times in a ever changing film industry, according to Hema. "Deepika is a really talented and hardworking actress but she is also fortunate to work with a director like Sanjay Leela Bhansali who has a grand budget to make a grand film like 'Padmavati' and 'Bajirao Mastani'." "In my time, I did 'Meera' and 'Raziya Sultana', where the producer had zero budgets and my remuneration was Rs 2,000." After unveiling the cover of the book, the actress received a series of video messages from iconic actors like Amitabh Bachchan, Jitendra, Shatrughan Sinha on her birthday and for the launch. At the event, Deepika read out a letter by Pamela Chopra, wife of late filmmaker Yash Chopra, where she wrote: "You are pristine and in your long career, you always showed grace and dignity, something very few actresses have."



## Sandeep Singh's biopic titled as Flicker Singh to have Diljit as lead

(Agencies) Sandeep Singh's biopic titled as Flicker Singh: Diljit Dosanjh all set for his next Bollywood movie titled as Flicker Singh with Taapsee Pannu that will be released in 2018. Earlier itself it was announced that Diljit Dosanjh will be playing the role of former Indian Hockey Captain Sandeep Singh in his biopic. But the name of Bollywood movie was not revealed, and recently in post on his social media, Diljit announced his 2018 Bollywood movie as Flicker Singh. Punjabi singer turned actor is all set on the practice mode to get in the role of Sandeep Singh in his next Bollywood project in the year 2018 with Taapsee Pannu.

(Sunny) is always there, along with Dharamji, especially when this accident happened." She also added: "He (Sunny) was the first person to come to see me at home and he saw that the right doctor was there for the stitches that were done on my face." "I was really taken aback to see him showing so much interest. That shows what kind of a relationship we are having." While Deepika and Hema had



## Kriti Sanon looks stunning this festive season

(Agencies) Kriti Sanon looks: Most awaited festive season is around the corner and bollywood celebrities has given us major festive goals. Talking about Bollywood divas in this festive season, Kriti is looking stunning wearing pink anarkali suit Styled by her go-to stylist Sukriti Grover and she wore a perfect pair of ethnic earrings which looked ideal with the attire and wore the pair of juttis. Kriti always looks attractive and creating an impression over the fans where ever she goes whether airport or attending any party. The actress has always stood out with her fashion game at the point.

# Former Playboy Model Accuses Oliver Stone Of Groping Her Breast

Actress Carrie Stevens says the Harvey Weinstein scandal reminded her of when Stone grabbed her like "a toy." Stone had defended Weinstein earlier in the week. A former Playboy centerfold model accused director Oliver Stone, who had defended Harvey Weinstein on Thursday, of molesting her when she was 22. Actress and model Carrie Stevens, now 48, told HuffPost late Thursday that Stone "groped" her breast without her permission at a dinner party. Stevens, who was

Playboy's Miss June 1997, described the encounter on her private social media pages Thursday night after seeing an interview with Stone published earlier in the day by The Hollywood Reporter. In it, Stone appeared to sympathize with Weinstein, who's been accused of sexually harassing or assaulting dozens of women, by saying, "It's not easy what he's going through." Stone has since clarified his statement, saying now he is "appalled" by the accusations against the fired co-

founder of The Weinstein Co. and was withdrawing from a television project involving the company, according to Variety. "When I heard about Harvey, the first person I thought of was Oliver Stone, and it figures," Stevens wrote in a private Facebook post seen by HuffPost. It included a link to The Hollywood Reporter's interview with Stone. Stevens told HuffPost the encounter with Stone took place in the 1990s. "Oliver saw me where I was standing near



the door and he just reached out and groped me, grabbed my boob like it was a toy or a hand you'd shake," Stevens said. Then, she added, he "grinned a

shit-eating grin and kept walking." Stone's agent did not respond to HuffPost's request for comment by the time of publication.

# Chef movie review: Saif Ali Khan film is a bland dish

**Saif Ali Khan's Chef offers moments of brilliance which, if weaved in a more organised manner, may have given us a light, affable film. But a lazy and rather uninterested narrative takes away the pleasure.**



**Chef**

**Director: Raja Krishna Menon**  
**Cast: Saif Ali Khan, Padmapriya, Dhanish Karthik**  
**Rating: 1.5/5**

If you are a Bollywood fan, it is almost impossible that you would not remember Aamir Khan-starrer Dil Chahta Hai. However, if you fall into the rare category of those who don't, Saif Ali Khan makes sure you are reminded of the iconic film throughout his latest release, Chef. Those are the rare moments from this largely bland fare that you do want to remember.

Raja Krishna Menon's Chef is an official adaptation of Jon Favreau's 2014 film by the same name - while the original was an endearing slice of life drama which managed to impress food lovers with the mouth-watering visuals, Menon's adaptation is flavourless in comparison.

Menon's movie shows us the star chef (Roshan Kalra, played by Saif Ali Khan) mostly cooking just one dish, pasta. The lead character, who is supposed to be so passionate about his culinary skills that he ran away

from home at the age of 15, shows little interest in actual cooking. Even when he cooks, we see none of that artistry which can make the audience taste the dish. Mostly, we see an empty pan and then the prepared pasta. Where is that pure joy

that the gustatory process can bring along? Well, there is some chola-bhatura, idli-sambhar and a sumptuous langar meal, but that's about it.

Even if we forego the food porn expected from the remake of Chef, the characters are given little space to establish their identities and personalities. While we are told Roshan is a self-made, passionate star chef, nothing in his personality gives us a glimpse of the gravity that such a man would carry. Unlike Carl Casper (Jon Favreau) from the original, Roshan is a stubborn, irrational and insensitive man. He is a chef, but has little passion for cooking. He picks up a fight with a customer in a restaurant for no

apparent reason (real-life parallels, anyone?) and after he loses his job, we see no craving in him to kickstart his dream journey.

It is also shocking to see racist comments being made in a film by the same director who made Airlift, and there are many. For example, when a Bangladeshi man surprises friends by suddenly reaching India, he is asked, "Taar paar kar ke, goliyan khate hue aaye ho?" and these are supposed to be jokes on which the filmmakers expect us to laugh.

Another problem with Chef is its clunky story. Whether it is Roshan fighting with a restaurant customer or his trip to Kochi or his decision to finally take the

plunge and start his own food truck — everything happens arbitrarily. These are not sudden twists, just haphazardly placed without a context.

There are a few moments, nonetheless, that bring a smile on your face. In a few sequences that showcase the bond between Roshan and his son, one where he interacts with his ex-wife and almost every single moment Milind Soman is in the frame — you warm up to the characters. But it appears the filmmaker didn't want audience empathising with the characters for every time a scene touches the heart, the narrative moves to a different, less engaging sequence.

# CSEA Endorses Labriola for County Comptroller



(By a staff reporter) Massapequa Park, NY — Nassau County Comptroller candidate Steve Labriola today earned the endorsement of the CSEA, Long Island Region Office.

Labriola, who is running on a platform of protecting taxpayer wallets by rooting out waste, fraud and corruption, has also been endorsed by the Nassau County Republican, Conservative and Reform Parties. A former NYS Assemblyman, Town Clerk and Chief Deputy Comptroller, Steve Labriola has the experience and ethics to get the job done.

"I am honored that the CSEA has endorsed me for the office of County Comptroller," said Steve Labriola. "I truly believe that my plan to restore the taxpayer's trust by creating accountability, strengthening transparency and rooting out corruption is in line with the CSEA's core ideals. I thank them for their support, and promise that nobody will rip off the taxpayers on my watch!" The Civil Service Employees Association is one of the largest and most influential organizations in the United States. They organize and represent hardworking men and women, to ensure their voices are heard and their place at the table is kept. They abide by the basic working principles of: honesty; inclusiveness; full participation; respect; diversity; open communication; accountability and fiscal responsibility. "We are pleased to endorse Steve Labriola's

candidacy for Nassau County Comptroller. Steve's record proves his commitment to the issues affecting public service employees, and addressing the needs of every hardworking man and woman in Nassau County. We're proud to offer him our full support," said Nicholas J. LaMorte, President, CSEA, Long Island Region. Labriola's plan for restoring the taxpayer's trust includes: Creating a Whistle-Blower Hotline, where employees and citizens can anonymously leave voice, text and social media tips; Creating an Anti-Fraud Unit with Forensic Accountants and Investigators to prevent shady companies from doing business with Nassau; Doubling the number of audits conducted annually, ensuring that any organization receiving taxpayer dollars is held accountable for how your money is spent.



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

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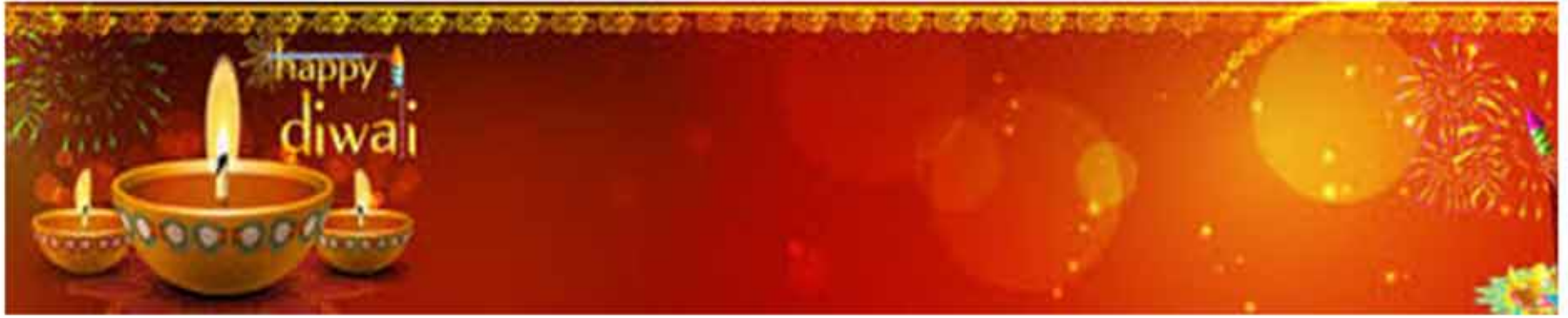
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