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Padmavati: Film associations say they are upset, question government's silence



Brexit is getting messy

(News Agencies) British Prime Minister Theresa May has lost two Cabinet ministers in the last two weeks, and the future of a third rests with an ongoing investigation into his conduct. A fourth is at the center of a growing diplomatic row with Iran.

This sense of crisis would hamper a government at the best of times — even one that had a parliamentary majority, something May lacks.

But against this backdrop of disarray, the British Prime Minister has just been confronted with the prospect that she won't be able to get Brexit through Parliament — meaning the entire project could fall into chaos. Talks between officials from Britain and negotiators for the European Union have progressed slowly, and are now at a near-stalemate.

(Contd on page 22)

As govt drags feet over air pollution, experts say situation is public health crisis

Experts warn that air pollution has reached critical levels and simply cannot be viewed as seasonal emergency.



(News Agencies) The Union environment ministry continues to treat the current air pollution crisis in Delhi and the national capital region (NCR) as a seasonal emergency rather than the national public health crisis that experts say it is. "On account of pollution control measures and slight improvement in weather conditions, the declining trend in PM levels which started in the afternoon of November 12 continues even today," Environment minister Harsh Vardhan. (Contd on page 23)

Bikram yoga guru seeks bankruptcy



(News Agencies) CHICAGO: Bikram Choudhury Yoga Inc, the studio that popularized doing yoga in sauna heat, has filed for US Chapter 11 bankruptcy, dogged by \$16.7 million in legal judgments and numerous lawsuits and allegations of sexual misconduct. Founder Bikram Choudhury, who built a worldwide following with classes of 26 yoga postures in rooms heated to 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40.6°C), has been accused of sexual assault by his yoga practitioners, students, instructors and teacher trainees. The Simi Valley, California-based company said in a bankruptcy court filing (Contd on page 22)

US hate crimes rise for second year, Hindus and Sikhs among those targeted

There were 10 incidents of hate-crimes against Hindus and seven against Sikhs in 2016.



(News Agencies) The FBI has reported an increase in hate crimes in the US for a second consecutive year, with Hindus and Sikhs among those targeted in the more than 6,000 incidents of crimes motivated by biases towards religions, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. There were 10 incidents of hate-crimes against Hindus and seven against Sikhs in 2016 — the year of the rise of Donald Trump as a politician and his election as president. The maximum number of hate crimes were related to race or ethnicity in 2016— 3,483 — with more than half against African Americans. (Contd on page 22)



Nassau County Commission on Human Rights Cancer Prevention Symposium

***Save The Date**



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Rotary Club**

**December 2, 2017
11:00AM - 3:00PM**

Cancer Prevention Symposium

According to World Health Organization Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally and accounted for 8.8 million deaths worldwide from cancer in 2015. Lung, prostate, colorectal, stomach and liver cancer are the most common types of cancer in men, while breast, colorectal, lung, cervix and stomach cancer are the most common among women. In the United States \$1.16 trillion was the estimated total annual economic cost of cancer in 2010. Cancer seems to affect at least one or more member of each family.

What is cancer?

Cancer is a generic term for a large group of diseases characterized by the growth of abnormal cells beyond their usual boundaries that can then invade adjoining parts of the body and/or spread to other organs. Other common terms used are malignant tumors and neoplasms. Cancer can affect almost any part of the body and has many anatomic and molecular subtypes that each requires specific management strategies.

Cancer Prevention

According to current evidence, between 30% and 50% of cancer deaths could be prevented by modifying or avoiding key risk factors.

**Excerpts Above from www.who.int/cancer/en/*

Saturday, December 2, 2017

11:00 AM to 3:00 PM

To be held at:

The Elmont Public Library

700 Hempstead Turnpike, Elmont, NY 11003



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NRI from Gujarat's Anand town shot dead in North Carolina

(News Agencies) VADODARA: A non-resident Indian having his roots in Anand town of central Gujarat was killed in a fatal shooting in the United States on Saturday. Akash Talati, 40, who used to run a motel on Fretwell Road in North Carolina state of US, was shot dead by unidentified assailants in wee hours of Saturday. Akash, the only son of former principal of

Anand Arts College Ramesh Talati, had shifted to US a decade ago. The parents of the deceased, who stay at Sanket Residency on Anand-Lambhvel Road, are in shock after the incident.

After earning a bachelors degree from Sardar Patel University, Akash had shifted to US where he managed a motel.

According to relatives of the

family, some unidentified assailants had entered the motel at around 3.30 am with the motive to carry out a loot.

"When Akash tried to intervene, the assailants opened firing inside the motel leaving three other employees in the motel injured. Akash died on the spot. After the police reached there, the injured were shifted to hospital where condition of

one employee is still critical," said a family friend and administrator of P G Arts College Raman P Patel.

"Akash's three uncles, who are settled in United States and his sister Chhaya who is based in New Jersey are reaching North Carolina," he said.

Akash is survived by wife Mital, who hails from Surat and eight-year-old son JayAkash



used to frequently visit India to meet his elderly parents and was expected to visit his hometown in January 2018.

Indian-American announces run for US Congress



(News Agencies) WASHINGTON: Indian-American Jitendra Diganvker has announced to run for the US House of Representatives in the

2018 Congressional elections. If elected by his Republican party in the primaries, Diganvker, a business owner and community worker, would be

pitted against popular Democratic Incumbent Raja Krishnamoorthi from the 8th Congressional District of Illinois.

A suburb of Chicago, the Congressional District has a sizeable Indian-American population.

Krishnamoorthi, who has carved a niche for himself in the last 10 months in the US Congress through his articulate views on key issues like national security, immigration and economy, is backed by the former US President Barack Obama.

If nominated by the Republican Party, it would be for the first time that an Indian-American would be pitted against another in a

Congressional election.

Diganvker said that he is running for Congress to give a voice to the hard-working middle-class Americans that are too often ignored by career politicians in Washington DC.

"Immigrating to our great country, my family and I have experienced many highs and lows," he said.

"My family came to America to achieve the American dream - to succeed or fail by our hard work and commitment. Today, career politicians have left behind hard-working middle-class Americans. I will be a voice for those very people who have been left behind, because my family is one of them," Diganvker said.

He lost his two daughters in a tragic house fire in 1999, which drove him to become a compassionate community servant. He said he has seen first-hand, how burdensome government regulations and rising health care costs can discourage the entrepreneurial

spirit.

"I am not a politician. While most politicians pass laws yet never feel the effects of their actions, I come from real America. I have felt these struggles and know first-hand the consequences of Washington's action, and inaction, on issues important to middle-class families. I will be the voice of everyday Americans in Washington," he said in a media release.

The US House of Representative currently has four Indian Americans.

Ami Bera from California is the three-term lawmaker. Three others - Ro Khanna from California, Raja Krishnamoorthi from Illinois and Pramila Jayapal from Washington State - were elected to the Congress last year. All of them would be seeking re-election next year. Kamala Harris from California is the first Indian-origin American Senator. She was elected to the Senate last year. She is of mixed parental heritage.

Tulsi Gabbard named chairperson of World Hindu Congress 2018



(News Agencies) WASHINGTON: Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu lawmaker in the US Congress, has been named as the chairperson of the World Hindu Congress to be held in Chicago next year, organisers of the mega event announced today. Held once every four years, World Hindu Congress (WHC) is a global platform for Hindus to connect, share ideas, inspire one another and impact the common good.

Organised by the World Hindu Foundation, the first Congress was held in New Delhi in 2014.

The second WHC will take place in Illinois in Chicago from September 7 to 9 next year. Hindus from across the world "would be able to come together, share ideas and inspire one another as we seek ways to positively impact the communities around us" and the world, Gabbard, 36, said.

The three-term Democratic Congresswoman from Hawaii, Gabbard is currently the co-chair of the House Congressional caucus.

"With all that's happening in the world, the universal message of aloha - love, peace, respect and unity - is so needed. I am looking forward to working with you and seeing you soon,"

Gabbard said in a video message to the organisers.

Abhaya Asthana, coordinator of WHC, said that the organising committee was looking for a recognised leader who is courageous, bold, principled, progressive, accomplished, articulate and above all a practising Hindu. "Undoubtedly, she brings with her all these attributes and more," Asthana said.

"We are thrilled to have her on the team and look forward to working with her for a successful World Hindu Congress 2018," Asthana said. Gabbard is an Iraq war veteran and a member of the powerful House Foreign Relations Committee.

The inaugural WHC held in November 2014 had seen participation of 1800 delegates from 53 countries.

Indian-American killed in hit-and-run case in US

(News Agencies) NEW YORK: An 18-year-old Indian-American dental student was killed in the US in a hit-and-run case when the driver of a pick-up truck ran his vehicle over her after a minor collision, according to media reports. Taranjit Parmar was on her way home when she got into a minor accident on Hempstead Turnpike near Gardiners Ave in Levittown on Thursday, New York Daily News reported. Parmar and the truck driver pulled over into the parking lot of a nearby gas station after colliding, police said.

But when she got out to inspect the damage to her vehicle, the driver of the pickup truck took off -- and ran over Parmar while speeding away, it added. Parmar was on the phone with her mother when she was run over in the middle of rush-hour traffic, her father was quoted as saying by the report. "She had called my wife and said, 'Hi, Mom,'" Parmar's father, Ranjit Parmar said. "Then she said 'Oh, no, Stop!' and the call got disconnected. There was no answer after that," he added. Medics rushed Parmar to Nassau University Medical Center, where she died from massive head and chest injuries. Parmar, who was studying to be a dentist at Adelphi University, was 10 minutes from her home when the tragedy occurred, the report added.

Trump's zigzag diplomacy on China will confuse US allies in Indo-Pacific region

At the Asean summit, Donald Trump's messaging on China was contradictory as usual. The world needs stability and that would be easier to sustain if the US clarified its views on China



The participating governments at this year's Asean summit had one underlying interest in mind: to determine the way United States President Donald Trump handles China. Would he be hard? Would he be soft? Would he tread the middle path? They will be disappointed as Mr Trump's statements about China remained as full of contradictions as they have been in the past.

Most reports indicate that the Trump administration has witnessed a hardening of US posture towards China, a position

finding favour with the both the strategic and economic hawks in the White House. But Mr Trump's statements gave no indication of this policy consensus. He did a flip-flop on whether to attend the summit. He spoke of a "free and open Indo-Pacific region", but then proposed unilateral trade action against countries who ran a trade surplus with the US. These are obviously contradictory stances. He also breathed fire about North Korea but not in a manner that reassured US allies in the region. The Trump vision of Asia is protectionist, militarily

weak, isolationist and advantageous to China. The only consolation is that even Beijing was probably confused by his messaging. India can be pleased that Trump has adopted the phrase "Indo-Pacific" to describe the continent's geopolitical milieu. This seems to reflect the US president's belief that India is an important part of any Asia power game. However, converting the use of the phrase into a genuinely effective grand strategy may take a long time. The decision to bring four of Asia's democratic regimes into

a quadrilateral meeting was an example of such symbolic action, though holding out the possibility of future coherence and importance. It seems likely that the Trump administration will be taking a harder line on China in future. However, Mr Trump has gone about moving in this direction in his usual zigzag way, simultaneously communicating his admiration for the Chinese strongman and his unhappiness at the latter's trade policies.

All of this is unfortunate. The rise of China and Beijing's determination to have a new

world order based on "China's values" has provoked a strong reaction from other countries, with India leading the pack. However, the US and its web of alliances is the cornerstone of any counter to China. And it was a mix of military and economic relations that kept this web in place. Mr Trump is determinedly demolishing the economic relationship. The military one remains paralysed by the North Korean crisis. The world needs stability and that would be easier to sustain if the US clarified its views on China.

Quality, not morality, should be the benchmark for films

They should not be subjected to the moral standards of those who have no expertise in the matter. Viewers both in India and abroad deserve to see the best of Indian cinema. Dropping these two films — Nude, S Durga — from the Goa film festival denies the audience this opportunity.



"People can judge for themselves. I am not making films for the Indian government." Clearly, the information and broadcasting ministry does not agree with these sentiments expressed by SK Sasidharan, whose film Sexy Durga, modestly renamed S Durga, has been knocked out off the Goa film festival. The film had been

cleared by the jury as had been another film, Nude, which did not meet with the approval of the I&B mandarins.

This has led to the resignation of the international film festival jury chairman and renowned filmmaker Sujoy Ghosh. This is the attitude which has prevented India making a

bigger splash in international film festivals. To the world at large, India is still synonymous with Bollywood, which tends to overshadow many films on serious topics that smaller artistes make. Presumably, the Victorian sensibilities of the I&B officials were offended by the titles of the two films though the Durga in question is not a goddess but a young North Indian woman who marries a southerner; Nude is all about women models who pose for artists.

The same misplaced sense of morality saw the former FTII chief Pahlaj Nihalani wield his scissors far too generously on films which would have been considered inoffensive. The

absurdity of his actions was highlighted when he sought to chop a Bond film and insisted on extremely clumsy changes such as substituting a cuss word with the expression 'Oh cats.' It is interesting to note that while the I&B ministry is busy deciding what we should or should not watch, other countries with far stricter moral codes have really pushed the envelope when it comes to addressing potentially provocative subjects.

Several Iranian films on homosexuality, a topic which is considered off limits in the country, such as Be Like Others and Circumstances, have made it big at international films festivals like Sundance. Apart from

touchy officials, we also face the added problem of the so-called sensitivities of interest groups when it comes to films. The movie Padmavati has run into trouble in Rajasthan, with vested interests asking that the film be cleared by them. In which event, there is no point in having a censor board or film festival jury at all. Films, as also other creative works, should only be judged by their quality. They should not be subjected to the moral standards of those who have no expertise in the matter. Viewers both in India and abroad deserve to see the best of Indian cinema. Dropping these two films denies the audience this opportunity.

Supreme Court, diminished

The judiciary has created a crisis of institutional credibility for itself

The Supreme Court of India is facing its worst crisis of credibility since the Emergency. With an occasional exception, the quality of the court's reasoning, the inconstancy of its judgment, the abdication of its constitutional role in some cases, and its overreach in others, are already denting its authority. But the institutional crisis that the Supreme Court has now created for itself will puncture more holes in the authority that it so valiantly tried to exert. It will also create the conditions under which it will be easier to legitimise diluting judicial independence.

The current crisis was occasioned by an order passed by Justice J Chelameswar to constitute a five-judge bench in a petition filed by CJAR that demanded that a SIT be constituted to look into an alleged corruption scandal pertaining to a case involving a medical college. There are two issues: Can the chief justice be part of the hearing, since the scandal allegedly implicates a judgment the CJI wrote, even though he has not been named in the FIR? Second, could a constitution bench be constituted bypassing the chief justice in violation of the current procedure through which such benches are constituted? This is not the place to recount the ugly sequence of events that transpired. But consider the different ways in which the judiciary has now rendered itself vulnerable.

First, there is the vulnerability that arises from the CBI itself. There are issues of corruption in the courts. The judiciary has failed to find a mechanism to deal with allegations of corruption within its ranks. Every justice in the court needs to be above suspicion. But a lot of care needs to be exercised so that the anti-corruption measures taken do not undermine the independence of the judiciary. This is not a very popular thing to say, but we should also consider the possibility that the threat of being investigated by the CBI, or speculative naming (or suggestion in a CBI report), can itself also be an instrument of seeking recusals or undermining the independence of judges, as is sometimes done with other government officials. This subtle institutional challenge to the judiciary is not outside of the realm of possibility. More than the conduct of Justices Misra and Chelameswar, the judiciary will have to think of how it will deal with instances where the Chief Justice of India or other justices becomes hostage to possible CBI innuendo.

The challenge of fighting corruption in the judiciary will be this: How do you do this in a way that does not make the judiciary vulnerable to implicit blackmail and leads to undermining its independence? But a clamour for reforms that undermine independence in the name of accountability will be a natural consequence of the current chain of events.

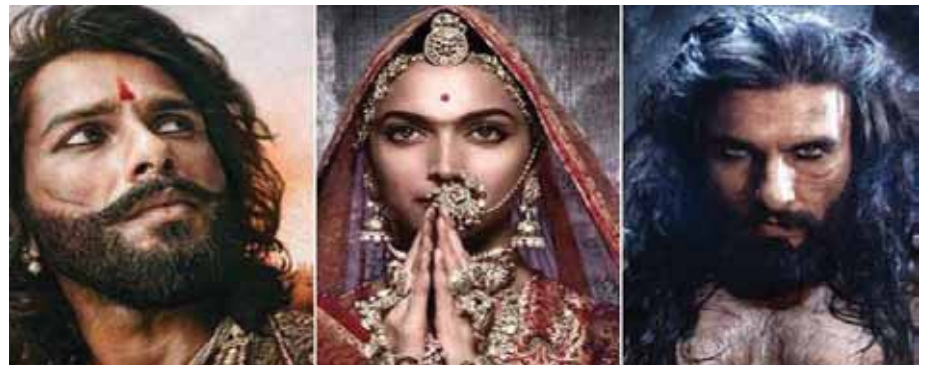
It is precisely because such a danger looms that the judiciary's conduct needs to be above board. And here, the judiciary has made itself doubly vulnerable. A court carves out its authority by the compelling character of its reasoning on behalf of constitutional values. We have had a succession of chief justices who have failed to exercise intellectual leadership and the present chief justice is no exception. It is not difficult to understand the chief justice's consternation. He has not been named in an FIR, and the prospect of a CJI's integrity being questioned on the basis of an unaccountable CBI is not a prospect we should relish. He was also institutionally humiliated by one of his brother justices, who disregarded existing court procedure and appointed a constitutional bench. But notwithstanding this, this is clearly a chief justice who seemed not to understand the concept of conflict of interest. He let his consternation on a procedural matter get the better of his judgment in a cringingly unbecoming way. He also gave the impression of not giving counsel a proper hearing. In the way he has constituted benches, he has also shown deep distrust in the capabilities of his senior colleagues. By setting himself up as a judge in his own cause and setting up a bench whose composition looks arbitrary, he has undermined the authority of the judiciary.

But Justice Chelameswar's order setting up a five-judge bench also made the judiciary vulnerable. Surely, there were better ways of securing the recusal of the chief justice and setting up a bench in a way that did not depart from existing court procedure or humiliate the chief justice. The danger is that the pursuit of justice and the need to project virtue often results in a grandstanding in its own right. Rather than build a robust judicial consensus, judges project their own individual heroism.

Between a chief justice who does not recognise conflict of interest, and justices who think the only recourse is public grandstanding, the judiciary will not be able to survive. Many learned counsel have defended Justice Chelameswar's move by invoking Article 142 that gives judges the power to do whatever it takes to secure justice. But the use of Article 142 has also become a sign of immense judicial indiscipline, where judges can easily ride roughshod over other procedural proprieties. Taken together, both the chief justice's and the judge's conduct highlights one obvious fact: There is no Supreme Court left any more. In expanding its powers, the Supreme Court first replaced the rule of law with the rule of the court (they are not the same thing); now the rule of court has been replaced with the anarchic will of individual judges. The Supreme Court has effectively ended an institution.

History and anger around Padmavati's purity and Alauddin Khilji's sweet dreams

Padmavati row: Since matters of faith continue to occupy the elevated sphere, it is only logical to cool matters with a compromise.



The roots of Rajput anger are a combination of various events that have happened in the recent years. An accumulated past of wrongs finds a new fireplace on which to stoke its ire. Such perceptions are shaped by a sense of identity attack, and seeming irrelevance. Events have conspired to create this perception, and a sense of victimhood in Rajasthan is seamlessly transmitted to fellow Rajputs who share the digital space. They, in turn, inform the unconnected. Hence the mammoth gathering of Rajputs in Gandhinagar to protest against the supposed visuals in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's upcoming extravaganza on Rani Padmavati. Voices are being raised in various pockets and parts of the country, wherever there is a Rajput presence. Discourse on community history in the age of social media knows no bounds. Identity is rooted in those stones on which Rani Padmini performed 'jauhar' more than 700 years ago. Her sacrifice continues to reverberate through ballads and folk tales. And every year on that date, by the Indian calendar, a vast gathering takes place in Chittorgarh to remember her and the hundreds of women who immolated themselves. Rajputs predominate in the gathering, but are not the only ones there who pay their respects. The 'Johar Kund' in Chittorgarh occupies the same status as does, for example, the Ka'ba, the Wailing Wall, or the Church of Nativity. It becomes a principal of faith, and identity. In a country that has been vivisected by faith, sensitivities continue to run high when it comes to matters of belief. History and memory shape belief. Not the textbook variety of history, but the one that is passed down through generations of village fireside talks and gatherings. The Shi'a marsiya has a Rajasthani equivalent, and it is through this medium that the message of Rani Padmini traveled hundreds of years, to become a sacred memory. So any visualisation, depiction, other than one rooted in popular perception comes to be taken as an affront, an insult, thus adding to the crisis of identity in the modern political milieu.

(Contd on page 23)

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Modifying MGNREGA can alleviate India's farming crisis



The design of large injections of public funds for India's agriculture economy needs to be informed with rigorous evaluations on what is effective for higher farm productivity. A wage subsidy for farm-labour is one modification that needs an evaluation, to generate evidence to inform how the MGNREGA policy generates employment when there is need, but without stress to farm production

Indian agriculture is witnessing a period of complex socio-economic distress, evidenced at multiple farmer agitations across rural India, all demanding a higher remunerative price for their crops. According to the latest report of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), paddy farmers managed on a marginal return of 4.4% on their investments whereas cotton farmers made a loss of 8.1%. Labour, as one of the largest input costs in farming could impact cost of cultivation and thereby, the profitability. A randomised evaluation in Andhra Pradesh found that the increase in wages for unskilled labour was driven by higher wages from the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). An effort needs to be made to evaluate whether modifying the NREGS to provide farmers with labour wage subsidies instead of the guaranteed 100 days of minimum wages to the labourers, may help reduce the agrarian distress that's sweeping rural India.

The expansion of the multi-crore NREGS and a growing construction sector — both private and public — has

given labourers an alternative to farm labour jobs and has driven higher wage rates. A study by an Abdul Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)-affiliate, conducted over randomly selected 250 sub-districts of Andhra Pradesh, found that an increase in public-wages also led to a consequent rise in private-wages by up to 24%.

In an ongoing JPAL study by Breza et al., studying the Odisha labour market, a reason for shortage of farm labour has been reported as availability of alternative job opportunities with higher wages. Job opportunities included not just work under the NREGS but a host of other government schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY), a housing scheme which provides another ninety days of unskilled employment to beneficiaries, above and beyond the 100 days offered under NREGS. Labourers working under PMAY reported earning double the daily wage offered for farm. According to a study by National Council of Applied Economic Research, 1.71 crore labourers from the unorganised sector have been employed so far under this scheme, adding to the higher wage options for rural manual

labourers. A modification in the NREGS could reduce stress on farming by including agricultural tasks on private land as a subset of works allowed under the scheme, and subsidising wages that farmers offer to labourers. Such a wage subsidy would promote labour supply to farmers, and should withdraw the stress of labour supply shortages. Second, sharing of the wage cost between farmers and the government will mean savings on the NREGS budget. Such a modification of the policy could provide a way to reduce budgetary expenditure, expand the coverage of the scheme to a larger population.

At present, the NREGS operational guidelines (2005) exclude all day-to-day agricultural operations such as ploughing, sowing, weeding, harvesting etc from its permissible work list. A legislative amendment to include farm work on private lands into the list of permissible work for agricultural activities would be a huge boost for the productivity of the rural agrarian community. The Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme, one of the first employment guarantee schemes in the country, had included that aspect

in its legal tenets by standardising labour payments to farmers working on their own lands, based on measurable farm output.

The proposal is not to address how involved a government should be in supporting the agrarian economy, but instead to question what is a better way to apply the large amounts of government funds entering the rural economy.

Since the 1990s, the Centre and state governments have been using capital subsidy tools like loan waivers to bring relief to distressed farmers without accomplishing much, except electoral and political gains. The cumulative debt relief announced by Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Maharashtra is 60% higher than the budget of NREGS in 2017-18. The design of large injections of public funds for India's agriculture economy needs to be informed with rigorous evaluations on what is effective for higher farm productivity. A wage subsidy for farm labour is one modification that needs an evaluation, to generate evidence to inform how the MGNREGA policy generates employment when there is need, but without stress to farm production.

Delhi man, 21, arrested after repeated rape of 18-month-old girl



(News Agencies)An 18-month-old girl in the Capital spent her Children's Day in Intensive Care Unit after being repeatedly raped by her father's colleague at her residence in south Delhi's Shahpur Jat. The toddler was raped on Monday afternoon

and found bleeding heavily by her mother who had left her with a family friend to babysit. The accused has been produced before a Delhi court on Tuesday, and sent to 14 days in judicial custody. The girl continued to remain in critical condition on Tuesday evening. Within three

hours of receiving the complaint the accused Santosh Rai, 21, was arrested. Rai works as a security guard in Shahpur Jat. According to Delhi police, the toddler's father had asked Rai to take care of her as he had to go out for work. As per the complaint, the girl's parents had left her in the custody of the accused for the last two weeks while they went off to work. The incident came to light when the toddler's mother returned home at around 2.40pm and found her daughter crying. She told police that she noticed that her daughter was bleeding.

At that time, Rai was also present in the house. The mother then shut Rai in a room and informed her husband who

immediately returned home.'By the time her husband could return, she made a call to the police control room. 'When police reached the spot, the child was rushed to Safdarjung hospital. Medical examination confirmed sexual assault,' a police officer said. 'Rai was produced before a Delhi court

on Tuesday, which sent him to 14 days in judicial custody. A case was registered against him under POCSO Act at Hauz Khas police station,' said Chinmoy Biswal, additional DCP (South). The victim's family's ordeal continued at Safdarjung hospital.



The greatest threat to PSU banks are fintech disruptions

Nimble, digitally-focused, non-banks are entering the business, and many of them are about to eat the public sector's future lunch



(Insider Bureau) Despite a willingness to embrace bold and disruptive economic ideas, Narendra Modi has shown a strange reluctance to get the government out of businesses in which the private sector can do just as well. This is unusual for a man whose most famous quote before he became prime minister was that the government has no business to be in business, a statement he repeated even after becoming PM when he went to the US in September-October 2014. The chances are economic forces and circumstances will force him to chase privatisation sooner than later.

Of late we have seen moves to privatise Air India, the government's white elephant that flies on the wings of taxpayer money. But the sector that really needs a huge political investment in selling the idea of privatisation is banking. The government is in a double-or-quits situation, where public sector banks need

massive doses of capital to stay alive and start lending again. If this does not happen soon, there is little possibility of a broad-based economic revival before 2019.

According to rating agency ICRA, just five public sector banks – State Bank, Bank of Baroda, Bank of India, Punjab National Bank and IDBI Bank – account for 47% of the bad loans in the system, which are now in the region of Rs 9-10 lakh crore. Barring IDBI Bank, the remaining four are probably too-big-to-fail banks.

Even on a conservative reckoning, the government will have to pump in Rs 50,000 crore in new capital into public sector banks over the next one year, but money is the lesser of the two problems staring at the government. The more, and bigger, threat to public sector banking is the massive disruptions looming ahead. The future direction of banking is technology, technology and

more technology. Nimble, digitally-focused, non-banks are entering the business, and many of them are about to eat the public sector's future lunch.

Bad loans are almost yesterday's problem compared to the threat of digital banks which will be very cost-competitive with low branch and manpower overheads, with an instant ability to penetrate large customer segments quickly. This is not something the public sector banks do not know, and the new State Bank Chairman, Rajnish Kumar, went public with his concerns about the threats from new fintech companies recently.

Fintech is a broad term used by many types of financial services firms that may or may not be banks, but which can quickly scale up and attract lots of customers using digital technology. At one end, we have new types of banks – payments banks like Airtel and Paytm, for example – who are trying to convert hundreds of millions of existing customers acquired in other businesses (like e-wallets or mobile telephony) to

becoming banking customers. At another end, we have entirely new animals with quaint names like Faircent, Wishfin and Loantap who are trying to do an Uber or Ola in financial services. The new fintech companies will use technology and data-mining techniques to bring lenders and borrowers on the same platform to allow the easy raising of money without banks even coming into the picture. Consider how disruptive that can be of traditional banking business models if lenders and borrowers no longer need banks to intermediate. The fintech companies are minnows now, but agile private banks can see and react more aggressively to these future threats than the public sector behemoths. Thus, while HDFC Bank is said to have cut 11,000 jobs to digitise its operations more, the State Bank has been merging its subsidiaries and adding staff to itself. While IndusInd Bank has recently taken over Bharat Financial Inclusion, a microfinance lender, and Axis Bank has bought itself an e-

wallet company in Freecharge, our leaden-footed public sector banks are still focused on how to get the bad loans out of their books. It will take them at least the next few quarters to fix this problem, but long after the bad loans are gone, they will be stuck with the usual public sector handicaps of high branch and employee overheads, and a low capacity to respond to competition and disruption. At least 10-15 public sector banks will either need mergers or euthanasia in the medium term.

If the smaller banks are not privatised quickly, they will become albatrosses around the taxpayer's neck. The various banking nationalisation acts must be repealed, and this needs Congress or opposition cooperation to get these bills through the Rajya Sabha. Time is running out for public sector banks, and government needs to reach out to the opposition to prevent banks from becoming burdens. Whether that will happen with state assembly elections being the priority right now is another matter.

How Americans became vulnerable to Russian disinformation

Russia's intervention in the 2016 US presidential election was historic, but it was also symptomatic of bigger challenges facing Americans. A population that does not fully understand its own democracy should concern not only civics teachers, but national security experts as well. The US didn't need Putin to deliver that lesson. "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free," Thomas Jefferson warned, "it expects what never was and never will be."

(Insider Bureau) As the US marks the first anniversary of President Donald Trump's election, the question of how Trump won still commands attention, with Russia's role moving increasingly to center stage. Each new revelation in the investigation of Russia's meddling in the 2016 campaign brings the vulnerability of the US democratic process into sharper focus. Last week, Congress unveiled legislation that would force social media giants to disclose who buys online advertising, thereby closing a loophole that Russia exploited during the election. But making amends through technical fixes and public promises to be better corporate citizens will solve only the most publicised problem.

The tougher challenge will be strengthening institutions that are vital to a democracy – specifically, civics education and local journalism. Until gains are made in these areas, the threat to America's democratic process will grow, resurfacing every time the country votes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's intelligence operatives chose wisely in mounting their social media attack. Facebook hosts nearly 80% of all mobile social media traffic, while Google accounts for close to 90% of all online-search-related advertising. By inundating these two platforms with automated messages from bogus user accounts, Russia was able to stoke discord along economic, racial, and political lines.

Moreover, they did it cheaply. According to one analysis, with only modest ad purchases on Facebook, Russian agents gained access to a goldmine of online advertising data – such as Facebook's customer targeting software – which enabled the "sharing" of Russia's fake news hundreds of millions of times. At one point during this clandestine assault, an estimated 400,000 bots – software applications that run automated scripts – sent millions of fictitious political messages, which in turn generated some 20% of all Twitter traffic during the final month of the campaign.

It is bad enough that the technology world's marquee names were not prepared to parry foreign meddling in



America's most important election. But the social media giants' persistent denial of responsibility for the volume of distorted and false information delivered as news, even as Russia's role has grown clearer, is more troubling.

Strip away the technobabble about better algorithms, more transparency, and commitment to truth, and Silicon Valley's "fixes" dodge a simple fact: Its technologies are not designed to sort truth from falsehoods, check accuracy, or correct mistakes. Just the opposite: They are built to maximise clicks, shares, and "likes."

Despite pushing to displace traditional news outlets as the world's information platforms, social media's moguls appear

content to ignore journalism's fundamental values, processes, and goals. It is this irresponsibility that co-sponsors of the recent advertising transparency bill are seeking to address.

Still, Russia's success in targeting American voters with bogus news could not have succeeded were it not for the second problem: A poorly educated electorate susceptible to manipulation. The erosion of civics education in schools, the shuttering of local newspapers – and the consequent decline in the public's understanding of issues and the political process – conspire to create fertile ground for the sowing of disinformation.

(Contd on page 23)

Japan to relax visa regime for Indians from January 1

(Insider Bureau) NEW DELHI: Japan will simplify its visa rules from January 1 next year for Indians and issue multiple-entry-visa for short-term stay, a move which is expected to benefit tourists and business persons as well as repeat visitors, the Japanese embassy said on Tuesday. The relaxed visa regime will not only have simplification of visa application documents but also expansion of scope of eligible applicants, it said. Under the simplification of visa application documents, the applicant's employment certificate and explanation letter stating the reason will be

exempted in cases of applying for multiple-entry-visa. "In principle, applicants will be able to apply for multiple-entry-visa with only three documents — passport visa application form (with photo) and papers to prove the financial capability (for tourism purpose)/ documents to prove the applicants affiliation to certain enterprises (for business purpose)," said the Japanese foreign ministry release, which was issued by the embassy here. The changes will also have expansion of scope of eligible applicants.

Multiple entry visas with a validity of 5 years maximum and stay of 90 days maximum will be issued to applicants who have travel records to Japan twice or more in the last one year, it said, adding in this case, the eligible applicants may submit only their passports and visa application form. "The relaxations are expected to help further development of people-to-people exchanges between Japan and India by enhancing convenience for Indian tourists and business persons as well as repeat visitors," the release said. In February, Japan had



introduced the simplification of visa application procedure for single entry visa for Indian students to promote visit of Indian youths to Japan. Under this relaxation, Indian students, graduate students and

alumni of universities in India may submit certificate of student status or graduation instead of the document to prove financial capability in the application for single entry visa for short-term stay.

Your parents' lifestyles can determine your health even as an adult



health.

Second, health is transmitted from parents to children.

Beyond the obvious common genetic inheritance across generations, parents' health also has an impact on their children's health by imparting habits and lifestyles.

Our research found that if a parent smoked when their child was young, the child was much more likely to smoke as an adult, in all countries except Sweden.

A person's obesity in later life was more frequent when their parents were smokers and had a problem with alcohol when the child was ten in Germany, Greece and Austria.

In Denmark, obesity was only associated with parents having a problem with alcohol; in France it was associated with

parents being smokers.

We also investigated the odds that a person would smoke – using national survey data from France – based on their parents' smoking and social background.

We found that if a person's father smoked when they were 12, they were almost twice as likely to smoke than people whose father did not smoke at all, controlling for education level and parents' job.

If mothers smoked, it increased the risk of their daughters smoking – but not their sons.

The risk that a person would smoke was also higher among those whose father was a manual worker, and who had experienced periods of poverty during their childhood



(Insider Bureau) We don't choose our parents, their jobs or their health. And we don't have a say in whether or not they smoke, nor in what they ate when we were children. However, our recent study found that these things strongly determine our own lifestyles and health, even into adulthood.

For our study – involving 21,000 participants aged 50 and above from 13 European countries – we compared the participants' current smoking,

obesity and lack of exercise with their parents' job, longevity, smoking status and alcohol problems during the participants' childhoods.

We showed that parents' characteristics when participants were ten years old explained between 31 percent and 78 percent of their adult health, with a European average at 50 percent.

The countries where health was largely determined by parents' characteristics were Czech Republic (78 percent),

Germany (72 percent), Spain (70 percent), France (66 percent) and Austria (64 percent).

However, parental factors mattered less in Belgium (31 percent), the Netherlands (34 percent) and Switzerland (41 percent).

The importance of parents' characteristics for their children's health is explained by two mechanisms.

First, poor living conditions in childhood lead to poverty in adulthood – which affects



Indian American Voters Victory Forum

(An Inclusion, education & advocacy organization for concerned voters)

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Chairman & Fording Member

Phone : 917.6512.3158 Email : sharnjitusa@gmail.com



if you don't
VOTE
then don't
COMPLAIN

Suspected illegal migrants' huts set on fire in Assam

(Insider Bureau) DIBRUGARH: A cluster of huts belonging to suspected illegal migrants was set ablaze by unidentified people at Mulan Chapori in Margherita on Sunday. Police detained four pro-talks United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) leaders, including the outfit's former military commander Jiten Dutta, in Tinsukia district in connection with the arson. Around 15 huts had recently come up on a sandbar on the Burhidehing river, a major tributary of the Brahmaputra

river, locals said. With rumours going around that the settlers were illegal migrants, Jiten had urged police and the district administration to identify those who had constructed the huts in the tribal belt area. He had also threatened to forcefully evict the settlers if the authorities failed to take action within 10 days. At 5.30am on Sunday, Jiten — accompanied by other Ulfa leaders, cadres and hundreds of locals — set out for the settlement. Anticipating trouble,

a huge police contingent — led by Tinsukia SP Mugdhajyoti Mahanta — set up a barricade 2km ahead of the site. When the group approached the spot, police prevented them from proceeding further. There was a sharp exchange between police and the Ulfa leaders. While this confrontation was going on, miscreants torched six huts at the settlement. However, since the settlers had fled the site anticipating violence,

there was no loss of life. Four pro-talks Ulfa leaders — Jiten Dutta, Antu Choudang, Biren Phukan and Nabadip Bora — have been detained. They are being held at the Ledo police outpost," SP Mahanta said. Another person, identified as Colonel Gogoi, was also arrested for his role in the arson. Ulfa supporters staged a road blockade on the national highway at Ledo, demanding their release. The leaders were released later, after which the blockade was lifted.



No VIP treatment for Ram Rahim, surprise checks every week: DGP

(Insider Bureau) CHANDIGARH: Seeking to dismiss claims that Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh was being given special treatment, Haryana's DGP (Prisons) K P Singh said judicial officers conduct surprise checks in Rohtak's Sunaria jail where the rape-convicted sect head is lodged. "Almost every week a judicial officer conducts a surprise check and inspects the barrack where Ram Rahim Singh is lodged... There is no prior notice to jail authorities. Nothing adverse has been found so far. Any claims of special treatment are baseless and far from the truth," the officer said. He was asked to comment on the claims made by an out-on-bail inmate who alleged that the Dera chief was being extended special treatment in the prison. The inmate claimed that no one had seen Ram Rahim Singh in the jail complex though other prisoners see food packed in a tiffin box being ferried to one of the barracks each day. DGP Singh, however, maintained that Ram Rahim Singh was being treated like any other ordinary prisoner. Singh said that because of security considerations, Ram Rahim Singh, sentenced for raping two disciples, was lodged in a barrack with only 5-6 prisoners with a track record of "good conduct".

"On security grounds, only a few inmates have been kept in Ram Rahim Singh's barrack. Only those prisoners whom we

thought can be put there from the security point of view, only they have access to his barrack," he said.

Besides, jail staff with an impeccable record have been put on duty near his barrack, he said. "Due to security reasons other prisoners are not allowed to come in his contact. As far as claims that a tiffin box goes out daily, let me clarify that the distance from the jail kitchen to Ram Rahim's barrack within the jail complex is about 1 km. So, the tiffin box is put on an e-rickshaw from the kitchen to the barrack," he said.

For security reasons, one of our

officer tastes his (Ram Rahim's) food and those of other prisoners lodged in his barrack everyday before it is cleared for their consumption. He (Ram Rahim) is being provided the same food as other prisoners," he said.

The 50-year-old self-styled godman, who boasted of millions of followers, is lodged in Rohtak's Sunaria jail for raping two disciples. A special CBI court had sentenced him to 20 years in jail, 10 years each in the two rape cases, on August 28. And the 'pita-ji', as his followers used to call him, then became prisoner number 1997.

By opposing Hindutva, opposition is objecting to development: UP CM Yogi Adityanath

(Insider Bureau) LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday attacked opposition parties, saying by opposing "Hindutva" they are objecting to "development" and "bhartiya" (Indianness).

Hindutva is not synonymous with any religion or community but with nationalism, he told reporters before embarking on a visit to Ayodhya to campaign for the upcoming local body elections.

"Hindutva and development are complementary to each other ... Those who are opposing Hindutva are in fact opposing development and bhartiya," Adityanath said.

Asked about opposition parties linking his speeches and work to Hindutva and not development, he said, "It is ridiculous that the forces which have encouraged dynastic politics and

casteism in the name of secularism and indulged in corruption are talking like this."

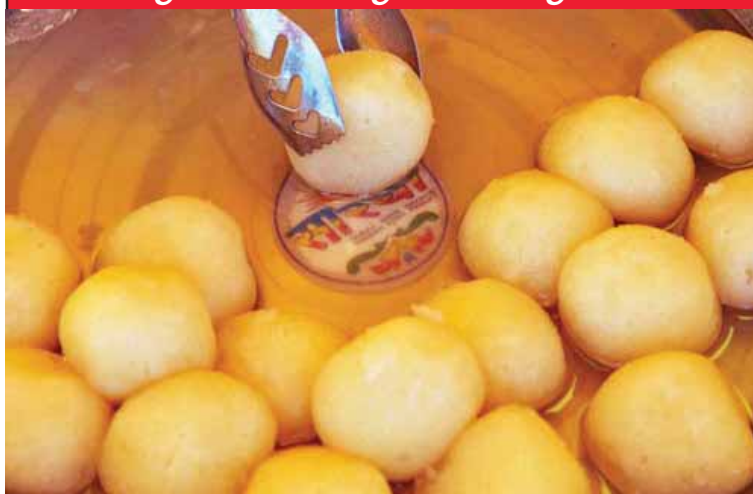
On reports about former UP CM Akhilesh Yadav's move to install a grand statue of Lord Krishna in Etawah, he said the SP chief also "wants to install a statue of Duryodhan (the chief antagonist of Mahabharata) and this shows where he wants to take the state".

"They are not able to get rid of their 'sanskar' and have said they will install a statue of Duryodhan," he said.

Adityanath said there is no doubt that the BJP will form government in 2019 and "it will perform well in the urban local bodies elections too".

Asked if he will celebrate Holi in Mathura, the chief minister said: "Why not." "It will be an honour for us if the places identified with festivals are restored to their traditional grandeur,"

West Bengal wins 'rossogolla war' against Odisha



(Insider Bureau) NEW DELHI: West Bengal today won its two-year-long 'rossogolla war' against Odisha. Both states claimed to have invented the dessert, but it was West Bengal that obtained the 'Geographical Indications of Goods Registration' (GI) tag for it. That officially makes the rossogollaa Bengali invention. The GI tag ensures that only registered and authorised users make use of a product name. The 'rossogolla war' began in September 2015, after the Odisha government began celebrating 'Rossogolla Diwas', or 'Rossogolla Day', on the day that a festival called 'Ulto Ratha' falls. Odisha said that according to legend, the goddess Lakshmi is annoyed when her husband Jagannatha leaves her alone at home during the 'ratha yatra'. She then refuses to allow him in. To appease her, he presents her a bowl of rossogollas. This is the origin of the dessert, said Odisha. Not possible, said West Bengal. It claimed that rossogolla is made of curdled milk which has always been considered 'impure' and was never an offering to the gods. So, there's no way it was offered by Jagannatha to Lakshmi.



he said. He alleged Ayodhya was neglected by previous governments and the people were afraid of going there. The BJP government has undertaken the task to develop it through projects worth Rs 137 crore, he said.



Hundreds of protesters march down Whitehall after a British-born Sikh man

(Insider Bureau) Hundreds of Sikh protesters marched outside the Foreign Office in Whitehall in support of a British Sikh who they claim has been abducted and 'tortured' by police in India.

The crowd demanded the release of Jagtar Singh, 30, who was detained by police in Punjab over allegedly financing weapons used in the murder of several officials in the Indian state.

They say the Government has ignored the plight of Scotsman Mr Singh, known to friends and family as Jaggi, who they claim has been and subjected to 'body separation techniques' and electric shocks.

Supporters also fear Mr Singh may die in police custody unless the government acts soon.

A huge crowd brought the road outside the Foreign Office to a standstill, holding placards emblazoned with Mr Singh's face and the slogan 'Free Jaggi Now'.

Many wore branded hoodies and several of the banners showed the Brit's face over a Scottish flag.

His brother Gurpreet Singh Johat, 32, who travelled to London from Scotland, told protesters the government has failed to act on the case and accused it of stripping Sikhs of their rights.

He said: 'They have got a duty to a British citizen. He's British by birth, he's not British by acquired nationality.'

Using a megaphone to address the crowd, he added: 'He has lived 30 years of his life in this country, if this is happening to him what rights do we have as British citizens?'

Mr Singh, from Dumbarton, Scotland, was 'abducted by plain clothes Indian policemen' while out shopping with his newly-wed wife, according to the Sikh Federation.

He has not been charged with a crime, but officials in India said he is being held over allegedly funding weapons used to kill Hindu leaders in Punjab.

Mr Johat said the British government 'have been useless, incompetent' since his brother was detained on November 4.

He told how he learned his brother was taken by Indian police after his sister law phoned him from the country.

He said: 'She phoned saying this has happened, we didn't know what it was, all police were saying is come this place.'

Mr Johat flew to India the following day but said his family members who were also in the country, including his sister-in-law and aunt, were soon forced into hiding over fears they would also be detained.

He said his brother was in India after recently getting married and was snatched from the street while out with his wife.

Mr Johat was also forced to leave on November 9 over fears for his own safety.

He said police had tried to seize his brother's passport but Mr Johat was able to hand it in to British officials in India.

He said: 'I didn't want to leave, I didn't have a choice.'

Protesters blocked the road outside the Foreign Office chanting 'Free Jaggi Now' 'What do we want? Justice' and 'FCO, do your job'. Mr Singh's brother told the crowd: 'This is happening in India, a country that says there are very powerful.'

'Today they have shown what powers they have. They have put the British government to their



knees. He was subject to third degree torture.

'When you think about torture it hurts you. When somebody turns around and says I have been electrocuted to my ears, my nipples and my private parts, you can only imagine what he went through.'

Sikh Federation advisor Jasveer Singh added: 'For us it's shocking that such an act can happen, such a dereliction of international law in that somebody, a British citizen, can be abducted.'

'He's been held in an undisclosed location, it's only

now we know where he is. His solicitors are only given an hour visitation. 'His family, his wife and relatives, in India have been harassed and intimidated and now we know he was tortured. 'It's third degree torture of a British citizen - we're not living in the dark ages.'

'The British government were informed on November 4 and until today they still have not met with him. 'He's been stripped of his rights, dignity and humanity. Not only have they broken him, they have broken the whole family and the community.'

Nassau County Commission on Human Rights

EDWARD P. MANGANO
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Dr. BOBBY KALOTEE
COMMISSION CHAIRMAN

RODNEY H. MCRAE
INTERIM EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

Friday,
December 1, 2017

WORLD AIDS DAY



Co-Sponsored by

Nassau Alumnae Chapter
Delta Sigma Theta
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Hempstead Branch - NAACP

NuHealth
Nassau University
Medical Center

6:00 - 9:00 PM

Theodore Roosevelt Executive
and Legislative Building
1550 Franklin Ave
Mineola, NY 11501



The red ribbon is the universal symbol of awareness and support for those living with HIV, it aims to spread the message that HIV victims enjoy equal status in society as well as enhance the social protection mechanisms for people living with HIV.

NASSAU COUNTY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
240 OLD COUNTRY ROAD, SUITE 606, MINEOLA, NY 11501
TEL: (516) 571-3662 • FAX: (516) 571-1422
nassaucountyny.gov/414/Human-Rights-Commission



No threat to Vijay Mallya's life in jail: India to tell UK court

to a British court that fugitive liquor baron Vijay Mallya will not face any threat to his life in jail, if extradited in connection with a Rs 9,000 crore loan default, officials said.

The Indian government's assurance will be conveyed to the Westminster Magistrates' Court in London through the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) which is arguing the extradition case of Mallya on behalf of the Indian government.

The decision has been taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba and attended by representatives of various authorities, including the Ministry of External Affairs yesterday, a home ministry official said.

The meeting deliberated on the response to be filed in the UK court, rejecting Mallya's apprehension that he will not be safe in Indian jail if sent back to India to face trial in the Rs 9,000 crore Kingfisher Airlines loan default cases.

With a detailed assessment of security cover given to prisoners in Mumbai's Arthur Road jail and Delhi's Tihar jail, the Indian government will tell the UK court that when extradited, Mallya may be lodged in Arthur Road jail where he will get full security cover as an undertrial prisoner, the official said.

The Westminster Magistrates' Court will start hearing the extradition proceedings from December 4

and a reply by India would be filed in the next few days.

The British court will be told that prisoners, both under trial and convicted, get full security cover.

It is the duty of the State to ensure security and Mallya's apprehension about threat is "misleading", India will tell the court. By making such allegations, Mallya is trying to save himself from getting extradited to India to face the trial in a case of cheating a consortium of banks, another official said. Mallya has been in the UK since March 2016 and was arrested by the Scotland Yard on an extradition warrant on April 18. However, he was soon granted bail by the court.

If the judge rules in favour of extradition at the end of the trial, the UK home secretary must order Mallya's extradition within two months of the appropriate day.

However, the case can go through a series of appeals before arriving at a conclusion.

India and the UK have an extradition treaty, signed in 1992, but so far only one extradition has taken place under the arrangement. Samirbhai Vinubhai Patel was sent to India last October to face trial in connection with his alleged involvement in the post-Godhra riots of 2002.

However, unlike Mallya, he had submitted to the extradition order without legal challenge.

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: India will soon convey

Supreme Court rejects plea for SIT probe into alleged judges bribery case



(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a plea seeking an SIT probe into an alleged case of bribery in the name of judges, saying it was "wholly scandalous".

It also deprecated the conduct of advocates in filing petitions aimed at bringing disrepute to the institution without any rhyme or reason.

The apex court said the plea was filed to "create ripples" in the judiciary by making allegations against the Chief Justice of India and an attempt was also made for "forum hunting" by seeking recusal of one of the judge's of the bench, which tantamounts to contempt of court.

The top court expressed displeasure while rejecting the petition filed by advocate Kamini Jaiswal, saying senior advocate Shanti Bhushan and lawyer Prashant Bhushan had made "unfounded allegations" against the system and the CJI.

Criticising the attempt to seek recusal of one of the judges in the matter, a bench of Justices R K Agrawal, Arun

Mishra and AM Khanwilkar said, "we find that it is another attempt to bring the system in disrepute. Casting of unwarranted aspersions tantamounts to seriously jeopardising the independence of the judiciary".

The petition had claimed that allegations of bribery were levelled for securing settlement of cases relating to medical colleges in which a retired Orissa High Court judge, Ishrat Masroor Quddusi, is one of the accused.

The top court held that filing of such petitions and the zest with which it was pursued, has brought the entire system in the last few days to unrest.

"An effort was made to create ripples in this Court; serious and unwanted shadow of doubt has been created for no good reason whatsoever by way of filing the petition which was wholly scandalous and ought not to have been filed in such a method and manner. It is against the settled proposition of law," the bench said.

It said "unfounded allegations" ought not to have been made against the system and that too against the CJI, and

such pleas should not have been preferred in case the majesty of the judicial system has to survive.

The apex court said the submission of the petitioner that CJI Dipak Misra should not hear the matter or should not assign it on administrative side, was "highly improper" and "it was an attempt of choosing a forum by submitting that Chief Justice of India should not have formed the bench".

"Yet another disturbing feature which aggravates the situation is that prayer has been made that one of us, Justice A M Khanwilkar, should recuse from the matter. This is nothing but another attempt of forum hunting which cannot be permitted," the bench said in its 38-page order.

The petitioner had sought recusal of Justice Khanwilkar contending that he had decided the matter of medical college with respect to which an FIR was lodged by the CBI.

"In our opinion, rather it is the duty of the bench to take up such matters firmly; such unscrupulous allegations and insinuations cannot be allowed to be hurled by oral prayer made on behalf of the petitioner for recusal," it said.

"We cannot fall prey to such unscrupulous devices adopted by the litigants so as to choose the benches, as that is a real threat to the very existence of the system itself and it would be denigrated in case we succumb to such pressure tactics," it said.

The bench said such things cannot be ignored as it would be the "saddest day" for the Indian judicial system to ignore such aspects on unfounded allegations and materials.

It said another petition, raising similar issue, was mentioned before a bench

headed by Justice J Chelameswar despite the fact that a similar plea was already listed for hearing before a bench headed by Justice A K Sikri.

"The submissions so raised, and averments so made, in this petition, and the entire scenario created by filing of two successive petitions, are really disturbing. The entire judicial system has been unnecessarily brought into disrepute for no good cause whatsoever," it said.

Terming the facts of the case as "disturbing", the bench said the pleas filed by Jaiswal and the Commission for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR), were identically worded.

The bench also said that even though there were allegations against the CJI, it was he who has to assign the case to a bench as considered appropriate by him.

Referring to a constitution bench judgement of 1991, the court made it clear that there was no question of registering any FIR against any sitting judge. "Thus the instant petitions ... are a misconceived venture inasmuch as the petition wrongly pre-supposes that investigation involves higher judiciary, that is this court's functionaries, are under the scanner in the aforesaid case; that independence of judiciary cannot be left at the mercy of the CBI or that of the police is a red herring," it said. It said the petitioner's contentions about the constitution bench's decision that the CJI was the master of roster should be ignored, was "wholly unfounded", as even the order passed by the bench headed by Justice J Chelameswar had said that the matter be referred to a bench of five senior-most judges of the apex court that would include the CJI too.

16 years after Indira Vikas Patra was scrubbed, 'outstanding' amount worth over Rs 800 crore revealed

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: Nearly 16 years after the 'small-savings' scheme Indira Vikas Patra was discontinued, over Rs 800 crore is lying unclaimed with the government as "outstanding" amount, an RTI query to the department of posts has revealed.

In answer to an RTI plea by Gurgaon resident Aseem Takyar, the department of posts said while information on the "unclaimed amount" was not available with the department, it had information on the progressive net balance as on March 31, 2017. This amount was Rs

884.75 crore.

Indira Vikas Patra was launched in 1986, offering a high interest rate.

It offered certificates in the denominations of Rs 200, Rs 500, Rs 1,000 and Rs 5,000 at half their face value, which the investors could buy and later exchange for the face value of the document after a specified period. The advantage with the scheme was that the depositor got the money in lump sum along with accumulated interests (for all the years) at the end of maturity period. This scheme was discontinued in 2001

amid criticism that it was aiding in parking of black money anonymously. Interestingly though, the annual statement provided by the department of posts on the state-wise net balance shows that around Rs 4.8 crore had been debited from the balance sheet in the financial year 2016-17. While the opening net balance was Rs 889.54 crore, the closing net balance was Rs 884.75 crore.

According to Takyar, the large amount of unclaimed money implied that there were many people who hadn't

asked for their money for one reason or another. Of course, it is not the only savings instrument where a huge amount of money is lying unclaimed. According to the data available, more than Rs 27,000 crore was lying unclaimed in the Employees' Provident Fund in 2015. Last year, the government had announced that funds lying unclaimed for more than seven years with the Employees' Provident Fund, Public Provident Fund and other small-savings schemes would be utilised to finance a senior citizens' welfare fund.

Punjab CM accuses Kejriwal of politicizing stubble burning issue, rejects request for meeting



(News Agencies) CHANDIGARH: Chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh yet again snubbed his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal after the latter reiterated his wish to meet him to discuss the issue of air pollution resulting from stubble burning. Amarinder said he failed to understand why the Delhi chief minister was trying to force his hand, knowing well that any such discussion would be meaningless and futile. "The problems faced by Delhi and Punjab on this count

were completely divergent, with no meeting ground, said Captain Amarinder, adding that, unlike Punjab, the Delhi problem was the result mainly of urban pollution caused by mismanaged transportation and unplanned industrial development. Instead of focusing all his attention on resolving these issues, Kejriwal wants to waste time holding useless discussions. I do not have the same luxury of time," he said. Kejriwal had earlier today tweeted, "@capt_amarinder Sir, I am coming to Chandigarh on Wed to meet Haryana CM. Would be grateful if u cud spare sometime to meet me. It is in collective interest." This follows Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar writing to Kejriwal, accepting his desire to meet him. Kejriwal's tendency to indulge in petty street politics was well-known, said the Punjab chief minister. Amarinder said that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader was evidently trying to divert public attention

from his own government's failure in Delhi to check the problem of pollution as exposed by the response of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to the ill-conceived odd-even scheme. "In any case, the Delhi chief minister has often been accused of leaving the national capital in the midst of a crisis and travelling to other places when his presence has been needed the most back home, Captain Amarinder pointed out, adding that the present instance was a case in point. As far as stubble burning is concerned, it is not a political issue like Kejriwal was projecting it to be, he said. It is an economic problem crying for economic solutions which the central government alone is in a position to provide, said Amarinder, adding that he would continue to pursue with the Centre the matter of compensatory allowance for farmers to enable them to opt for alternatives to the dangerous practice of stubble burning.

It's put off again: Rahul Gandhi not becoming Congress chief yet

(News Agencies) New Delhi : Contrary to earlier claims from Congress leaders, party vicepresident Rahul Gandhi's elevation to replace mother Sonia Gandhi as party chief seems to have been put off.

With no indication when a meeting of the Congress Working Committee will take place, Congress leaders said election of the party chief may now happen after the Gujarat elections. The likely delay flies in the face of repeated hints from Congress leaders over the last couple of months that Rahul was set to take over the reins just after Diwali and ahead of the Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh assembly polls+. These claims were politically significant as they meant that the Gandhi scion would campaign in Gujarat as Congress chief. Amid constant delay, the last window for elevation was said to be the time between the polling in Himachal Pradesh on November 9 and November 19, which is the birth anniversary of party icon Indira Gandhi.

However, Sonia is said to be in Goa on a brief "trip" while Rahul last week embarked on another three-day campaign in Gujarat which will end on Tuesday. Many argue that convening a CWC meeting now to approve the election schedule and the time taken by the election process would push Rahul's elevation to right in the middle of the Gujarat campaign. senior leader said the elevation amid a tight campaign schedule in Gujarat would create an "unnecessary distraction" for party workers, a reason why it may now happen later. However, some leaders still feel the elevation may happen between now and Gujarat polling. They argue the timeline is too tight for the party having committed to the Election Commission that organisational polls would be held by year-end. With results of Himachal and Gujarat on December 18, it will be left with the option of holding internal polls for the top post within the remaining 12 days of December. It would be particularly tricky if the party turns in a bad performance in the polls.

Madhya Pradesh govt opens sand mines for all



(News Agencies) BHOPAL: In a major decision, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, BJP government on Tuesday threw open the sand mining sector for the common man to "generate employment opportunities and provide sand at cheaper rates". The decision was taken at the cabinet meeting on Tuesday to formulate a new sand mining policy whereby any individual who requires the commodity would be able to dig sand at will and take it away. "No one will stop any truck carrying sand within the state," said minister for water resources and government spokesman Narottam Mishra. All that a person needs to do is go to a government portal (website will be announced shortly),

pick a sand mine (usually a river ghat) of his choice and pay a royalty at the rate of Rs 125 per cubic metre.

The person will get an e-pass, which he will show to the sarpanch of the village from where he will dig the sand. And thereafter, no one can stop him.

There are a total 1,266 sand mines in the state, of which 445 have been auctioned. This new policy will be implemented in the remaining 821 mines. "If need be, then even auctioned mines will be brought under the new policy," Narottam Mishra said.

Illegal sand mining has been a major political dispute between the ruling BJP and opposition Congress over the past decade. As Congress raised questions on the sudden decision to empower sarpanch of villages with the authority of verifying sand mining passes, minister for mining Rajendra Shukla explained, "The e-pass for mining sand will be valid for four hours within which time the applicant has to take sand and move away. The sarpanch will check and verify the pass to ensure that royalty has been paid to the government."

In 2016-17, the state earned Rs 240 crore royalty from sand mining which

in 2017-18 is expected to fall to Rs 200 crore. According to mining minister Rajendra Shukla, the government has a lucrative offer of Rs 20 crore royalty for Rs 1 crore worth of sand.

"But revenue is not the concern of the government now. Of the Rs 125 per cubic metre royalty earned under new policy-- Rs 50 will go to the village panchayat, another Rs 50 diverted to the district collector's fund and remaining Rs 25 will be for administrative expenses of the state Mining Corporation," Rajendra Shukla said. "Mining Corporation's job will be to implement mining plans, give consent to operate and together with the district collectorate get environmental clearance," the minister added.

To keep a check on illegal sand mining activities, the Mining Corporation will conduct a survey two months before the monsoons to see how much sand remains and then soon after the rainy season to measure how much more sand has collected. "It is in the monsoons when collects in the rivers," Shukla quipped. "A GPS tracking system will be installed in every mine to keep count of the number of vehicles that plied sand.

South China Sea dispute: India supports rules-based security architecture, says PM Modi



"We have individually strived very hard to fight terrorism and violent extremism. It is time that we jointly address this challenge by intensifying cooperation in this crucial area," he said.

The 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) is considered one of the most influential groupings in the region and India and several other countries including the US, China, Japan and Australia are its dialogue partners.

In a clear reference to the South China Sea (SCS) dispute which has cast a shadow over the summit talks, PM Modi said India will continue its support to the ASEAN for establishing a rules-based security architecture in the region.

"India assures the Asean of its steady support towards achieving a rules-based regional security architecture that best attests to the region's interests and its

peaceful development," he said. China's aggressive military build up in the SCS was one of the focus areas of the deliberations at the Asean summit.

China claims sovereignty over all of SCS, a huge source of hydrocarbons. However, several Asean member countries including Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei have counter claims. India has been supporting freedom of navigation and access to resources in the SCS in accordance with principles of international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Asean have been pushing for a legally binding code of conduct for all stakeholders in the SCS but Beijing has been opposing such a framework asserting that it will resolve the dispute with respective countries under bilateral mechanism.

Prime Minister Modi also talked about shared values and common destiny between India and Asean, adding 1.25 billion people in India were eagerly waiting to receive leaders of the ASEAN at the Republic Day celebrations in January next year.

He said India is also holding a commemorative summit with Asean on January 25 next year. The ties between India and Asean have been on an upswing.

The Asean region along with India together comprises combined population of 1.85 billion people, which is one fourth of the global population and their combined GDP has been estimated at over \$3.8 trillion.

Investment from Asean to India has been over \$70 billion in the last 17 years accounting for more than 17 per cent of India's total FDI. India's investment in Asean during the same period has been more than \$40 billion. Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Brunei are the members of the Asean. Prime Minister Modi also participated at a meeting of leaders of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

The RCEP, comprising 10-member Asean bloc and six other countries — India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, is engaged in negotiations for a free trade pact.

(News Agencies) MANILA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday called for intensifying regional cooperation to effectively deal with terrorism and pitched for a rules-based security architecture for the resource-rich region, seen as a veiled reference to China's expansionist posturing in the Indo-Pacific. In an address at the Asean-India summit+ here, PM Modi identified terrorism and extremism as the major challenge facing the region and said time has come for the countries of the region to join hands to collectively deal with it.

US Congress decides against including action against LeT as condition for funds to Pakistan: Pak media



that removes the differences between the Senate's version and that of the House of Representatives - focusses entirely on the Haqqani Network. According to Dawn, this joint version of the bill says that \$350 million of a total \$700 million in reimbursements won't be given to Pakistan unless it takes significant action against the Haqqani Network's safe havens, and its fundraising and recruiting efforts. The US Secretary of Defence must issue a certificate to the Congressional Defence Committees saying that Pakistan is taking this action. India's success in shaming LeT In September, for the first time, BRICS countries slammed Pakistan without naming it, as they "deplored" terror attacks in member countries and the "violence caused" by Pakistan-based terror outfits. The 'BRICS Xiamen Declaration' specifically named LeT and JeM+, as well as the Haqqani Network, the Taliban, ISIL/DAISH and Al-Qaida.

In addition, the BRICS members also called for greater efficiency in designation of terrorists. This was particularly significant, because it is BRICS member China that has been blocking designating Jaish-e-Muhammad chief Masood Azhar a terrorist.

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: It appears the US Congress has decided against including action against terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) as a condition to reimburse Pakistan for its cooperation in the 'war on terror', reported Pakistan's Dawn newspaper. A new version of the US bill authorising such payments to Pakistan from the Coalition Support Fund, retains action against the Haqqani Network but has no mention of the LeT, Dawn said citing the 'National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA 2018) for Fiscal Year 2018 Conference Report.' The Haqqani Network, a deadly offshoot of the Taliban, focusses its terror activities on Afghanistan. The LeT - which is banned - carries out its terror acts in India; its founder Hafiz Saeed masterminded the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. The decision to exclude the LeT may come as a disappointment to India, which this year has had success in getting global forums to name and shame India-focussed Pakistan-based terror groups like the LeT and the Jaish-e-Muhammad. In September, the version of NDAA 2018 passed by the US Senate said Pakistan must show "it has taken steps to demonstrate its commitment to prevent the Haqqani Network and Lashkar-e-Taiba from using any Pakistan territory as a haven and for fundraising and recruiting efforts", reported PTI in September. Now, the 'conference' version of the NDAA 2018 - which is the bill

PM Modi conveys India's commitment to work with East Asia



(News Agencies) MANILA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday conveyed India's total support and commitment to work with the East Asia Summit, an influential bloc, to address political, security and trade related issues in the region. In an address at the annual gathering of leaders of the grouping here, the Prime Minister said India was looking forward to a greater role by the East Asia Summit in the region. "We look forward to the East Asia Summit attaining greater salience in years to come. I reiterate my commitment to work with you to address the political, security and economic issues of the region," he said. The East Asia Summit is the premier forum in the Asia-

Pacific region. Since its inception in 2005, it has played a significant role in the strategic, geopolitical and economic evolution of East Asia. Apart from the 10 ASEAN Member states, East Asia Summit includes India, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, United States and Russia. Modi said ASEAN began in times of a great global divide, but today, it is shining as a beacon of hope. He described ASEAN as a symbol of peace and prosperity. The leaders are expected to discuss issues relating to terrorism, situation in Afghanistan and North Korea's nuclear and missile tests among others.

China plans to reduce satellite launch prices, ISRO says we can do that too



China's state-owned entity that develops and manufactures spacecraft is ready to provide cheaper and faster rocket launches, with costs in the range of \$5,000 per kilogram .

(News Agencies) The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is fully prepared to compete in the global race to cut the cost of launching satellites, the agency said on Tuesday after China announced plans to bring down prices to \$5,000 a kilogram . Satellite launch prices usually aren't made public and a Chinese official made the rare comments on plans to reduce costs at an aerospace forum in Beijing this month. Reacting to China's plans to drastically reduce launch costs, an ISRO official said not only is the Indian agency "competitive", but it is working to reduce the cost of access to space through new technology. The effort is to bring down launch costs to "one-tenth" of what they are now, the official said. Yang Baohua from the China Aerospace Science and Technological Corporation (CASC), a state-owned entity that develops and manufactures spacecraft and launch vehicles, said the company is "ready to provide cheaper and faster low-earth orbit rocket launches". The People's Daily, the Communist Party's mouthpiece, quoted Yang as saying: "The price could be as

low as \$5,000 per kilogram and the pre-launch preparation will only need a week."

Will ISRO, known for its cost-effective model, be able to compete?

"We are quite competitive," ISRO spokesperson Deviprasad Karnik said, responding to China's plans. "As of now, India is quite competitive with regard to the prevailing global launch cost. So far, India has launched 209 satellites of nano, micro, mini, and standard size for 28 countries. There is a global move to reduce the cost of access to space to the tune of one-tenth of the prevailing one. India is also working towards that," he said. The cost of launching satellites using rockets of the United Launch Alliance - a joint venture of Lockheed Martin and Boeing that provides services to the US government - ranges between \$14,000 a kilogram to \$20,000 a kilogram. However, private launch service provider SpaceX plans to bring down costs to about \$2,500 a kilogram with its partially reusable rockets.

ISRO's low prices and its high success rate have attracted foreign clients. While a satellite launch on

Arianespace's rocket costs about \$100 million after subsidies, SpaceX will charge \$60 million. In contrast, Isro charged an average \$3 million per satellite between 2013 and 2015.

Antrix Corp Ltd, ISRO's fledgling commercial arm, is widely seen as a serious contender in the \$335.5 billion global space industry, even though the launch market only brings in about 20% of the agency's revenues. But ISRO is better placed to capitalise on the new market for launching small satellites, including those which will be used for space-based, high-speed internet connections. Karnik outlined some of the steps being taken by ISRO to bring down costs. "India is developing reusable launch vehicles. We have successfully tested a mission - RLV-TD and Scranjet -TD - in that direction, with TD standing for technology demonstrator. Efforts are on for the full-fledged development of such systems," he said. He declined to share details of how much India charges but the fact that India has done launches for 28 countries, including Germany, Canada, The Netherlands and Israel, points

toward the sharply competitive model put in place by ISRO.

Karnik said the Chinese effort to reduce costs in the sector was part of a global trend. "As I have already mentioned, the global move is to reduce the cost of access to space to the tune of one-tenth of the prevailing (prices)," he said. With six manned space missions, China's space programme is more advanced. But that hasn't stopped Beijing from closely tracking the commercial aspect of India's space programme and attempting to make its own cheaper. "India's successful launch of a record-breaking 104 satellites into orbit could serve as a wake-up call for China's commercial space industry and there are a number of lessons for the country to learn," the nationalistic Global Times tabloid wrote after ISRO broke the Russian record for launching the highest number of satellites at one go in February. "Competition with India for commercial space launches may be inevitable, and the most urgent action needed for China to expand its market share is to reduce the cost of putting satellites into orbit," it said.

Every day 290 children in India are victims of crime

(News Agencies) As India celebrates Children's Day, crime records show kids still face a slew of daily threats ranging from trafficking, sexual violence, forced labour and early marriage. Every day as many as 290 children become victims of crime, data shows. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, offences against kids have increased fourfold in just

two years. 'Children are among the most vulnerable groups in the country. Be it victims of sexual assault, kidnapping or murder, children below 12 years have a higher abuse rate as they are more vulnerable,' said a police official. A total of 89,423 crimes against children were reported in 2014. The number went up to 94,172 in 2015 and 1,05,785 the

next year. Between 2014 and 2016, the number of crimes recorded under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) went up from 8,904 to 35,980 - a fourfold jump. Also, there has been a steep rise in sexual offences against children, the data says. Delhi Police crime record reveals that every week more than two children report sexual

assault. From October 31, as many as 73 cases under POCSO Act have been registered in various police stations in the Capital. As per the recent survey conducted by humanitarian aid organisation, World Vision India revealed this May that one in every two children is a victim of sexual abuse. The survey was conducted across 26 states of the country. 'This is true and sad.

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) has been doing a 'satyagrah' for the last eight days. We want the Centre and the state governments to draft a law ensuring that within six months the perpetrator should be given death penalty. 'Recently a one-and-a-half-year-old and a seven-year-old girl were raped in the Capital,' said Swati Maliwal, chairperson of DCW.



As we complete 15 Years

“Words cannot express the monumental journey that each and every person reading this has crossed through. The South Asian Insider has completed 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
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'They are desperate and have nothing'

Rohingya crisis 'is good for business' boasts pimp who stalks refugee camps looking for starving women, girls and boys to recruit

(News Agencies) Sex traffickers are targeting young women and children in the sprawling Rohingya refugee camps where more than 600,000 people now live after fleeing the violence in Myanmar.

The 'pimps' roam the camps looking for easy prey, and once a woman or child has been convinced to enter prostitution, they are sold to brothels in nearby cities for £5.

They round up young widows with children who have lost their husbands during the fighting in Myanmar, or look for families with unmarried girls which they cannot afford a dowry for.

Human trafficking, especially luring women and children into the sex trade is on the rise in the huge refugee camps in Bangladesh.

One pimp, a man in his mid-20s revealed the atrocities committed against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar has been 'good for business'.

He said he and other pimps target women but that there is a demand for young children of both sexes.

'People who end up alone, maybe who have had family

members killed or who are in a very bad condition,' he told Sky News.

'They come into the business because the aid from the Government doesn't last for a long time and to earn money they go into prostitution.

For women who have two or three children they need money for their children's medicine, or the people who are poor and have four or five girls in the house, maybe they may have got one girl married and couldn't afford to get the other girls married because they need a large



Buddhist mobs since August 25 in response to coordinated Rohingya insurgent attacks on security posts. Six out of ten of the new arrivals in the Bangladesh camps are children, providing a fertile hunting ground for traffickers looking for young girls to recruit as prostitutes, or as household staff for Bangladeshi families. Thousands of children have, at some point, been separated from their families amid the chaos. 'It is a major, major risk,' said Jean Lieby, head of child protection at the U.N. children's agency (UNICEF) in Bangladesh. 'Young girls might enter into this type of

trafficking and then end up in one of the big cities.' Kateryna Ardanyan, an anti-trafficking specialist with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), said exploitation had become 'normalised' in the camps. 'Human traffickers usually adapt faster to the situation than any other response mechanism can. It's very important we try to do prevention.' Ardanyan said.

'Funding dedicated to protecting Rohingya men, women and children from exploitation and abuse is urgently needed.'

dowry.' The women and children lured into the sex trade are transported from the refugee camps to nearby cities such as Cox's Bazar and Chittagong, but some are then taken abroad to India and Pakistan. He said the women are taken in groups of ten to 15, and that he is paid £5 for each girl.

The United Nations said this week that they are aware of trafficking networks already in existence in southern Bangladesh's sprawling camps.

Some 618,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh after systematic killings, arson and rape by troops and ethnic Rakhine

U.N. says Prime Minister Modi's Swachh Bharat drive has failed to end 'manual scavenging'



(News Agencies) The Indian government has rejected criticism of its ambitious sanitation programme by a United Nations official who said lower-caste communities had their rights violated by being left to clean toilets built in a

individual and public toilets.

But activists say the campaign has failed to end the practice of manual scavenging, or clearing faeces by hand, and has even exacerbated the problem because the toilets are not connected to water supplies or the sewage system.

The U.N. special rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation confirmed those observations.

The emphasis on building toilets should not 'contribute to violating fundamental rights of others, such as those engaged in manual scavenging, or ethnic minorities and people living in remote rural areas,' Léo Heller said in a statement on Friday.

'Eliminating open defecation is not only about building latrines, but requires adequate methods for behaviour change, and sufficient water supply is a prerequisite for the sustainable and safe use of adequate, low-cost latrines.'

The Indian government dismissed Heller's 'sweeping judgements' as 'either factually incorrect, based on incomplete information, or grossly misrepresent (ing) the situation'.

The campaign fully conforms to human rights principles established by the U.N., it said in a statement, adding that it 'strongly rejected his mostly baseless assertions'.

Despite laws to end the

practice of manual scavenging, a euphemism for clearing faeces from dry toilets and open drains by hand, it is prevalent in many Indian states.

The occupation has long been thrust upon the Dalit community, the lowest ranked in India's caste system.

At least 90 percent of the country's estimated one million manual scavengers are women, who clean public and private dry latrines with barely any safety equipment.

While caste-based discrimination was banned in 1955, Dalit communities continue to face threats of violence if they try to give up manual scavenging.

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Medical college bribe case

CJI decides who hears a case even if facing allegation, Supreme Court underlines

Medical college bribe case: The Supreme Court said “though it is true that no one is above the law, no person in the higher echelons is above the law, but at the same time, it is the duty of both the Bar and the Bench to protect the dignity of the entire judicial



(News Agencies) Moving to end a raging courtroom debate over a plea seeking an SIT probe into alleged judicial corruption in a case involving a blacklisted Lucknow medical college, the Supreme Court dismissed the petition Tuesday, saying the CBI FIR in the matter was not against any sitting judge of the court.

The controversy, a three-judge bench ruled, also settled the legal position that the Chief Justice of India (CJI) alone had the power to assign a case to a bench even if there were allegations against him in the matter.

Dismissing a plea by advocate Kamini Jaiswal, the bench of Justices R K Agrawal, Arun Mishra and A M Khanwilkar said: “There is an averment made in the writ petition that it is against the highest judicial functionaries; that FIR has been recorded. We do not find reflection of any name of the judge of this court in the FIR.”

Stating that the petition itself was forum-shopping and its contents amounted to contempt of court, the bench, however, said it was not initiating contempt proceedings against petitioner Jaiswal or her counsel Prashant Bhushan.

The court said the two petitions filed to seek an SIT probe — the second petition was by NGO Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR) — had brought the “entire judicial system... unnecessarily... into disrepute for no good cause or reason whatsoever”. It wondered how the petitioners had “presumed that there is an FIR lodged against any

public functionary”.

The bench said “instant petitions as filed are a misconceived venture inasmuch, as the petitioner wrongly supposes that investigation involves higher judiciary, i.e. this court’s functionaries are under the scanner in the aforesaid case... There cannot be any FIR even against the Civil Judge/Munsif without permission of the Chief Justice of the concerned court; and rightly, FIR has not been registered against any sitting judge. Otherwise, on unfounded allegations, any honest judge to the core, can be defamed, and reputation can be jeopardised. No judge can be held responsible for what may or has happened in the corridors or for ‘who purports to sell them’.”

The judgment said it was “highly improper” for the petitioner to allege conflict of interest in the petition and say that CJI Dipak Misra should not hear it on the judicial side or allocate the matter on the administrative side. “It appears that in order to achieve this end, the particular request has been made by filing successive petitions a day after the other and prayer was made to avoid the Hon’ble CJI to exercise the power for allocation of cases which was clearly an attempt at forum hunting and has to be deprecated in the strongest possible words.” Making such “scandalous remarks also tantamount to interfering with administration of justice...”, it said.

The petition had demanded an SIT probe into case in which

former Orissa High Court judge I M Quddusi was arrested along with five others on September 21 by the CBI. The case, according to the CBI, was one of alleged corruption involving the Lucknow-based Prasad Institute of Medical Sciences which was trying to get relief from courts after being placed on a government blacklist.

The CBI claimed Quddusi and others were involved in deals to try and secure favourable orders from courts. In its FIR, the CBI alleged that promoters of the medical college, one of 46 barred by the government from admitting students for two years, had approached Quddusi who had promised relief from courts, including the Supreme Court, with bribes to influential people. During the hearing, the petitioners had demanded that a three-judge bench, headed by CJI Dipak Misra, had in the past dealt with the case of the Prasad Education Trust which runs the Lucknow college and, therefore, propriety demanded that he stay away from taking any judicial or administrative decision related to the matter.

“As a matter of fact, this controversy has been set at rest that even when there is an allegation against Hon’ble CJI, it is he, who has to assign the case to a Bench, as considered appropriate by him”, the three-judge bench said.

This was laid down in the order of the five-judge Constitution Bench on November 10 and in the 1996 matter Dr D C Saxena vs Chief Justice of India wherein it was held that “it was the duty of the Chief Justice to assign judicial

work to brother judges” and that “by doing so, he did not become a judge of his own cause”. Tuesday’s order recalled that in the Saxena case, it was held: “It is contempt to imply that the Chief Justice would assign it to a bench which would not pass an order adverse to him.” The three-judge bench rejected the contention that it should not have heard the case since a judicial order, by a two-judge bench of Justices J Chelameswar and S Abdul Nazeer, had directed that it be heard by a Constitution Bench of five most senior judges of the court. It said the November 10 order by a five-judge Constitution Bench that the CJI was the master of the roster and he alone had the power to constitute benches and allocate work had “rendered ineffective” any decision to the contrary. The three judges also dismissed arguments of senior advocate Shanti Bhushan that Article 142 gave the court of Justice Chelameswar the power to come out with the November 9 order and Article 144 of the Constitution made it binding even on the CJI. “As a matter of fact, there is no question of applicability of Article 144 or 142 in this case. In case they are attracted, it is the decision of the Constitution Bench that is binding on all...”, the judges said.

On the submission that “unprecedented hearing” was done on November 10 by the five-judge Constitution Bench, the three-judge bench said “it was a fait accompli and circumstances compelled hearing on November 10 as on Thursday (November 9)

in this case, order was passed bypassing the power of the Hon’ble CJI”. There was no working day after November 10 and as such the question whether cases can be allotted by judicial order had to be settled that day itself, it said. “The cases cannot be assigned by judicial order. Such judicial order is to be simply ignored as it is not open to the judges to decide which matter is to be heard by whom as laid down by Constitution Bench,” the three judges said. The order also “deprecated” the contention of the petitioners that Justice Khanwilkar, who was on the three-judge bench, must recuse from the case since he too was part of the bench that heard the Prasad Trust matter in the past. “There is no reasonable basis for this prayer...”, it said, adding this also “tantamount to contempt of court and forum shopping”.

The court said “though it is true that no one is above the law, no person in the higher echelons is above the law, but at the same time, it is the duty of both the Bar and the Bench to protect the dignity of the entire judicial system”. “We find that filing of such petitions and the zest, with which it is perused, has brought the entire system in the last few days to unrest. An effort was made to create ripples in this court; serious and unwanted shadow of doubt has been created for no good reason by way of filing the petitions which was wholly scandalous and ought not to have been filed in such a method and manner,” the three-judge bench said.

Amazon India doubles its war chest to \$4.74 billion



(News Agencies) Bengaluru: Amazon India has nearly doubled its authorized capital to Rs31,000 crore (\$4.74 billion), nearly matching its mammoth capital commitment of \$5 billion made in June last year.

Not only does it improve the prospect of further investment commitments from founder and chief executive Jeff Bezos, it also sets the stage for an all-out, high-stakes war against local e-commerce rival Flipkart.

According to a separate filing on Tuesday, Amazon also infused Rs2,900 crore (\$443 million) into its Indian marketplace arm, Amazon Seller Services, making it at least the third such capital infusion this year.

According to regulatory filings with the Registrar of Companies on Tuesday, Amazon India has already issued paid up capital of Rs17,839 crore (\$2.7 billion) towards Amazon Seller Services—far exceeding its initial commitment of \$2 billion in July 2014.

The latest move by Amazon

Amazon has nearly doubled its authorized capital to \$4.74 billion, nearly matching its India investment commitment of \$5 billion made in June 2016

indicates that the American e-commerce giant is more than willing to not just match, but outweigh the war chest commandeered by Flipkart in the battle for what is widely seen as the world's last major consumer Internet market.

“As India's largest and fastest growing e-commerce player, and with a long-term commitment to make e-commerce a habit for Indian customers, we continue to invest in the necessary technology and infrastructure to grow the entire ecosystem. We are delighted and humbled by the trust from our customers, to lead in India on things that matter to our customers in over four years of our business, while continuing to launch innovative India-first initiatives as well as completely new offerings like Echo, Prime and Prime Video,” an Amazon India spokeswoman said in response to a query from Mint.

Flipkart, which is also extremely well-funded and counts among its investors Japan's SoftBank Group Corp., China's Tencent Holdings Ltd, South Africa's Naspers Ltd and Accel Partners, has already raised nearly \$3 billion in two separate tranches this year and has declared that it has at

least \$4 billion of cash reserves. Flipkart did not immediately respond an email seeking comment.

Amazon's willingness to pump in more funds is especially significant at this point, because it comes after a bruising festive season battle against Flipkart where it lost out to the Indian online retailer, as Mint reported on 27 September. The company also lags Flipkart in terms of overall gross sales.

To be sure, Amazon has disputed the claim that it lags Flipkart and has asserted that its methodology of calculating gross sales could be different from that deployed by Flipkart. Gross sales refers to the value of goods sold on a platform, not net revenue.

In recent interviews, Amazon India chief Amit Agarwal has indicated that the online retailer has a multi-year, multi-billion dollar view as far as India is concerned.

“I think our investments are still squarely in the same three areas—how do we add more selection, how do we make it easier for sellers to offer more competitive prices and how do we build for faster deliveries... A layer on top of that is that we keep investing in Prime—so video,

AMAZON INDIA VS FLIPKART

The latest move by Amazon indicates that the American e-commerce giant is more than willing to not just match, but outweigh the war chest commanded by local rival Flipkart, which has declared that it has at least \$4 billion of cash reserves.

	Total funds raised/capital committed so far	Funds raised/ additional capital authorized this year	Total capital spent till date	Estimated cash reserves
Amazon India	\$5 billion	Rs15,000 crore (\$2.3 billion)	Over \$2 billion	Over \$2.5 billion (remaining amount from its earlier commitment of \$5 billion)
Flipkart	\$6 billion	\$2.8 billion	Over \$2 billion	\$4 billion

music, Echo, etc., are our key areas,” Agarwal said in an interview on 27 October.

Mint reported in April 2016 that Amazon India, launched in June 2013, had doubled its authorized capital to roughly about Rs16,000 crore. Since then, Amazon has invested at least four times in its Indian marketplace—a Rs2,010 crore infusion in December last year, a Rs1,680 crore investment in June, a further Rs1,620 crore infusion in October and the latest Rs2,900 crore investment. The pace at which Amazon has raised the stakes in India to fight Flipkart has been staggering. In July 2014, Amazon's authorized capital was only Rs1,500 crore, when Bezos

made the initial \$2 billion commitment. In June 2016, Amazon committed a further \$3 billion. Amazon has nearly caught up with Flipkart in its four years of operations in India. “As of now, the battle between Flipkart and Amazon is too close to call. I don't think is Flipkart is going to lose out in the near future, unless they make big strategic blunders, which is highly unlikely,” said Harminder Sahni, founder and managing director of consulting firm Wazir Advisors. “Having said that, Amazon should be happy with what they've achieved so far. They have already realized that India is not a winner-takes-all market and that there's enough room for two big players to compete.”

RCom defaults on dollar debt in test for Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

Reliance Communications failed to pay a coupon on its 2020 dollar notes before the expiry of a grace period on Monday

(News Agencies) Hong Kong: The first default on US dollar bonds by an Indian company in 15 months may become a closely watched test case for how international creditors will fare under the country's new bankruptcy laws. Reliance Communications Ltd (RCom), the telecom operator controlled by billionaire Anil Ambani, failed to pay a coupon on its 2020 dollar notes before the expiry of a grace period on Monday, according to a person familiar with the matter. It's India's most high-profile default on international debt since the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was passed in May 2016. The company's shares and bonds fell to record lows.

The new bankruptcy rules are designed to speed up debt restructuring at a time when the banking system is plagued by the highest stressed-asset ratio in 17

years. An improved resolution process would not only encourage foreign money managers to increase holdings of Indian distressed debt, it could also help reduce borrowing costs for companies.

“If the restructuring is done properly and fairly, this could set a good precedent and global creditors will take comfort that debt restructuring can have a satisfactory outcome in India,” said Dhiraj Bajaj, Singapore-based portfolio manager at Lombard Odier. “Historically, some debt restructurings have taken years and proved to be very costly for creditors from a time, capital and opportunity cost perspective.”

While it's unclear whether offshore creditors will utilize the new rules, Ernst & Young (EY) says bondholders can prompt firms to come up with a debt



resolution plan or face liquidation if they fail to do so after 270 days. There hasn't yet been a case where this process was initiated by offshore bondholders, according to EY.

Under the old rules, “the only option available to bondholders was liquidation”, said Abizer Diwanji, partner and national leader, financial services, EY. “And that took forever.”

The defaulted 2020 notes issued by RCom, once the country's second-largest wireless

operator, were trading at a record low of about 35.6 cents on the dollar as of 4.03pm in Hong Kong. The company's shares slid 3.3% to an all-time low of Rs11.55.

RCom had reiterated on Saturday that a standstill period for interest and principal repayments continues until December 2018. The company has proposed a debt resolution plan to lenders that includes lenders converting part of their debt to equity. A filing under

the insolvency code would force the firm to come up with a debt resolution plan for all its creditors.

Under the new rules, anyone who has debt due of more than Rs1 lakh can file for taking the company to a corporate insolvency process, according to EY's Diwanji. The threat of bondholders taking action in courts could prompt a firm to begin talks with bond investors, according to Gunjan Shah, partner at law firm Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas and Co. While the problems at RCom highlight the dangers of investing in Indian companies with high debt, a successful restructuring process could ultimately make the country more attractive for investors. “Recent defaults in the Indian offshore dollar market are going to be interesting test cases for the evolving Indian regulatory system,” said Manjesh Verma, Hong Kong-based head of Asia credit specialists at Citigroup. Bloomberg

People for sale

Tripoli, Libya (CNN) — “Eight hundred,” says the auctioneer. “900 ... 1,000 ... 1,100 ...” Sold. For 1,200 Libyan dinars — the equivalent of \$800.

Not a used car, a piece of land, or an item of furniture. Not “merchandise” at all, but two human beings.

One of the unidentified men being sold in the grainy cell phone video obtained by CNN is Nigerian. He appears to be in his twenties and is wearing a pale shirt and sweatpants.

He has been offered up for sale as one of a group of “big strong boys for farm work,” according to the auctioneer, who remains

off camera. Only his hand — resting proprietorially on the man’s shoulder — is visible in the brief clip.

After seeing footage of this slave auction, CNN worked to verify its authenticity and traveled to Libya to investigate further.

Carrying concealed cameras into a property outside the capital of Tripoli last month, we witness a dozen people go “under the hammer” in the space of six or seven minutes.

“Does anybody need a digger? This is a digger, a big strong man, he’ll dig,” the salesman, dressed in camouflage gear, says. “What am I bid, what am I

bid?”

Buyers raise their hands as the price rises, “500, 550, 600, 650 ...” Within minutes it is all over and the men, utterly resigned to their fate, are being handed over to their new “masters.”

Each year, tens of thousands of people pour across Libya’s borders. They’re refugees fleeing conflict or economic opportunities in Europe.

Most have sold everything they own to finance the journey through Libya to the coast and the gateway to the Mediterranean.

But a recent clampdown by the Libyan coastguard means fewer boats are making it out to sea, leaving the smugglers with a backlog of would-be passengers

on their hands.

So the smugglers become masters, the migrants and refugees become slaves.

The evidence filmed by CNN has now been handed over to the Libyan authorities, who have promised to launch an investigation.

First Lieutenant Naser Hazam of the government’s Anti-Illegal Immigration Agency in Tripoli told CNN that although he had not witnessed a slave auction, he acknowledged that organized gangs are operating smuggling rings in the country.

“They fill a boat with 100 people, those people may or may not make it,” Hazam says. “(The smuggler) does not care as long as he gets the money, and the migrant may get to Europe or die

at sea.”

“The situation is dire,” Mohammed Abdiker, the director of operation and emergencies for the International Organization for Migration, said in a statement after returning from Tripoli in April. “Some reports are truly horrifying and the latest reports of ‘slave markets’ for migrants can be added to a long list of outrages.”

The auctions take place in a seemingly normal town in Libya filled with people leading regular lives. Children play in the street; people go to work, talk to friends and cook dinners for their families. But inside the slave auctions it’s like we’ve stepped back in time. The only thing missing is the shackles around the migrants’ wrists and ankles.

Bikram yoga guru seeks bankruptcy in wake of harassment claims

on Thursday in the Central District of California that its liabilities were worth up to \$50 million. It listed assets of up to \$1 million, suggesting that its largest creditors - women who are owed money for court judgments awarded against Choudhury - will not be paid in full. They include Miki Jaffa Bodden, former head of legal and international affairs at Choudhury’s yoga school who has an \$8 million claim stemming from a wrongful dismissal case that included sexual harassment claims. Bodden alleged that Choudhury repeatedly subjected her to vulgar sexual gestures and offensive comments about women and minority groups. “Birkram Choudhury created a hyper-sexualized,

offensive and degrading environment for women by, among other things, demanding that female staffers brush his hair and give him massages,” Bodden said in her 2013 lawsuit. She also accused him of pressuring her to cover up sexual harassment of women, and in a separate lawsuit filed this year, of fraudulently transferring assets such as luxury cars including a Ferrari and a Bentley to avoid paying judgments against him. A warrant for Choudhury’s arrest was issued in May. Petra Starke, who moved from her job as lawyer in the Obama White House to chief executive of the Bikram Yoga College of India in 2013, complained of wrongful dismissal, sexually

inappropriate conduct and “racist tirades.” She has a \$5.1 million claim. Sharon Clerkin, who sued claiming she was fired for becoming pregnant, is owed \$3.6 million. The bankruptcy filing, which included affiliates Bikram Inc and Bikram Yoga College of India, follows heightened social awareness over sexual misconduct in the wake of allegations against movie producer Harvey Weinstein, actor Kevin Spacey and comedian Louis C.K. Restructuring experts have mentioned Chapter 11 bankruptcy as an option for the Weinstein Company to avoid mounting legal claims against its founder, Harvey Weinstein, over alleged sexual crimes.

US hate crimes rise for second year, Hindus and Sikhs among those targeted

Religion-related hate crimes came second, with Jews and Muslims targeted the most. Another 1,076 hate crimes were linked to with sexual orientation, while other incidents were linked to disability, gender and gender-identity. Hate crimes against Muslims — a group targeted by Trump — saw a steep rise, increasing to 307 incidents in 2016 from 257 in 2015 and 154 in 2014. The Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC), an organization that tracks hate-crime and discrimination, said the rise in hate crimes “coincides with Donald Trump’s racist, xenophobic campaign and its immediate aftermath”.

The FBI and the justice department did not make that connection. “The department of justice is committed to ensuring that individuals can live without fear of being a victim of violent crime based on who they are, what they believe, or how they worship,” attorney general Jeff Sessions said in a statement.

The SPLC contends that the actual number of hate crimes may be much higher. In a report, they said that the “actual number of hate crimes may be as high as 250,000 – more than 40 times the 6,121 incidents that the FBI reports for 2016. But the FBI figures do serve as a rough barometer for what’s occurring in our country”.

Brexit is getting messy and the UK is facing a political crisis

The EU has given Britain a deadline of two weeks to agree on a figure for the so-called “divorce bill” — the money May’s government must pay into the EU budget as part of its membership obligations.

As negotiations with the EU reach the crunch point, May’s government is finding itself in ever-deeper trouble over its attempts to push through the legislation that will allow leaving the EU to happen at all.

Lawmakers from all parties have put forward hundreds of amendments to the EU Withdrawal Bill, and debates and votes are expected to take a month. At the heart of the problem is that the lack of progress in talks between the UK and EU — which must conclude by summer next year — has meant that May’s government has recently had to concede a new alarming reality: that the differences are so great that no deal may be done at all.

This prospect has made the many UK legislators who always feared that Brexit would be damaging to the UK even more fearful. Now they are worried that the UK will be stepping into a complete unknown with no transition deal or trade deal planned with the EU. But hardline pro-Brexiteers still want the UK to leave, whatever the short-term damage. This is why the content of the Withdrawal Bill is now being even more strongly contested than it was just a few weeks ago. On Monday night, May’s minister in charge of Britain’s exit from the European

Union, David Davis, attempted to buy off MPs worried about a “cliff edge” hard-Brexit — under which the UK would leave all the EU institutions such as the single market, customs union and laws — by promising they would be able to vote on the final deal agreed with Brussels on Brexit, including the cost to Britain of leaving and its post-Brexit trading rights. Yet the move backfired, because it presented lawmakers with only two choices: backing whatever deal had been reached even if it was a bad one in their eyes, or voting against it, which would mean crashing out with no deal at all. What a majority of MPs — including the Opposition Labour Party — want is to be able to ask to return to the negotiating table, or ask for a pause, or in some cases just agree to stay in the EU, rather than be forced to choose between what they see as two undesirable outcomes. Many MPs — including some Conservatives — are also furious that the government is trying to enshrine into law the actual precise leaving date and time: 11 p.m. GMT on March 29, 2019. This was put forward by May to appease hardline Brexiteers who want reassurance that Brexit will definitely happen, but the moderates worry that it ties the UK’s hands and commits it to exit and the prospect of high tariffs trade under World Trade Organization rules if no deal is reached. The parliamentary difficulties for May are not unconnected to the problems inside her Cabinet. Both sides

are hardening their positions because they know she is a weak Prime Minister. Having lost her government majority in parliament, the sense of crisis caused by the resignation of Michael Fallon as defence secretary and Priti Patel as international development secretary has made it look like May is not in control of events. Her de facto deputy prime minister, Damian Green, is being investigated over allegations of sexual harassment and pornography. The foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, is under pressure for incorrectly stating that a British-Iranian citizen, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe — who has been jailed by Tehran — was in the country training journalists when she was on holiday with her family. For his part, the foreign secretary has tried to bolster his chances of survival by rekindling an alliance with another Cabinet minister — a move which could be interpreted as the first strike against May’s premiership. Johnson and Environment Secretary Michael Gove, who together led the successful campaign for Britain to leave the EU last year, fell out over their own leadership ambitions. But a memo leaked to a newspaper over the weekend revealed they are now working together to put pressure on the Prime Minister to deliver Brexit, fearing that Britain is heading toward a no-deal scenario without preparations being made for businesses, or even that Brexit may not happen at all.

As govt drags feet over air pollution, experts say situation is public health crisis

said on Tuesday, "Delhi and NCR have now moved from emergency level to severe category of PM levels." This week he suggested in an interview that the Bhopal Gas tragedy qualified as an emergency but not the smog in Delhi. "...there is no need to spread panic among the people," was the minister's advice. According to a recent report in the Lancet medical journal, air pollution claimed almost 1.81 million lives in India in 2015.

"All of north India cannot breathe," Sunita Narain, director general of Centre for Science and Environment, said of the current pollution episode. Data from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) shows that for most cities in UP, Punjab and Haryana air pollution levels in terms of PM2.5

were comparable to Delhi last week. The data is skewed because Delhi has more monitoring stations than all three states combined.

Though the whole of north India was reeling under the impact of air pollution, the environment ministry continued to focus narrowly on Delhi-NCR.

"The biggest problem is that the centre doesn't consider this a crisis," Ritwick Dutta, an environmental lawyer, said.

The Centre's dismissal of air pollution-related health statistics has been widely criticised. "Unfortunately the official reaction seems to be to discredit the numbers. That's not something we should spend too much time on," former environment minister, Jairam Ramesh, said

Tuesday in Delhi at a conference on the impact of air pollution.

Even as the centre grapples for an appropriate response, the blame game among three states over who is responsible for the poor air quality in the NCR continued.

In response to calls for the Centre's intervention, the ministry called meetings inviting high-level officials from the affected states. However, instead of directing them to implement measures to tackle pollution, it has been requesting them to do their job. According to Dutta under Section 5 of the Environmental Protection Act, the Centre has the power to issue directions. "The Centre has to play a direct role here," he said.

Environmentalists also called for the ministry to implement the emission

norms they have laid down, penalise defaulters, especially the industry, ensure that agencies like the pollution control boards are properly staff and implement orders of the apex green tribunal in the country.

"The Centre has to move on two things: move towards clean fuel, and that cannot be done by the states. It includes banning the imports of petcoke, severely restrict the use of furnace oil across the country and making sure gas is available for industry and power plants," Narain said.

"We have two doctors are in charge of the environment ministry yet this is what is happening," Dutta said of Harsh Vardhan and Mahesh Sharma, who recently became the junior minister in the environment ministry.

History and anger around Padmavati's purity and Alauddin Khilji's sweet dreams

Rani Padmini's 'jauhar' elevated her to goddess-hood. Though she is not worshipped in a ritualistic sense, the former Queen of Chittorgarh now resides in the sanctum sanctorum of the holy. Hers was the first of three major Sakas performed in Chittorgarh. The last of which happened during the siege launched by Akbar. It is for this reason that Akbar is not regarded as 'The Great' in Rajasthan.

Much like Tipu Sultan and the Kodavas of Coorg, there is a local version of story telling that prevails in the public sphere in Rajasthan. And the local tale overrides all other versions.

In the case of Rani Padmini it is the particularly hated Alauddin Khilji who is considered evil personified. Therefore any image of Khilji in the proximity of Rani Padmini is taken as an affront, to community, to identity, and to a self perception built up over centuries of

story re-telling. A marsiya recounting the martyrdom of Imam Hussain in Karbala finds its local counterpart in Rajasthan, in pristine purity.

From her birthplace in Pugal, the romantically beautiful desert oasis in Bikaner district, to her immolation in Chittorgarh Rani Padmini remains a venerated figure. And when that venerated figure is shown near a despised marauding invader a short fuse can light the ire of a community that carries a feeling of being wronged, repeatedly. Thus the demand to review scenes from the movie before its release. In an India where faith prevails over logic, and precedence shows the way, this demand is sure to gain further traction. After all India is not a post-enlightenment post-reformation society where faith has receded from public space. In fact the partition of India has only added to the awe of faith. And

coupled with the awe in which Rani Padmini is regarded it is a combustible concoction with an easily available trigger to set things afire.

On 15 October 1988 a Joint Secretary in the then Prime Minister's Office announced that India would not allow the screening of Last Temptation of Christ, becoming the first country to do so. It remained one of the few countries to ban that famous movie. Months before that India has also banned Satanic Verses, the book that led to its author Salman Rushdie banishment from public view. In August of that year a play in Malayalam, based on Last Temptation of Christ, was also banned. This precedence encourages more to demand the same, but in this case the current call is only to delete scenes that are deemed offensive to the sacred memory of Rani Padmini. Since matters of faith continue to occupy the elevated sphere, the hallowed space,

it is only logical to cool matters with a compromise. Alauddin Khilji's sweet dreams are no reason to incite a people for whom memory and history are intertwined with identity, and a diminishing sense of self. A combustible situation is best handled by hosing down that which is deemed to be offensive.

The almost 100,000 people who came to express that demand in Gandhinagar were motivated by the ire of their clansmen in Rajasthan. It is for the first time that such a community gathering has happened in Gujarat, testament to the veneration accorded to Rani Padmini. Fear that her standing is being encroached by freedom to film, and depict, is incendiary to a community fiercely protective of its heroes, gods, and also those who are deemed goddesses. Rani Padmini is the first amongst them, and should be allowed to remain untouched.

How Americans became vulnerable to Russian disinformation

Consider the evidence: In 2005, an American Bar Association survey found that 50% of Americans could not correctly identify the country's three branches of government. By the time the Annenberg Center for Public Policy asked the same question in 2015, the percentage of such respondents had grown to two thirds, and a staggering 32% could not name a single branch. This slippage is apparently age-dependent; a 2016 study of Americans with university degrees found that those over 65 years of age know far more about how their government works than those under 34.

There is a clear correlation between democratic illiteracy and a de-emphasis on civics, government, and history education in schools. In 2006, for example, a national study that tracks student performance in

various subjects found that only a quarter of America's 12th graders were proficient in civics. A decade later, that percentage had sunk below 25%.

Not surprisingly, overall educational quality and access to basic civics coursework have also suffered in recent years. In 2011, a think tank that ranks the 50 states on the rigour of their high schools' US history courses gave 28 states failing grades. A 2016 survey of 1,000 liberal arts colleges found that only 18% required a US history or government course to earn a degree.

High school or university courses by themselves will not keep gullible voters from falling for bogus news or inflammatory disinformation. But the viral spread of fake news stories initiated by Russian agents made one thing clear: An electorate lacking a

basic civics education is more likely to fall for provocations designed to inflame partisan tensions.

Changes in the news industry are increasing that risk. As Internet giants siphon away advertising revenue from traditional media outlets, social media have become many people's main source of news. Traditional news organisations, especially local newspapers, are steadily disappearing, shrinking voters' access to information that is vital to making informed political decisions.

The numbers are striking. Since 2004, 10% of all small-market newspapers have closed or merged. Of those that survive, over a third have changed ownership, concentrating the industry into fewer hands. The result has been layoffs, cost-cutting, and diminished reporting on national and local issues.

As for the media's civic responsibility, that, too, seems to have suffered. The managers' manual from one investment firm that owns three daily and 42 weekly newspapers does not mince words: "Our customer is the advertiser," the document states. "Readers are our customers' customers," so "we operate with a lean newsroom staff."

Russia's intervention in the 2016 US presidential election was historic, but it was also symptomatic of bigger challenges facing Americans. A population that does not fully understand its own democracy should concern not only civics teachers, but national security experts as well. The US didn't need Putin to deliver that lesson. "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free," Thomas Jefferson warned, "it expects what never was and never will be."

THE FASTEST ELECTRIC CAR EVER

Elon Musk reveals \$200,000 Tesla roadster that does 0-60 in 1.9 seconds 'and can hit 250mph'



Tesla has unveiled the fastest electric car ever made, with chief executive Elon Musk bragging that he wants to 'give a hardcore smackdown' to gasoline vehicles.

A shiny red Roadster surprised everyone when it emerged from the trailer of the company's other big reveal - an electric truck named the Tesla Semi - during a presentation at an airport in Los Angeles.

The \$200,000 (£151,000) sports car - an updated version of Tesla's first production vehicle - can seat four and travel 620 miles (1000 km) on a single charge, a new record for an electric vehicle.

The car - which also features a removable glass roof - can go from 0 to 60 miles per hour (0 to 100 km/h) in 1.9 seconds and has a top speed over 250mph (400 kph). This would make it the quickest production electric car

ever made, beating the Chinese-made NIO EP9 all-electric hypercar, which has a top speed of 194 mph (310 kph). The vehicle has three motors, one in the front and two in the rear, all-wheel drive and torque steering. The showmanship wowed the crowd although some analysts' heads started throbbing at the variety of new projects launched as the company is struggling to produce the more affordable sedan upon which its future depends. 'You'll be able to travel from LA to San Francisco, and back, at highway speed without recharging,' Musk said. 'The point of doing this is to just give a hardcore smackdown to gasoline cars. 'Driving a gasoline sports car is going to feel like a steam engine with a side of quiche.' The first 1,000 cars will cost \$250,000 (£190,000) each, paid in full up front, with later models starting

at \$200,000 (£150,000). It will be available to buy in 2020. Powering the car is a 200 kilowatt hour battery pack. The Tesla Semi truck, however, attracted the most attention last night. Musk has described electric trucks as Tesla's next effort to move the economy away

from fossil fuels through projects including electric cars, solar roofs and power storage. But some analysts fear the truck will be an expensive distraction for Tesla, which is burning cash, has never posted an annual profit, and is in self-described 'manufacturing hell' starting up production of the \$35,000 (£26,000) Model 3 sedan. 'Elon's showmanship remains intact, even as his customers' patience for Model 3 delivery wanes,' Karl Brauer, executive publisher of Kelley Blue Book and Autotrader, said by email. The specs on the new semi truck and sports car would put both vehicles at the top of their segments...assuming they can be produced and sold as part of a sustainable business plan. So far that

final element has eluded Tesla Motors, which makes it difficult to see these vehicles as more than 'what if' concept cars,' he added. Tesla also has to convince the trucking community that it can build an affordable electric big rig with the range and cargo capacity to compete with relatively low-cost, time-tested diesel trucks. The heavy batteries eat into the weight of cargo an electric truck can haul. The truck can go up to 500 miles at maximum weight at highway speed, Musk said, without giving the size of the payload. Musk said the Class 8 vehicle, the heaviest weight classification for trucks, in 30 minutes can recharge the battery enough to go 400 miles, and that Tesla would build a global, solar-powered network of 'megachargers.'



'I have full control'

Kim Kardashian sizzles in Violet Grey shoot as she discusses creating her crystal-inspired KKW Fragrance



(News Agencies) On Wednesday she released an astonishing seventh perfume in her line of fragrances. Kim Kardashian seems very proud that she has 'full control' of the creative process over KKW as she talked to Violet Grey for a cover story released on Wednesday morning. The 36-year-old social media maven posed nearly

naked and looked positively stunning in a series of images for the lifestyle publication. 'I have full control over what I want the campaign to look like, the bottle to look like, the scent to smell like,' Kardashian said about her fragrance line. While she revels in responsibility, the mother-of-two said she trusts 'the perfume house, because they are the experts.' 'The meetings are



fascinating, because you go in and have lists of everything you love, everything that evokes a memory,' Kim said. As the star of Keeping Up With The Kardashians prepares to welcome her third child via surrogate, healing energy was at the forefront of her mind during the design process. 'My bottle looked like a crystal—it was all about healing,' Kim said. 'I feel like when I started to make the fragrance a year ago, it all just really clicked in my head.' Kim turned to the healing crystals after the ordeal in Paris last year, during which she was tied up and gagged while robbers stole an estimated \$10 million worth of jewelry from her, including her \$4 million, 20-carat engagement ring. 'People would come over and give me these healing

crystals, and I wanted a perfume I could hold in my hand like a healing crystal, that gives off good vibes and good energy.' She said she has been drawn to decadent scents from a young age where she recalled 'every time my Dad (Robert Kardashian) would travel, he'd bring me and Kourtney back a perfume.' 'Gardenias are my happy place,' she said. 'When I smell them, it brings me back to memories of being eight years old in Hawaii. I have seven fragrances, and my first one was heavily gardenia. And that's my favorite scent out of the seven. I'm still working with the perfume house that did my other seven, Givaudan, and I love them, but this is a really independent project for

me, and I wanted to start out with what I love best.' As Kim unveiled her new creation, fans couldn't help but resemble the new chic fragrance packaging to a not so glamorous object. Some of the reality star's followers replied: 'I love u Kim but this packaging looks a bit like a dildo.' Another fan wrote: 'Every beauty product that Kim Kardashian is selling in her line looks like a sex toy.' Even Kim's new found friend Jennifer Lawrence has questioned the TV icon's beauty packaging while guest hosting Jimmy Kimmel Live earlier this month. Kim responded: 'That didn't come to mind until after I posted it to social media and I was like, "Oh f**k, this looks like a dildo!"'

Survey finds 60% urban Indian women at risk of diabetes

According to the results of a new survey conducted across 14 Indian cities, despite being aware that diabetes is a serious health concern, urban women did not take steps to adopt an active, healthy lifestyle.

(News Agencies) Over 60% of urban Indian women do not follow a regular exercise regime, which puts them at increased risk of diabetes, according to the results of a new survey.

Released on the occasion of World Diabetes Day, the survey conducted by diabetes care company Novo Nordisk India also showed that 73% of urban women in the country are unaware of gestational diabetes and its related health risks for the next generation. For the survey, over 1,000 women, belonging to the age group of

18-65 years were interviewed to draw insights on the level of awareness on risks emerging from diabetes. The survey was conducted across 14 cities in the country – Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Lucknow, Ludhiana, Indore, Guwahati, Kochi and Vijaywada.

The findings showed that 78% women interviewed were aware of diabetes as a serious health concern and more than 70% women believed that a healthy lifestyle will help prevent diabetes

and its associated complications. While it is encouraging to note that 78% of the respondents were aware about diabetes and its complications, it is alarming to note that women are not taking concrete actions to address this challenge," Melvin D'souza, Managing Director, Novo Nordisk India, said in a statement. According to a study published in the journal Lancet, lack of physical activity is linked to an increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers and is associated with more than five



million deaths per year. With 72.9 million people currently living with diabetes, India is known as the world capital for the disease. According to an estimate, the diabetic population in India is expected to grow up to 134.3 million by 2045.

Men more at risk of sudden cardiac arrest after sex. Women, learn CPR



According to a US study, men who have a history of cardiovascular disease may be at greater risk of experiencing sudden cardiac arrest during or soon after

(News Agencies) Men with a history of cardiovascular disease may be more at risk of facing sudden cardiac arrest during or soon after sex, a study has revealed. Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is when the heart suddenly

stops beating. It usually occurs without warning. The findings showed that although the incidence of SCA is very rare, survival rates in such cases remain low. It is because, the partners failed to immediately perform

cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), which could save more lives, the researchers said. "Even though SCA during sexual activity was witnessed by a partner, bystander CPR was performed in only one-third of the cases," said Sumeet Chugh, associate director at the Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute, LA, California. For the study, published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, the team examined records of

more than 4,500 cardiac arrests over a period of 13 years in persons above 18 years. Out of these only 34 were during or within an hour of having sex, and 32 of those were men, who were already taking drugs for heart conditions. Patients who experienced sudden cardiac arrest related to sexual activity also had a higher rate of ventricular fibrillation/tachycardia than those who did not. Only one-third of these SCA cases received

bystander CPR. This low bystander CPR rate accounted for less than 20% of patients who survived to hospital discharge, the researchers noted. Moreover, some cases of SCA after sexual activity may also involve medications, stimulants and alcohol use, the researchers said. "These findings highlight the importance of continued efforts to educate the public on the importance of bystander CPR for SCA, irrespective of the circumstance," Chugh added.

World Diabetes Day: 8 fruits to include in your diet if you have diabetes

From apples, berries, guavas to amla and jamun leaves, here is a list of fruits that can help keep a diabetes patient's condition from worsening.

(News Agencies) Diabetes has come to become one of the most dreaded offshoots of modern and hectic



lifestyles. In such cases, fruits play a major role and can go a long way in helping keep a diabetes patient's

condition from worsening.

*Pomegranates contain the richest combination of antioxidants, protecting you from free-radicals and chronic diseases. They play an important role in lowering the levels of bad cholesterol and resistance, which the body has against insulin. *Apple is a hypoglycaemic fruit which contains plenty of fibre that is an impeccable ingredient for a diabetic. It also contains the chemical Pectin, that has the capability of reducing blood sugar

levels and the requirement of insulin in the body by almost 50%.

*Berries have the capability to break glucose into energy, which reduces the increased glucose levels by a considerable amount. Further, they increase the release of insulin. Thus, regulating glucose levels in the body. * Guava is very rich in dietary fibre that helps ease constipation (a common diabetic complaint) and can lower the chance of developing type-2 diabetes. Guavas are also high in vitamin A and vitamin C. * Natural antioxidants in papaya make it a great choice for diabetics. As diabetics are prone to many ailments, like heart or nerve damage caused by

irregular blood sugar levels, the diet having papaya can obstruct future cell damage for a better and longer life span. *Jamun leaves are good for diabetics. They help convert starch into energy and keep the blood sugar levels in check. Jamun has a low glycemic index and reduces symptoms such as frequent urination and thirsting. * The glycemic load of an orange is about 5, a low number that indicates a small rise in blood glucose. But avoid consuming orange juice. *Amla is a good source of chromium which is good for the pancreas, where insulin is produced and therefore, helps to manage blood sugar levels.

Qarib Qarib Single movie review

A heartfelt film where Parvathy outshines a superb Irrfan
Irrfan and Parvathy star in a love story that comes with the dreaded tag -- at least in
Bollywood -- of mature. And for once, Tanuja Chandra makes sure it is a good thing.



Qarib Qarib Single
 Director: Tanuja Chandra
 Cast: Irrfan, Parvathy
 Rating: 4/5
 Tanuja Chandra returns to films after a gap of nine years with Irrfan-Parvathy-starrer Qarib Qarib Single, bringing with her a refreshingly sweet but mature love story.
 The movie tells the story of two

adults who embark upon a journey and discover themselves in the process. It begins with Jaya (Parvathy), a work-obsessed 35-year-old widow who carries her understated personality in pastel dresses. While she rules her workplace, Jaya lacks confidence when it comes to her personal life. She shies away from meeting people, dedicates her Sundays to

baby-sitting, and tries to please everybody around her.

Thanks to a dating website called Ab Tak Single, Yogi (Irrfan) enters the scene. The world he brings with him is completely different – he is outspoken, exudes confidence, wears bright red and yellow clothes, and believes in living in the moment.

Through the lead characters, Tanuja takes us on a journey from Mumbai to Dehradun, Roorkee, Jaipur and Gangtok. The movie offers a sneak peek of the scenic beauty that these places have to offer, but doesn't begin meandering either. Even when the characters undertake a luxury train journey or a road trip to Gangtok, the focus remains on their personal journeys through it all.

Both Yogi and Jaya

come with baggage from their respective pasts, but while the former is open to new relationships, Jaya is not so sure. Focussing more on Jaya, the movie offers little explanation for Yogi's wealth or his background (except for his past girlfriends, of course). The charm and maturity of the love story, however, do not allow us to dwell too long on these important details that seem to be missing.

The interactions between the lead couple are a novel and realistic way of depicting romance in Bollywood. They are devoid of flowers, hearts and chocolates, and even make light of cinematic cliches like "saath jeene marne ki kasamein".

Almost all the songs in the film remain in the background, with the exception of Atif Aslam's

Jaane De – a smart choice as it only adds to the mood while keeping the flow of the narrative intact. Khatam Kahani is one song that stands out, mainly because of Raj Shekhar's lyrics, and is aptly placed in the story.

Through the film, Irrfan's character charms his way into the hearts of the audience and – eventually – Jaya herself. She finds him annoying, but in a sweet way.

Malayalam actress Parvathy, who makes her Bollywood debut with the film, is the perfect choice for the paradoxical role of the under-confident but self-dependant woman who fights a lonely battle with the ghosts from her past and eventually emerges the winner.



Fifty Shades Freed trailer: Dakota Johnson, Jamie Dornan's erotic series reaches

(News Agencies) The first theatrical trailer for the final film in the erotic franchise Fifty Shades of Grey was released online on Monday.

The first theatrical trailer for the final film in the erotic franchise Fifty Shades of Grey was released online on Monday. Along with a new poster, the film's tagline teased a suitably erotic climax to the much-ridiculed series. "Don't miss the climax," the words on the screen read.

In case you'd forgotten that Anastasia Steele and Christian Grey are now husband and wife, the two made it a point to remind you, greeting each other with "Good morning, husband," and "Good morning, wife."

After spending their honeymoon cuddling each other in an exotic location (and engaging in BDSM, of course), they return home and he has a surprise for his new wife - a home. He apologises for not having asked her permission first,

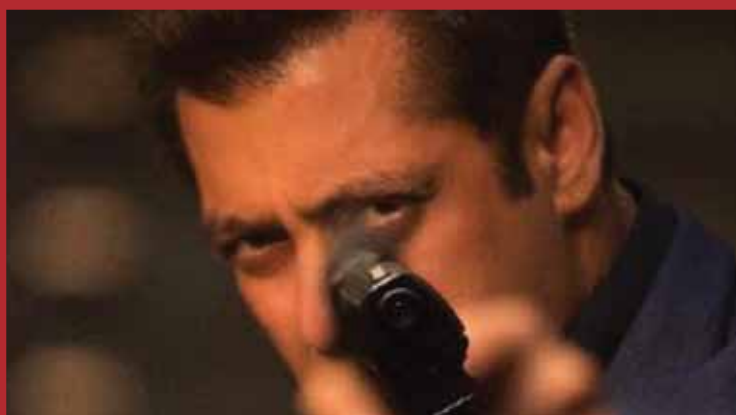
as if he'd bought her a dog, and not a multi-million dollar mansion. But their blissful (and very violent) relationship is interrupted by people from their pasts. Soon, Anna and Christian are taking part in car chases, stashing guns and gazing at each other

longingly. Fifty Shades Freed is the climax that the fans of writer EL James erotic novels have been waiting for. Starring Dakota Johnson and Jamie Dornan, and directed by James Foley, the film is scheduled for a Valentine's Day release.



Salman Khan shares first look of Race 3, does he look like a negative character?

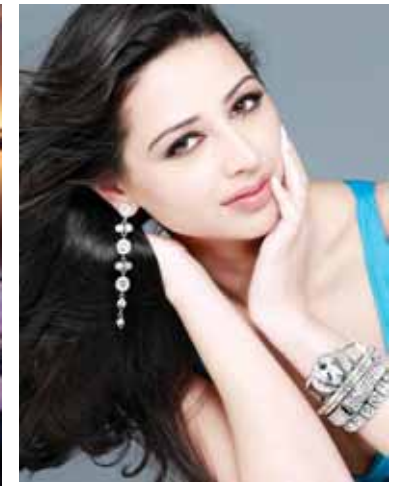
Salman Khan on Monday shared his first look from the upcoming action sequel, Race 3. He captioned the picture simply, "... and Race3 begins."



(News Agencies) Salman Khan on Monday shared his first look from the upcoming action sequel, Race 3. He captioned the picture simply, "... and Race3 begins." The first trailer for the star's December release Tiger Zinda Hai was released last week. In the new picture, Salman is seen glaring at the camera, pointing a gun in the audience's direction. He also appears to be wearing a uniform of some sort, and a badge is visible on his breast pocket. The film's shoot began last week at Mumbai's Mehboob studios. The film marks the reunion of stars Salman and Jacqueline Fernandez, who previously appeared opposite each other in 2014's Kick. Abbas-Mustan directed the first two films in the Race franchise and Remo D' Souza will helm the third movie. The first two films featured Anil Kapoor, Saif Ali Khan, Bipasha Basu and Ameesha Patel in lead roles. While Akshaye Khanna, Katrina Kaif and Sameera Reddy were seen in the first film, John Abraham, Jacqueline Fernandez and Deepika Padukone starred in Race 2.

Composer-singer duo Sajid-Wajid invited Serena to explore Indian film industry

Serena Milan Dance performance enthralled audience



(By a staff reporter) New York : Serena Milan, New York based, professional Model, Fashionista & winner of many pageants, present at recently held Sajid Wajid live show in New York, was invited on stage. She thrilled and mesmerised the packed to capacity auditorium full of 10000 plus crowd, with her dance performance and interaction with the spectators from onstage. "I love you," the more flamboyant among the brothers Sajid fondly expressed

Serena while talking to her on the stage. Sajid termed Serena as the "American Diamond Girl!" at the show, promoted and managed by Indian television giant Zee TV which is extremely popular in the US, especially among the strong Indian community living there.

Popular American model Serena Milan was invited by the famous Bollywood composer duo

Sajid-Wajid to explore the Indian film industry. The impromptu invitation came her way when Serena danced to their tunes during the recently held show in her hometown, New York. Serena gracefully accepted the invite, saying would visit India sometime in future soon after carrying out her

busy professional commitments. Considered as perfect combination of beauty and brains, Serena, born and brought up in New York. Many famous Indian and American photographers captured her on camera for many fashion brands. She has appeared in many United Nations events with several other celebrities. Serena is a fan of big Bollywood actors like Salman Khan, Shahrukh Khan, Akshay Kumar and Hrithik Roshan and holds keen interest with them in the world of entertainment. Sajid-Wajid, who had co-composed the popular dance number Munni Badnaam Hui with composer Lalit Pandit for super hit Salman Khan movie Dabangg, released in 2010, would be too glad to compose a matching number to launch Serena in the Bollywood enabling her to enthrall the Indian movie buffs.

Too many superheroes spoil the broth



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FILM REVIEW

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JUSTICE LEAGUE should have been a thundering, excitable romp through fertile imagination — instead, it's a tired attempt at banding together superheroes from the DC comic book world and getting them to fight a common enemy who is all set to destroy the universe. The immensely entertaining Thor: Ragnarok came before it and the storyline of the two films is similar enough to warrant a comparison. This film fails to match the Chris Hemsworth-starrer in terms of visual and comedic appeal. The scripting by Chris Terrio and Joss Whedon never quite gets a handle of things, and the action is a tad too haphazard to make it seem homogenous.

The impending invasion of earth by Steppenwolf (Ciaran Hinds), the leader of the Parademons, who wants to recover and merge three magic boxes that will give him ultimate power, brings together an unlikely team of superheroes — Batman (Ben Affleck), Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot), Superman (Henry Cavill), The Flash (Ezra Miller), Aquaman (Jason Momoa), and

Cyborg (Ray Fisher). Lois and Clark reconcile while Batman/Bruce Wayne appears to have been shocked out of his pensiveness enough to be a little more sociable. Affleck plays his character with a

Dad-body and injured physicality, implying that Batman is not as sprightly as he once used to be. But that's just about as endearing as this film can get. This DC universe doesn't quite add up to marvellous mainly because the new character additions need to be introduced, which gets in the way of the storytelling. The narrative isn't clear about what it wants to be. A few

engaging moments and Gal Gadot aren't able to lift this incoherent and short-fused experience to gratifying.

JUSTICE LEAGUE

U/A: Action Adventure

DIR: Zack Snyder

CAST: Ben Affleck, Henry Cavill, Gal Gadot



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★★★★★AWESOME



Akshay's social drama goes to UN

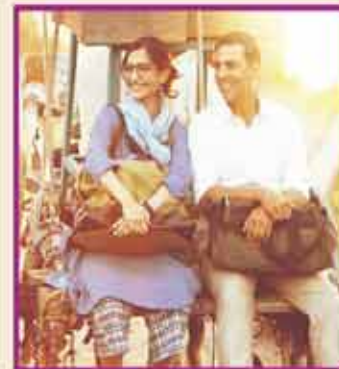
Kumar's biopic on Muruganantham becomes second Hindi film to be shot at global agency's Manhattan venue

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GIVEN that their outing delves into the pressing concern of menstrual hygiene for women in rural India, makers of Padman were able to seamlessly coerce authorities at the United Nations to permit them filming rights at their headquarters. The development implies that the Akshay Kumar-starrer will become only the second Hindi film to bag the opportunity.

A production hand tells mid-day that the team will jet off to Manhattan later this week to shoot for the final schedule at the headquarters in Turtle Bay. "We procured permissions to shoot a few days ago. This is the second Hindi film, after Half Girlfriend, to be shot there," an insider says. The unit will utilise the opportunity to film the climax scene at the venue. "The scene will mostly showcase the protagonist delivering an emotional lecture at a UN event. The pivotal subject was reason enough for authorities to readily come on board at a short notice."

The cast and crew, we hear, will not be permitted to use their phones while shooting. They have



Kapoor and Kumar in the film

also been allotted only six hours each day over the two week-long schedule, and will be permitted access at a specific section that has been cordoned off for them.

Twinkle Khanna's debut production puts the spotlight on social entrepreneur Arunachalam Muruganantham, who created a low-cost sanitary pad-making machine for less-privileged women of the country. Leading man Kumar will be accompanied by Sonam Kapoor, who recently wrapped up Veere Di Wedding, for the sequence.

Although the script has been tactfully crafted to reflect Muruganantham's life, the biopic has been adequately commercialised and fictionalised for the big screen. It is being helmed by R Balki. In an interview to mid-day, Kumar, whose last outing touched upon the subject of open defecation, expressed perplexity at the tendency to avoid discussion around menstrual hygiene.

'The scene will mostly showcase the protagonist delivering an emotional lecture at a UN event' A source

Musical birthday for Zeenat

Sanjeevani Bhelände to croon Aman's chartbusters at concert

SOUMYA VAJPAYEE TIWARI
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VETERAN actor Zeenat Aman turns 66 on Sunday. On the eve of her special day, singer Sanjeevani Bhelände will belt out Aman's hit numbers at a tribute concert. Titled Mehek-e-Zeenat, the show will be held tomorrow in Borivali. The singer is looking forward to performing in Aman's presence. She tells mid-day, "Zeenatiji will sit on stage as I perform the songs picturised on her. She will share anecdotes and memories, like how Do Lafzon Ki Hai was shot in Venice



Sanjeevani Bhelände; (right) Zeenat Aman

and Khatuba in Cairo, as I sing the songs. She is a living legend, who modernised the look of the conventional Hindi film heroine."

Bhelände will perform hits from films like Satyam

Shivam Sundaram (1978), Ajanabee (1974), Hare Rama Hare Krishna (1971), The Great Gambler (1979), Yaadon Ki Baaraat (1973) and Heera Panna (1973). Few among these are also Aman's favourites.

Talking about her birthday plans, Aman says, "Birthdays validate the joy of life. I usually celebrate mine with my family and friends. I am looking forward to to sharing a meal and some time with the underprivileged."





Karan Johar on mending bonds with Kajol

She has and will always be more than special

Filmmaker Karan Johar declined to elaborate on his renewed friendship with Kajol but said the actor will "always remain special" to him.

(News Agencies) In his autobiography, the director had said that his nearly 25-year-long bond with Kajol ended prior to the release of his and her husband actor Ajay Devgn's movies - Ae Dil Hai Mushkil and Shivaay.

said some "nasty" things to him before the release of their films and vowed to cut all ties with his long-time friend and collaborator. The two, however, have started to bond again.

When asked how it feels to have his best friend back, Karan told reporters, "This

platform isn't about my personal life. But Kajol is, has always been and will always remain more than special to me, for the time to come. Always."

The director was speaking at the launch of his radio show, Calling Karan for Ishq 104.8 FM. Karan was also asked for

his opinion on the ongoing "Padmavati" row, but the director limited his comments to the new project.

"The reason why I am not commenting on anything else but this (the show) is that things invariably sometimes seem out of context. When I am at World

Economic Forum, we talk about socio-political issues. We do debates surrounding our country there. "This show is about love, relationships, emotions and lust. To talk about such serious, heavy-weight thought-provoking issues, I feel is not the platform," he added.

Karan had said that Ajay

Karan told reporters, "This

FM. Karan was also asked for

of context. When I am at World

the platform," he added.

Saif Ali Khan's daughter, Sara is a pro at Pilates

Pilates expert Namrata Purohit on Monday posted a short video showing Sara Ali Khan working hard at the gym.

(News Agencies) Sara Ali Khan knows she has to work hard and she is giving it everything she has got. Leaving nothing to chance, Sara, Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh's daughter, is preparing in all earnestness for her big Bollywood debut.

Namrata Purohit, a Pilates expert, on Monday posted a short video showing Sara perform a step routine, meant to tone inner thigh and quadriceps. She wrote: My #PilatesGirl #SaraKhanAli doing the side step ups on the stability chair. These really work the gluteus, inner thighs and quads, also challenging stabilisation!"

Sara is currently shooting for

Abhishek Kapoor directorial Kedarnath in which she is paired opposite Sushant Singh Rajput. Sara is a regular at Bollywood parties and is often spotted with the who's who of Hindi film industry. Her airport sightings are also a favourite with paparazzi.

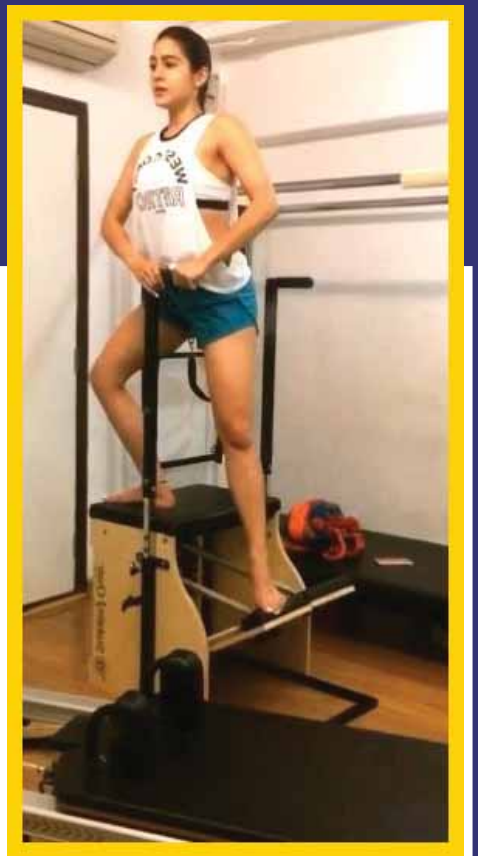
Kedarnath, a film set in the 2013 Kedarnath floods and the tragic events around it, is produced by Ekta Kapoor and will see Sushant play a 'pitthoo', who ferries people/pilgrims on his back to the shrine. It will, of course, have a love story woven in.

The makers have shared two posters from the film -- one was a motion poster showing Lord Shiva's trident with the

Himalayas as the backdrop and the other was a mock-up of various images of Lord Shiva, Himalayas, Kedarnath shrine and an image of Sushant kissing Sara's forehead (appearing as a silhouette).

Meanwhile, Sara is evidently in demand as she already has another film with Anushka Sharma in her kitty.

Father Saif had recently said about her debut that encourages his daughter to take independent decisions. He said, "She simply came to me and told me that she is doing Kedarnath. We never discussed the script in detail, as I don't think my opinion matters. Since it is her independent decision, she is happy to either fly with it or go down with it."



Padmavati: Film associations say they are upset, question government's silence

Speaking at a press conference in Mumbai on Monday, called by members of CINTAA and many others, veteran director Sudhir Mishra said by asking for a ban, one was creating an atmosphere where nobody will attempt films on Indian history.

(News Agencies) Several film bodies on Monday came out in support of director Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Padmavati and questioned the government's silence on threats by Rajput groups against the release of the film. The Indian Film and Television Directors' Association (IFTDA) along with Cine and TV Artists Association (CINTAA), Western India Cinematographers Association (WICA), Screenwriters Association (SWA), Association of Cine and Television Art Directors and Costume Designers (ACTADCD), backed Bhansali at a press conference in Mumbai. Filmmaker Sudhir Mishra, who was present there,

said an attack on Bhansali was an assault on creative freedom.

"Attack on Bhansali is an attack on freedom. This is very stifling. When it comes to the interpretation of history, you can disagree with him, but at least allow the film to release. By asking for a ban, you are creating an atmosphere where nobody will attempt films on Indian history," Mishra said.

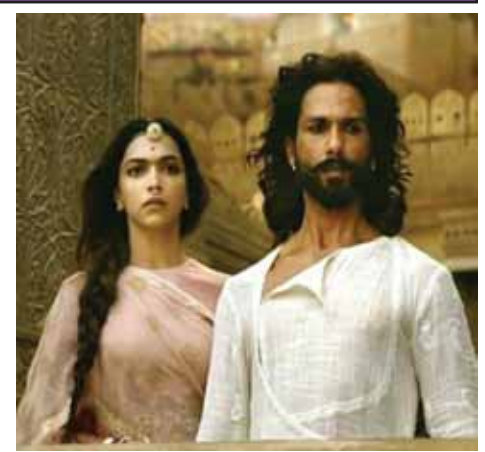
Bhansali has been facing trouble since he started shooting for the movie. The set of the movie was vandalised twice — in Jaipur and Kolhapur — and the director was roughed up by members of Karni Sena during the Jaipur schedule

of the film earlier this year.

Rajput groups and some BJP members have accused Bhansali of distorting facts in the movie, starring Deepika Padukone, Shahid Kapoor and Ranveer Singh. The film is scheduled to be released on December 1.

At the press conference, actor Sushant Singh, general secretary of CINTAA, said the government should intervene at this point.

"Sanjay Leela Bhansali didn't ask us to hold this conference... We all are frustrated, angry and upset. For how long will our fraternity members keep asking for freedom of expression to make



films? Why do we need to fight for such a basic right all the time?," Singh asked.

Shaadi Mein Zarur Aana movie review

An entertainer that takes on sexism, dowry and corruption

This Rajkummar Rao film comes packaged with all the elements you expect in a Bollywood entertainer romance, drama, revenge and songs.



Shaadi Mein Zarur Aana
 Director: Ratnaa Sinha
 Cast: Rajkummar Rao, Kirti Kharbanda
 Rating: 3.5/5

Ratnaa Sinha's Shaadi Mein Zarur Aana checks all the Bollywood boxes — there's

romance, drama, revenge, song-and-dance. This Rajkummar Rao-Kirti Kharbanda-starrer also manages to take on sexism, dowry and corruption.

The film opens as a love story. Two Kanpur families are busy finding a match for their children

and force Satyendra Mishra (Rajkummar Rao) and Aarti Shukla (Kirti Kharbanda) to meet. Satyendra is a clerk in a government office with little ambition — his sources of contentment is a family owned three-storey building. Aarti is a college topper who wants to be IAS officer. Neither wants to get married but decide to go with the flow as they find common values and interests.

After some twists Shaadi Mein Zarur Aana turns into a revenge saga but goes back to being a love story when the curtain comes down.

The narrative is not jerky, no sudden jumps and an undertone of the love story is carried throughout.

Ratnaa's story gives us an insider's view of the practice of dowry that continues to thrive

though it is illegal. The groom's family, riding high on its ancestral property, makes the most of the fact that the groom is a single child and the sole inheritor to step up the demand for dowry.

The bride's father busts his "budget" and sells his land to give his daughter a perfect start in her new family.

It is not just dowry that the girl has to deal with. Her mom-in-law has her own definition of IAS. "Is ghar mein to humi sarkar hain, bahu aaye aur ghar sambhale. Isi ko sarkari naukari samajh le. Humare ghar me bahuein naukri nahi karti."

Outdated and irrational as they may be but the words reflect the reality that confront girls across the country.

Rajkummar's transformation from a young man charmed by his lady to the one who does not

believe in love is impressive. He makes you love, pity and hate him all in a single stroke.

Kirti effortlessly essays her role. All character actors are a treat to watch. Govind Namdev's strict and patriarchal father is in contrast to KK Raina's educated father of the groom and Navni Parihar is impressive as an understanding but submissive mom — all of them successfully manage to bring to the screen the life and travails of small-town India.

The film, however, leans too much on clichés. Songs are abrupt and obstruct the narrative. The filmmakers have also relied heavily on melodrama but despite these minor hiccups, this is an invitation you must not miss.

A Bad Moms Christmas movie review

The Shawshank Redemption is a funnier movie
Mila Kunis, Kristen Bell and Kathryn Hahn make for a talented trio, but honestly, cancelling Christmas sounds like a more cheerful idea than watching it again.



A Bad Moms Christmas
 Directors - Scott Moore, Jon Lucas
 Cast - Mila Kunis, Kristen Bell, Kathryn Hahn, Susan Sarandon, Cheryl Hines, Christine Baranski
 Rating - 0.5/5

Ask yourself this: How would you react if you walked into a Chinese restaurant (voluntarily, of course, salivating at the thought of some nice chow), and were served a piece of burnt toast instead? How would you feel if you ordered a pair of white underwear off the Internet, and they sent you hot

pink ones 'by mistake'? It's safe to assume that you'd be most upset at this minor, yet endlessly infuriating inconvenience. You'd have to return the product, wait for them to receive it, and then spend 5-6 business days twiddling your thumbs till they send a refund.

You'd be well within your rights to feel cheated. And that's precisely the emotion A Bad Moms Christmas - the rushed, China-funded sequel to 2016's Bad Moms - leaves you with. Only difference is, there's no way you're getting a pair of new undies at the end of this

scenario. It's a film that has been sold as a comedy along the lines of Bridesmaids - with raunchy hijinks, Christmas cheer and what to Hollywood's eyes is a bigger gamble than funding a Scandinavian black & white movie: Funny women - but has zero laughs. None. Zilch. Not even a pity giggle. And on that basis alone, The Shawshank Redemption is a funnier movie. There are films that you forget the moment you step out of the theatre. We've all been there, walking out of the dark auditorium, eyes adjusting to the lights, vaguely peeved at another two hours of our life flushed down the drain. Anyone who can recite the plot of the 2008 blockbuster Mamma Mia deserves some sort of a medal, or a firm handshake, or, if they have an earnest look in their eye, maybe even both.

But this goes deeper. The plot — even though A Bad Moms Christmas has none — thickens. There are — and this is the worst-case scenario we're talking about here — films that you forget while

you're watching them. They don't have to be long, these movies — by the mercy of God, A Bad Moms Christmas clocks in at an hour-and-a-half. But before 30 minutes have passed, children have already dropped numerous f-bombs, and you've been rudely stranded in the middle of a scene that involves a man's nether regions being waxed (voluntarily, you guys), with no idea how you got there. If Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer himself were to jingle his way into my home, and in the nicest, most Christmassy voice quiz me on one — just one — detail about this movie in exchange of a present, I might as well slam the door in his adorable little face. In it, Amy (Mila Kunis), Kiki (Kristen Bell) and Carla (Kathryn Hahn), three remarkably bland women — united by race, socio-economic class, and intellect — have their less-than-fabulous lives unceremoniously gatecrashed by their equally insipid moms. It's a set-up that we'll unfortunately have to endure again much sooner than any of us had

anticipated when Daddy's Home 2 (starring renowned comedians Mark Wahlberg and Mel Gibson) lumbers into theatres soon. And this lack of diversity, this lack of conflict among the lead trio poses a very unique problem for the movie, one that also affected the original Bad Moms. Whether consciously or not, though, at least this one addresses it. It's another matter, however, that it does so by hurling three mom-shaped spanners into the works. It's a move that draws exactly the results you'd imagine — it brings an already creaky operation down to a clanging halt. No self-respecting human being expects intelligence out of A Bad Moms Christmas, but the introduction of Amy, Kiki and Carla's moms should have, at the very least, made some insightful observations about mother-daughter relationships, and how with age, many of us find ourselves turning into versions of our parents we'd sworn we'd avoid.



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