



The South Asian

INSIDER

Voice of South Asian Community

Since March 2002

Vol. 15 Issue 06 Wednesday 28 November to 04 December 2017 \$1 www.thesouthasian.info



STORY ON page 30

Is Padmavati just a myth?

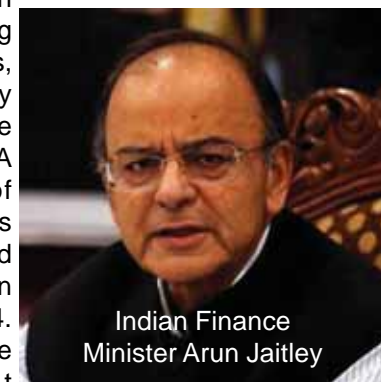
Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2017



STORY ON page 22

"No Loan Waiver For Big Capitalists"

(SAI Bureau) Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on this week cleared the air over the allegation of loan waiver to big NPA defaulters, indirectly attacking the previous UPA regime of relaxing norms for defaulted firms between 2008 and 2014. He said the present government had not waived off any loans of big NPA defaulters, and that "rumour mongers"



Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley

(Contd on page 23)

Reliance Communications to go insolvent?



(SAI Bureau) Mumbai : As the news about China Development Bank (CBD) filling an insolvency petition against Reliance Communications with National Company Law Tribunal spread, the shares of beleaguered billionaire Anil Ambani's company fell on Tuesday. The telecom operator owes Rs 11,460 crore (\$1.78 billion) to the CBD, which accounts for around 37 per cent of the company's Rs 45,000 crore debt. However, a PTI report quoted RCom spokesman saying the company had not been served any notice by China Development Bank. BSE also sought clarification from RCom after market hours on Monday but the company, reported Media (Contd on page

Congress leader Baba Siddique to be interrogated for Rs 500 Crore scam

In June 2017, Siddique was questioned for at least nine hours by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the Rs 500 crore SRA scam. After the investigation is done ED will again issue a summon to Siddique for second round of interrogation.



(By a staff reporter) Since last four months, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has been collating all the required evidence against Congress leader Baba Siddique and eight other accused in the Rs 500 crore SRA scam. Last week, the final set of documents were handed over to the agency by Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) in Mumbai.

(Contd on page 22)

Michael Flynn Pleads Guilty to Lying to the F.B.I. and Will Cooperate With Russia Inquiry

(News Agencies) Washington — President Trump's former national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn, pleaded guilty on Friday to lying to the F.B.I. about conversations with the Russian ambassador last December, becoming the first senior White House official to cut a cooperation deal in the special counsel's wide-ranging inquiry into election interference. Mr. Flynn's

discussions with Sergey I. Kislyak, the Russian ambassador, were part of a coordinated effort by Mr. Trump's aides to create foreign policy before they were in power, documents released as part of Mr. Flynn's plea agreement show. Their efforts undermined the existing policy of President Barack Obama and flouted a warning from a senior Obama administration official

(Contd on page 22)



Jewel of India in Association with Box Office Insider presents

2018 CALENDAR HUNT A REALITY SHOW

Josh india tv

BOI BOX OFFICE INSIDER

An appeal to the community



Dear Publishers & Editors, Namaskar. Please take up the issue of "Apology for Racial Slurs called for Indo-American community in the Edison Municipal Complex" with the community leaders and various organizations. "Indians are cockroaches, animals, illegal & go home", these are the worst ever called racial slurs for any community in over 200 years history of America. This "Apology" is long over due and much needed from Edison Administration at this hour because we need to address the other serious issues affecting the community. We had ignored when Joel Stein made fun of Hindu Gods and Indo-American community living in Edison in an article "My Own Private India" published by Time magazine. We had ignored when an 11 yrs old was traumatized, terrorized and abused by US Media for demanding equal rights with Christians and Jews of his town along with age appropriate changes in Bullying Laws from Gov Christie in a public meeting at Spotswood, New Jersey. Again we ignored when an 8

11 yrs old Gujarati child was traumatized, terrorized and punished for drawing a perfect Swastika along with the Christmas Tree in a Middlesex County Public School. The child was given an assignment to draw something related to his holidays. Further he was counseled that "Swastika is a bad symbol." If I would have been the educator, I would have circulated his drawing as an example of "Diversity" all over America. Then we ignored Democrat Peter Jacob who tries to capitalize on the bogey of "Swastika" to win Congressional election in Dist. 7 of New Jersey. During the trial of Aakash Dalal & Anthony Graziano under the quasi-criminal Bergen County Prosecutor Mollinelli his Assistants Thomas Kearney and Brian Sinclair has grossly misled the jury by calling some graffiti as "Swastika" for pictures of each incident of vandalism/graffiti at 3 synagogues of New Jersey. As a Hindu I strongly condemn such acts of vandalism at any House of worship and I strongly believe people of my community feels

the same. But the first question that must come to every one's mind is whether it was Swastika or Nazi Logo or just graffiti that was drawn outside the Synagogues. It is a shame that ignorant people wants to call Nazi Logo or graffiti a Swastika for their vested interest. At no stage both of them ever tried to show to the jury a picture of Nazi Logo or Swastika, so that the Jury could compare and decide what name should be given to the graffiti/vandalism. At the time of sentencing under their new boss County

Prosecutor Gurbir S. Grewal both Thomas Kearny and Brian Sinclair put the final nail in the coffin by calling "Swastika is the most hated symbol in the world"! The trial was reported very heavily in We can not allow "Swastika" to be cursed, disrespected, ridiculed and called most hated symbol in the world. It is creating confusion, fear and misinformation in the minds of young Hindus about their own religious symbol. The fact is Swastika originated in 2000BC and is an auspicious symbol for over 1 Billion Hindus and 4.5 Europeans, Chinese and few others sects out of the total 7.3 Billion world population. Swastika has been a symbol of peace, harmony and good luck for thousands of years. To reprimand a Hindu child for drawing a "Swastika" is highly offensive to all the Hindus around the world and totally unacceptable. To call "Swastika" world's most hated symbol in the world is highly insulting and hurting the religious feelings of 1.6 billion believers of Swastika. We are a highly educated and advanced society, by

associating the "Swastika" with the Nazis or any graffiti; we are insulting and hurting the religious feelings of Hindus, Buddhist, Jains and other sects that believe in "Swastika". Then we are only giving credit to the monstrosities of Nazi's horrible regime. Symbols have been abused throughout history and hence the importance of explaining people their true origin lies with the present generation especially the media, educators, political leaders and the religious leaders of different faiths. We must start a petition to White House "STOP CALLING NAZI LOGO or similar graffiti A SWASTIKA". It is my humble request to all the editors and publishers of the Indian Media in USA; please for the sake of the community, young children as well our coming generations; call all the community leaders, cultural, business, political & religious organizations and those elected to public offices for an open debate with in the community; so a united action can be taken against the very serious issues affecting the community.

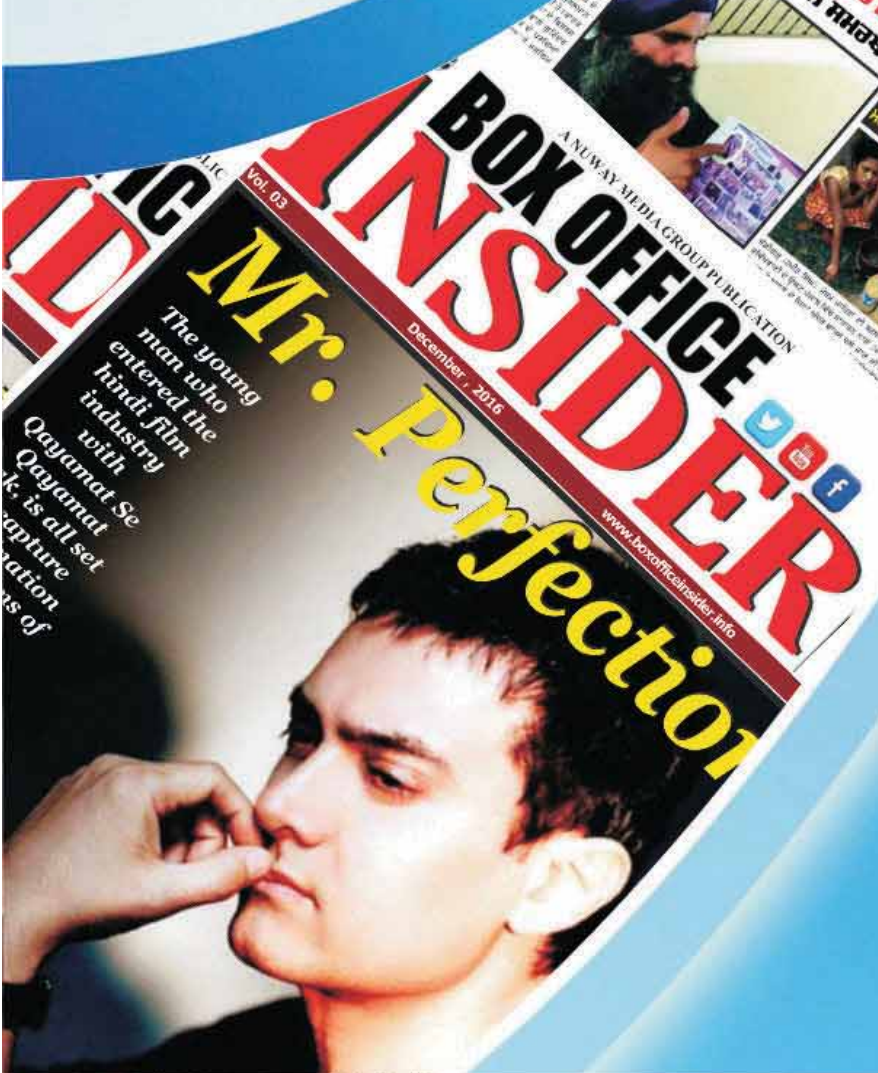
By Dave Makkar
davemakkar@yahoo.com





**Most Trusted
News Media Company
Serving South Asian Americans**

*The Only South
Asian American
Media Group that
Gives you Maximum Cost
Effective Reach*



*3 Million + Views on
YouTube & Half Million
fan like on Facebook*

**Email: sst@nuwaygroup.com
www.nuwaygroup.com
Phone: 917 612 3158**



A politically unstable Pakistan is a threat to global peace

What magnifies the threat to democracy in Pakistan is the role the Pakistan army played in brokering peace between the fringe group Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan and the government

Monday showed yet again why Pakistan is dangerously poised.

The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) government genuflected to the demands of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, a little-known, radical Islamist group, which agreed to call off its three-week long protests across Pakistan after law minister Zahid Hamid resigned. The fringe group, headed by Khadim Hussain Rizvi, demanded the head of Mr Hamid after he released a new

version of the electoral oath which it saw as blasphemous. The government blinked, tried to pass off the change as a clerical error, and restored the original version, but that was not enough for the radicals.

The PML(N) government has been on the back foot ever since Nawaz Sharif was disqualified on corruption charges. Last week, a court ordered proceedings to declare finance minister Ishaq Dar a proclaimed offender in a graft case. Mr Hamid's

resignation is the latest, and clear sign of the civilian government losing its grip on power. Meanwhile, in an all-too-familiar scenario, the army is tightening its grip.

The government, now headed by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, also failed to present in court a credible case against 26/11 Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed. Islamabad has come under international censure for

Saeed's release from house arrest. The general elections in Pakistan are to be held next year, and given the army's proclivity for toppling civilian governments, the recent developments are disturbing.

What magnifies the threat to democracy manifold in Pakistan is the role the army played in brokering peace between the fringe group and the government. Rizvi, while calling off the protests, appreciated the efforts of army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, who played go-between. The judiciary and media in Pakistan criticised the army and government for "surrendering to radicals", but that is likely to change nothing, especially given the

disproportionate power army GHQ Rawalpindi enjoys.

In its recently-released report, Asia in the Second Nuclear Age, US think-tank Atlantic Council, noted how Pakistan's nuclear-weapons programme was a security threat to the world and "the surest route to escalating conventional war to the nuclear level".

The think-tank's report shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone. India has long maintained that a politically-unstable Pakistan is not only a threat to it, but also a threat to regional and global peace. The rise of radical voices, such as Rizvi's, should be causing alarm bells to go off everywhere.

What Trump is doing to consumer agency isn't normal

A new White House is tasked with filling 4,000 political jobs at over 400 federal departments and agencies, according to the Center for Presidential Transition. Perhaps it's inevitable that every presidential administration fills a few empty seats with cronies, hacks and ideologues who are unqualified for their jobs. But something very different — and troubling — is happening in the Trump administration.

Although the post is being hotly contested, it appears current White House Budget Director Mick Mulvaney will become interim head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or CFPB, becoming just the latest Trump nominee tapped to lead an agency he had previously been intent on destroying or eliminating. Mulvaney once called the CFPB a "sad, sick, joke."

This isn't normal. This isn't a new administration deciding it would like agencies to have different policy or regulatory enforcement priorities from the previous one. This is an administration trying to neuter agencies that were created and funded by acts of Congress. And this won't stop until Congress, particularly the Senate, does something about it.

There has been no shortage of reporting about how the President is (or is not) staffing his administration, but it is often suggestive of mere managerial incompetence. For example, we have learned that the Trump administration is well behind the pace of the Bush and

Obama administrations in both nominations and confirmations.

Our government somehow has no ambassador to South Korea or permanent assistant secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs at the State Department amid one of the worst crises on the Korean Peninsula since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

This is concerning, to say the least.

But this still doesn't capture the significance of what the Trump administration is up to.

Earlier this month, I watched Scott Garrett's confirmation hearing to lead the Export-Import Bank of the United States, or EXIM, the agency I ran from 2009-2017. When I led the bank, Garrett was a New Jersey congressman who sat on the House committee with oversight over us. Garrett didn't just question our work, as any member of Congress properly should, he clearly did not think EXIM should exist. And he said so on many occasions.

He had decided, against all evidence, that EXIM, which provides critical export finance for domestic small businesses and foreign buyers of Americans goods and services, "embodies the corruption of the free enterprise system," as Politico reported Garrett said in 2015.

Garrett is entitled to think whatever he wants. But to put him in charge of EXIM is, as Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown recently said, like "putting an arsonist

in charge of the fire department."

If confirmed, Garrett would join the growing list of Trump appointees, including Scott Pruitt at EPA and Rick Perry at Energy, who have expressly opposed the mission of the agency they are leading.

An agency leader sufficiently determined to gut their own agencies — as Pruitt is and Mulvaney and Garrett certainly would be — has countless ways to do it. They can leave senior positions unfilled. They can ignore the work and recommendations of career scientists and technical experts. They can slow-walk grants, funding or financing requests.

Former Trump adviser Steve Bannon called this strategy "deconstructing the administrative state." This White House is free to try Bannon's strategy, but not unilaterally and not without authorization from Congress.

And yet that is exactly what it is doing. In an extraordinary move, the Trump Justice Department this summer concluded the Constitution doesn't empower individual members of Congress to conduct oversight of federal agencies.

This is the Trump administration essentially telling political appointees they can ignore any request from members of Congress who want to investigate how executive branch agencies are doing their job.

I know several members of Congress who may not like the EPA or EXIM but

like even less a White House that doesn't respect Congress as a coequal branch of government, and this one clearly doesn't. Here is Congress' chance to take a stand.

Congress has limited power to stop an interim Cabinet appointment for someone like Mulvaney, but the Senate can reject Garrett's nomination as chairman of the EXIM Bank. And it should.

There are still hundreds of unfilled political appointee jobs requiring Senate confirmation, and the Senate should also deny any appointee who does not understand or respect a basic fact: Congress passes laws, creates and funds agencies, and agencies implement the will of Congress. Future political appointees should also be asked explicitly if they would respect and respond to information and oversight requests from members of Congress. If they refuse, they should not be confirmed either. There may come a point when Congress needs to go even further. In 1982, the House voted to hold President Reagan's Environmental Protection Agency administrator in contempt of Congress for her refusal to turn over subpoenaed documents to a House committee. It was the first time a Cabinet-level official had ever faced such a charge.

This Congress shouldn't hesitate to take a similar step if Trump political appointees continue to willfully disregard its oversight authority.

Modi's India has a quiet confidence that is markedly different from lofty Nehruvian rhetoric

The victory of India's candidate to the International Court of Justice has been lauded as a great diplomatic victory, especially since it involved a bitter contest with a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

There were two interpretations attached to the triumph. Commentators in the West attributed the withdrawal of the British candidate to the UK's waning global influence after Brexit. However, the sheer scale of support for India's candidate in the UN General Assembly has also attracted attention. While it is tempting to see this as a continuation of an earlier pattern of Afro-Asian solidarity against an erstwhile colonial power, the point shouldn't be overemphasised. Would any candidate from, say, a smaller country, have succeeded in rallying as many countries as India did in the UNGA? Unless an exceptional candidate was on offer, this seems unlikely. The UK's importance may well have shrunk, but as a P5 country, it still has considerable drawing power.

The conclusion is inescapable: the large support was more for India than it was against the UK. Even London calculated it was better to opt out of the race than risk a contest that would have soured bilateral relations. In the context of next year's Commonwealth summit in which India is expected to play a leading role and a possible post-Brexit India-UK trade pact, the UK chose to not make the ICJ election a prestige issue.

In its report, The Times (London) referred to a diplomat quoting Tennyson: "The old order changeth, yielding to the new." For India, such a projection is extremely flattering. For those blessed with a spirit of nostalgia, it invoked memories of a distant time when Jawaharlal Nehru was routinely consulted on international issues.

To see the India of Narendra Modi reclaiming this inheritance is tempting. After a prolonged period on the margins, India appears to have clawed its way back to the centre stage of world affairs. Today, India is taken seriously and its voice matters. Even P5 countries are willing to show flexibility to accommodate India, witness the unconfirmed suggestion that Washington may have played a discreet role in persuading the UK to withdraw its candidate for ICJ.

However, there is a major difference between the influence India exercised in the early-1950s and its role today. Earlier, to quote V.K. Krishna Menon – arguably the most loquacious of Nehruvian publicists – India was a "quality" in world affairs. Its interventions, mainly to promote decolonisation in Asia and Africa, were based on moral arguments. As the first large country to secure independence from colonial struggle after an ethical struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi, India tended to be hectoring and even preachy. There were constant attempts to guilt-trip the West and prey on the troubled conscience of Western liberals, a posturing that ingratiated India to the Soviet Union and other 'progressive' forces. Yet the loftiness of the rhetoric could not conceal the fact that India lacked the capacity to feed its people, defend itself and muster enough internal resources to ensure adequate economic growth. Equally, the claims of moral superiority were punctured by the indulgence India showed in supporting shambolic post-colonial regimes.

The real difference between Modi's India and Nehru's India lies in India acquiring domestic capacity and achieving a measure of economic growth that many countries find enviable. Today, the Indian economy is vibrant and relatively more open than at any time since Independence. Additionally, while India has certainly not become insular, it has tempered its internationalism quite sharply. The irritating habit of pious grandstanding has been replaced by circumspection, strategic silences and a greater willingness to put national self-interest above ideological correctness. Finally, India has been willing to shoulder international obligations that go much beyond despatching peace-keeping forces to troubled spots. Its role in expeditions to the Antarctica and explorations in space, not to mention providing targeted assistance in war affected regions in, say, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, have significantly enhanced its claims to a permanent place on the global high table.

It was Cyril Connolly who once wrote: "Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first call promising." For a very long time, India's global image was laced with either patronising asides of 'promising' and 'potential' or quasi-mystical prognosis of 'destiny.' They essentially covered up for underperformance. It is only now that India is beginning to be taken seriously. A contrived arrogance resting on under-performance has been replaced by the quiet self-confidence that comes with rising achievement.

The Biggest Tax Scam in History

You might wonder how such a thing could possibly pass the Senate. But that's where the scamming comes in.

While the underlying structure of the bill involves raising taxes on the middle class, the bill also includes a number of temporary tax breaks that would, at first, offset these tax increases. As a result, in the first few years most middle-class families would see modest tax cuts.

But the operative word here is "temporary." All of these tax breaks either dwindle over time or are scheduled to expire at some point; by 2027 the bill is, as I said, a tax increase on the middle class used to pay for tax cuts that mainly benefit the wealthy.

Why would anyone write a bill full of provisions that evaporate over time? There's no economic or policy logic behind it. Instead, it's all about trying to have it both ways, making a safe space for political double talk.

Here's how it works: If you point out that the bill hugely favors the wealthy at the expense of ordinary families, Republicans will point to the next few years, when the class-war nature of the plan is obscured by those temporary tax breaks — and claim that whatever the language of the law says, those tax breaks will actually be made permanent by later Congresses.

But if you point out that the bill is fiscally irresponsible, they'll say that it "only" raises the deficit by \$1.5 trillion over the next decade and doesn't raise deficits at all after that — because, you see, those tax breaks will expire by 2027, so the tax hikes will raise a lot of revenue. By the way, the claim that middle-class taxes will rise is crucial to passing the bill: Only bills that don't raise deficits after 10 years can bypass the filibuster and be enacted by a simple Senate majority. The point, of course, is that these claims can't both be true. Either this bill is a big tax hike on the middle class, or it's a huge budget-buster. Which is it? Nobody really knows; probably even the people who wrote this monstrosity don't know. But someone is being scammed, bigly.

Oh, and ignore claims that tax cuts for corporations would jump-start the economy and pay for themselves. Of the 42 ideologically diverse economists surveyed by the University of Chicago on the impact of Republican tax plans, only one agreed that they would lead to substantial economic growth, while none disagreed with the proposition that they would substantially increase U.S. debt. So it's a giant scam. And while the exact nature of the scam may be unclear, ordinary American families would end up being the victims either way. For suppose those temporary tax breaks did end up becoming permanent, so that the budget deficit soared on a long-term basis. Then what? You know the answer: Republicans would suddenly revert to the pretense that they're deficit hawks, and demand "entitlement reform" — that is, cuts in Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, programs that ordinary families depend on. In fact, they're already talking about those cuts — they've started the switch even before getting the suckers to take the bait. So will they manage to pull off this giant con job? The reason they're rushing this to the Senate floor without a single hearing, without a full assessment from Congress's own official scorekeepers, is their hope that they can pass the thing before people figure out what they're up to.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

Chairman : Karam Singh Thind

President: Bhupinder Kaur Thind

Editor in Chief & Publisher : Sharanjit Singh Thind

Editor (Political Affairs-India) : Aruna Singh

Deputy Managing Editor : Max Thind

Contributing Writers: Navjot Kaur Thind, Sonia Gaba

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah

Special Correspondent :

Photographers: Ruth Alvarez/Hamad

Gagandeep Singh (INDIA)

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Web Coordinator : Jatinder Kumar

A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Phone: 917 612 3158 TelFax : 516 342 1076

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Disclaimer The South Asian Insider is a weekly newspaper published every week by The South Asian Insider. It's available in community & religious centers, ethnic grocery stores and also available by mail, email & online to subscribers. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various writers, authors and forum participants in The South Asian Insider do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editor. All advertisers advertising in The South Asian Insider assume responsibility for accuracy of their advertisements. The South Asian Insider and/or people associated with it are not responsible for any claims made by the advertisers and don't endorse any product or services advertised in The South Asian Insider. We strongly urge consulting your lawyer before buying/contracting/hiring through the ads published in the newspaper. We are in the business of selling space and claims made by the advertisers are not authenticated or confirmed by an independent source

Hafiz Saeed release

Pakistan moving from state sponsor of terror to state run by terrorists

The failure of the Pakistani government to press a charge against Hafiz Saeed signifies Nawaz Sharif's decline and the court judgment reflects the military's ascension



It is no surprise that a Pakistani court has allowed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed to walk the streets again. From the start, his detention was little more than an eyewash by the Pakistani administration in response to the fierce global criticism of LeT's role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. Saeed was never formally charged with any terror crimes; his detention was based on minor public order rules. The judges argued that if Islamabad would not charge Saeed with a crime, then it was time to end his four-year long detention.

While there is speculation about whether Saeed's release was linked to a lack of pressure from Washington, it is

more likely that his release is the outcome of a changed domestic political landscape in Pakistan. LeT is the terrorist group most closely associated with the Pakistani military, so any serious action against Saeed was unlikely. The battle over his detention helped highlight Pakistan's state sponsorship of terror to the rest of the world and promoted a broader, long-term policy of isolating Pakistan within the international community. That policy has been successful: Islamabad still has friends, but a lot fewer than in the past.

What precipitated Saeed's release is the ongoing power struggle between former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and

the military establishment. One could almost say the failure of the government to press a charge against Saeed signifies Sharif's decline. The judgment is just as much a reflection of the military's heightened power. Part of the military's strategy is promoting a cluster of political parties to undermine Sharif's party, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz). These have included a party built around former cricketer, Imran Khan, but today also include a political party structured around LeT. With Pakistani general elections scheduled for next year, it was necessary for Saeed to be released so that the LeT chief could effect the transition from a pretend

prisoner to an authentic politician.

While Saeed's release is reprehensible, it should be recognised that his conviction on terror charges would have meant a fundamental shift in the mindset of the Pakistani military establishment. His release indicates that if there is any change, it is only for the worse.

Rawalpindi's generals seem to have concluded that it makes sense for the future of their country to bring Saeed and his murderous cohorts into the political mainstream. Pakistan may now cease being a state sponsor of terrorism and instead become a state run by terrorists.

In The Middle East, The Dream Of Democracy Is Dead

Seven years ago, a Tunisian street vendor set himself on fire in defense of his dignity, unknowingly triggering an avalanche of public demonstrations across the Middle East. People in the region wanted what was denied to them for almost a century - a fair order, better lives and a little breathing space.

Seven years down the road, what the people got in return is upgraded despotism and chaos. Cab gossip is not an entirely infallible guide to world affairs. But a few weeks ago in Istanbul, a chatty driver said, "They say there will be a war. That's what everyone who gets in the cab is talking about."

The speculation about a "regional war" is becoming widespread, and to a large extent, that has to do with the death of an idea. Call it progress or democracy, but people in the region have no more reason to believe in a linear progression of history - that in time, all nations will become freer, more prosperous and more democratic. Any notion that Turks, Arabs or Persians could live under free regimes is long dead - both on the streets of Cairo and in the international community.

Seven years after the beginning of the Arab Spring, the Middle East has nothing to look forward

to. Democratic demands in countries such as Bahrain, Turkey and Egypt have long been squashed by the regimes. Economic reform has descended into corruption. Liberalism is lifeless; secularism has no backers; Baathism, Arab nationalism and, some argue, Islamism have long since failed. Ideologies are gone - but so is hope for change.

Even countries that once had a fair chance of establishing a democratic order, such as Turkey, are backsliding. With the partial exception of Tunisia, there is a stoic acceptance of what the late Fouad Ajami called the region's exceptionalism - the idea that the global spread of democracy and prosperity has bypassed the Middle East for several generations. Freedom will likely bypass this generation, too.

Of course, this sense of hopelessness does not directly lead to war. But it does mean there is a lot less to lose - and that populist despots could use nationalist fervor to make up for their lack of legitimacy.

"I really don't know what will happen," I told the cab driver in Istanbul. Could the Saudi crown prince's internal crackdown be a precursor to a war against Iran? Is Israel gearing up for another showdown with Hezbollah? Will

Baghdad continue to battle Iraqi Kurds - or will Turkey's internal Kurdish war spill over into Syria? Or can all of the above happen simultaneously, after a small trigger like the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, bringing the Middle East into a Hobbesian trap unseen since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire? It's possible. The Middle East wasn't always so heartbreaking. Back in 2011, when the world collectively believed - for about 10 minutes - that the region was on the verge of a democratic revolution, I was at the Munich Security Conference listening to Hillary Clinton. The then-secretary of state delivered a passionate plea for the region's leaders to reform: "In the Middle East, we have not yet seen security and democratic development converge," she said. ". . . For decades . . . governments have not pursued the kind of political and economic reforms that would make them more democratic, responsible and accountable. . . . The status quo is simply not sustainable. So for all our friends, for all the friends in the region including governments and people, the challenge is to help our partners take systematic steps to usher in a better future where people's voices are heard, their rights

respected and their aspirations met. This is not simply a matter of idealism. It is a strategic necessity." But somewhere along the line, after a successful counterrevolution in Egypt, the mess in Libya and Iraq, and the civil wars in Syria and Yemen, the Arab Spring has become a joke. A quiet Western consensus has emerged that it is futile to push for democratization in the Middle East. No Western leader would deliver the type of message that Clinton did in 2011, including Clinton herself. Despots are firmly entrenched and are more than willing to enter transactional deals with the West. Western leaders no longer have the motivation or faith to encourage democracy.

When it comes to the Middle East these days, the buzzword in the international community is "stabilization," as opposed to "transition." No one is betting on democracy any more. But has the equation that Clinton set out back in 2011, that dictatorships are inherently unstable, changed? Not really. Monarchies or repressive regimes are ultimately bound to produce instability. The gap between the people and the governments is still wide. Region's despots are still not providing good governance. Societies are still deeply divided

and unequal. Worse, the Middle East is now without a safety net. The notion of armed conflict is not new in the region, but this new round of tensions is taking place against a backdrop of an increasingly fraying liberal world order - with little self-confidence about its ability to transform the world. A self-absorbed and cacophonous United States no longer see a role for itself in providing regional stability or lifting the Arabs on the bottom ranks of the U.N. human development index. Russia is in the Middle East only to prop up the Syrian regime and its own sense of national pride. Turkey is too vulnerable domestically to fulfill its promise to be a regional "model," and Iran is essentially just interested in expanding the power of its sectarian policies. So back to the idea of war. Unfortunately, the conditions are all there. Borders may well change, countries could become ungovernable, and non-state actors could undermine the power of central authority in places such as Iraq, Syria or Lebanon. Sectarian wars could well rummage through the region for the next decade with the world watching the destruction of some of the world's oldest human habitats. When the idea of democracy is dead, what is there for anyone to lose?

When Gujarat Model Fails, Bring In "Padmavati"

Maitreesh Ghatak

"The Gujarat Model" is back in the news as the election in the state approaches. Elections in a major state like Gujarat are important anyway, but in this instance, there is an added factor: Narendra Modi's rise to the national stage was entirely based on the supposed success of the Gujarat Model under his Chief Ministership for 13 years. Now beauty, as they say, lies in the eyes of the beholder. The same, it seems, applies to the Gujarat Model. You don't have to go further than the recently-published Reserve Bank of India's Handbook of Statistics of Indian States for a handy guide to this question.

If you look at economic statistics reported in the section on State Domestic Product, e.g. at average state income or its growth rate, then there is no doubt that Gujarat is one of the top states. If you delve deeper and look at things like measures of infrastructure, such as power per capita (reported in the section on Infrastructure), once again it is a leading state. In these matters, Gujarat might seem to offer a "model" for others to emulate.

However, when you look at social indicators, reported in the section on Social and Demographic Indicators, the picture changes dramatically. Whether it is the percentage of people below the poverty line, infant mortality rate, life expectancy, or gender ratio, Gujarat is no model - it is a below-average state.

What is even more striking is that this basic picture has not changed much since the state began to outpace the rest of India in terms of growth in the early '90s following liberalization. By the mid-90s, Gujarat was a leading state in terms of economic indicators and a lagging state in terms of social indicators. Unfortunately, two decades of growth has not trickled down to improve the economic conditions of the average person.

This is a puzzle and cannot be easily dismissed as partisan criticism. In the end, per capita income, its growth, infrastructure, or ease of doing business are not important in and of itself. They are means to an end. And the end has to do with the quality of life of the average citizen.

Unless the benefits of growth percolate down to the masses - through greater employment opportunities, higher wages, or increased budgetary resources that can be used to improve

public services relating to health and education, or directly targeted to alleviate poverty - these statistics are just dry numbers to everyone except the affluent. A rising tide can lift all boats only when the smaller boats are able to float, and the tide has spread to the nooks and corners where most people live, and not just to the cosy coves with the luxury liners. Growth is necessary for long-term poverty alleviation, but to take advantage of growth opportunities, the younger generation of those from poor backgrounds need the required skills. And to develop their human capital, the key inputs are education and health.

One can live on hope for some time when one sees that the tide is rising at a distance, but eventually, if one remains stranded, patience runs out. Two decades is a long time and no wonder there is rising voter discontent in Gujarat as the election approaches.

Why did the benefits of growth not percolate down to show an improvement in the social

statistics? Again, a quick look at the official statistics provided by the RBI Handbook provides some clues. If we look at employment in medium and small-scale industries, then Gujarat is not in the top 5 of the 20 major states (in terms of total population) either in terms of the level of employment (adjusted for population) or its growth rate. What is even more alarming is that if we look at state-wise social sector expenditure per capita, Gujarat's rank is 12th among the 20 major states.

No surprise, then, that Gujarat's rank in terms of percentage of people above the poverty line was 10 in 2011, the latest year for which state-wise numbers are available. This suggests that, under the Gujarat model, growth has not led to employment generation, nor has it created enough fiscal resources to invest in human resources. It has largely involved facilitating big industries that are capital-intensive and do not generate growth of employment. Often, this is accompanied by strong fiscal

exemptions to big industries that use up budgetary resources that could be devoted to social schemes.

Leaving aside statistical details, the Gujarat Model is analogous to a situation where a small number of children in a school get all the attention and exclusive access to the facilities and end up doing very well in exams, earning the school fame in terms of its high-profile toppers as well as higher average scores. However, most other students languish with below-average scores and little hope. For some time, one can argue that the apparent success will bring in more resources and this will help everyone. But if this does not happen year after year, eventually the promise starts sounding false and rumblings of discontent become audible. We can hear this in the frustration in the Patel community and its Hardik Patel-led agitation, unrest among the Dalits, despair among the minorities, and the increasing urgency in the tone of the BJP's campaign in the state which was

supposed to be an electoral cakewalk for them.

It is fair to ask, given all this, how did the BJP manage to win successive state elections in Gujarat (it is likely to win the coming one as well despite the jitters that are on clear display). The answer to this lies in the fact that political outcomes are not just driven by economic fundamentals. If we look at the list of the longest-serving Chief Ministers in India, the person who beats Narendra Modi convincingly to a second position is the late Jyoti Basu of West Bengal, whose tenure was not exactly synonymous with economic prosperity for the state, despite early success in rural reforms.

After all, electoral contests are also a reflection on the opposition's ability to offer a credible alternative to the electorate as well as on non-economic issues that can divide up the electorate along ideological lines of whatever colour.

It is not an accident that the headline news for the past few weeks has been about a certain film called "Padmavati".

India has become a republic of "offended sentiments" and the disturbing trends in the country the row exposed.

We behave rather strangely for a country acclaimed as the world's largest democracy. We ban books and films before even reading or seeing them. In October 1988, India became the first country in the world to ban the import of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, within nine days of its release in the UK and much before the rest of the world woke up to the perceived slight to Muslims for what they considered to be blasphemous references. We had, unfortunately, a role to play in it, carrying an exclusive interview with Rushdie and some excerpts from his book in the September 15, 1998, issue of *India Today*. The initial attacks on the book came from the late Janata Party MP Syed Shahabuddin who alleged that the book was "a deliberate insult to Islam" while admitting that he had not read the book, only the review. Subsequently, there was a fatwa demanding Rusdhie's head by the late Ayatollah Khomeini, which forced the writer into hiding for nine years.

That drama has been replayed in India again and again attacking a variety of

art and literature, from Wendy Doniger's books to Bollywood films ranging from *Jodhaa Akbar* to *Uda Punjab*. With *Padmavati*, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's magnum opus dedicated to the mythical Rani Padmini, the politics has hit a new low. Since work on the film started late last year, Bhansali has been slapped and shoved, threats have been issued to mutilate leading lady Deepika Padukone, and a bounty has been placed on both the director and actor's heads. Powerful chief ministers of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Punjab have banned the release of the film in their states. Meanwhile, a little-known group, calling itself the Karni Sena, led by a former Union minister's son, Lokendra Nath Kalvi, is making political capital from the so-called insult to Rajputs. Not a single one of them has seen the film.

India has become a republic of "offended sentiments" in which one person's freedom of expression ends where another person's perceived honour begins. The postponement of *Padmavati*'s release underlines several

disturbing trends. The most important is the absence of the rule of law. The state did nothing to book Kalvi for hate speech or to ensure that the Central Board of Film Certification completes due process for its timely release. Then there is the question of artistic licence. The world over, filmmakers are making movies and TV series on living figures, such as Netflix's *The Queen*, and recent history, such as Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk*. Most of all, the politics of *Padmavati* has exposed the rampant desire under way in some quarters to reimagine our history in simplistic terms as valorous Hindus versus evil Islamic invaders. In such a charged environment, facts don't matter, emotions do. So it doesn't matter that Bhansali's film is based on a poem, *Malik Muhammad Jayasi's Padmavat*, written in 1540, more than 200 years after Rani Padmini of Chittor is said to have immolated herself to defend her honour against Alauddin Khilji. Based on the historical record, there is no evidence that Khilji attacked Chittor for Padmini rather than the mundane reasons of

territorial conquest. Or indeed whether Padmini existed. But none of that matters to those who cannot see beyond their own agenda. Senior Associate Editor Suhani Singh who reported this story believes the postponement of *Padmavati* and Kalvi's threat that he'll ensure it remains in cold storage is a blow to filmdom. It'll make filmmakers think twice before tackling subjects out of the ordinary. There's also deafening silence from some of the most powerful people in the industry amidst a culture of fear. "All their muscle-flexing is restricted to the screen," says Suhani. The fundamental problem is that we still think in terms of caste and community and how we can further our self-interest. In a country beset with such serious problems as a slowing economy, crumbling infrastructure, suffocating pollution, ailing healthcare and a pathetic education system, the national conversation is dominated by a mythical character. It doesn't reflect well on us as a nation with claims to modernity and democracy.

Editor, India Today

Kim: North Korea now a full n-state

PHOTOS: AGENCIES

N Koreans rejoice after regime tests ICBM that puts the whole US in range

NORTH KOREAN leader Kim Jong-un has bragged that his country has achieved full nuclear statehood after successfully testing a new missile capable of hitting virtually anywhere in the world.

The country ended a 10-week pause in its weapons testing on Tuesday when it fired off a Hwasong-15 rocket — its most powerful intercontinental ballistic missile yet which the regime claimed could be fitted with a 'super heavy nuclear warhead'.

It poses a new challenge for US President Donald Trump who has vowed not to let North Korea develop nuclear missiles that can hit the US mainland.

After watching the launch, Kim Jong-un boasted about its success, according to state television presenter Ri Chun-Hee.

"Kim Jong-un declared with pride that now we have finally realised the great historic cause of completing the state nuclear force, the cause of building a rocket power," the presenter said.

Trump has vowed to 'handle the situation'

"The great success in the test-fire of ICBM Hwasong-15 is a priceless victory won by the great and heroic people of the DPRK," she added, using the abbreviated name for North Korea.

US defense secretary Jim Mattis warned on Tuesday that North Korea now has the ability to hit 'everywhere in the world' and that the latest missile test went 'higher, frankly, than any previous shot they have taken'.

The Pentagon said the test missile traveled about 620 miles and landed within 200 nautical miles of Japan's coast. In a broadcast on state TV, North Korea said the missile reached an altitude of around 2,780 miles — more than 10 times the height of the international space station — and flew 600 miles during its 53 minute flight.



People celebrate the launch of Hwasong-15, in Pyongyang on Wednesday.



Tweet Picks

Just spoke to President Xi Jinping of China. Additional major sanctions will be imposed on N Korea. Situation will be handled!

— DONALD TRUMP



N Korean dictator Kim Jong-un

North Korea deliberately fires its missile on a near-vertical trajectory to artificially limit the range. If the Hwasong-15 had been fired on a typical trajectory, analysts believe it would have a maximum range of around 8,000 miles (13,000km) — leaving only South America and a small part of Africa beyond its reach.

President Trump vowed on Tuesday to 'handle the situation' in a brief interview with reporters, but gave no further details. "A missile was launched a little while ago from North Korea. I will only tell you that we will take care of it," Trump told

reporters in the Roosevelt Room of the White House a few hours after the missile streaked across Korean and Japanese skies at 745 miles per hour.

Asked if Tuesday's provocation by despot Kim Jong-un had changed his strategy in the region, he said: "Nothing changed. We have a very serious approach and nothing changed. We take it very seriously."

China expressed 'grave concern' over the new test, with foreign ministry spokesman calling on the US to suspend military drills in the region in return for North Korea freezing its missile pro-

gramme. Washington has previously rejected that approach.

China hopes all sides will work on the 'peaceful settlement' of the issue as a military option is not the solution to resolve the crisis, Geng told a regular news briefing. Beijing 'strongly urges' North Korea to observe UN resolutions and 'stop actions that heighten tensions on the Korean peninsula', Geng said.

"At the same time, we also hope the relevant parties will act cautiously to work together for the peace and stability of this region," Geng added.

Daily Mail

Trump shares 'anti-Muslim' videos, row breaks out

ON WEDNESDAY, US President Donald Trump retweeted videos posted by a British nationalist, which showed 'Muslims' committing crimes. Trump retweeted content posted by Jayda Fransen, the deputy leader of Britain First, a far-right group that stands against Islamisation of UK.

The first video purportedly shows a 'Muslim migrant' beating up a Dutch boy on crutches. After that Trump retweets a video of a Muslim man 'destroy(ing) a statue of Virgin



Videos showed disabled boy being beaten and Virgin Mary statue destroyed.

Mary'. And finally, he retweeted a video Fransen posted where she wrote, "Islamist mob pushed teenage boy off roof and beats him to death!"

All the clips that Fransen tweeted, that then Trump retweeted, are unverified.

Last year, Fransen was found guilty of religiously aggravated harassment after accosting a Muslim woman.

The charge stemmed from a January 2016 incident in which Fransen, wearing a political uniform and during a so-called 'Christian patrol', accosted a Muslim woman named Sumayyah Sharpe in Luton.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan, the city's first Muslim mayor, who has tussled with Trump over the president's so-called travel ban, said, "Britain First is a vile, hate-fueled organisation whose views should be condemned, not amplified."

Daily Mail

ISIS children execute 'spy' by chopping his arms



The video also showed a kid standing on the victim's decapitated head to deliver threat to the group's enemies.

BLOODTHIRSTY ISIS butchers have released their most gruesome video to date — showing a child no older than 10 standing on a decapitated head and threatening death to spies.

The tiny lad — dressed in camouflage gear — was part of an execution party that ended the life of a man who was condemned as a spy. First, he was chained to two trees with his arms stretched out as he confessed to his crimes.

Then two older boys — who appeared to be in their late teens — stepped forward and chopped off his arms with giant swords.

One of the boys then decapitated the victim with a hunting knife before the smaller lad placed his tiny boot on the man's head and delivered his clearly

coached speech.

The man is said to have been a US spy and the executioners were orphans whose parents were said to have been killed in airstrikes.

The alleged spy was dealt with in gruesome fashion by his ISIS captors after he was arrested for passing information to Pakistani and US forces in Afghanistan.

Video shot in Khorasan, along the Af-Pak border

The eight-minute video released by ISIS in Khorasan Province, a mountainous border region stretching across parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan, shows the Afghani man clad in an

orange boiler being interrogated.

He's then pulled into woods where he meets his appalling end.

Security experts say the new video is part of a desperate attempt by ISIS to shore up its recruitment process after receiving severe setbacks in its erstwhile bastions of Iraq and Syria.

The massive attack on a church in Egypt that killed more than 300 people is also part of the same desperation. The gunmen made no effort to conceal their identity — they showed up raising the ISIS' black banner, authorities and witnesses said. The group's militants had previously warned the North Sinai mosque associated with Sufis to end the mystical practices ISIS calls heretical.

Daily Mail



(News Agencies) WWE star John Cena is being sued by Ford after they say he flipped his rare, \$500,000, 2017 Ford GT.

In the suit, Ford claims Cena, 40, was hand-picked from thousands of applicants to purchase the car but violated his contract with the company that said he would not to sell it for at least two years.

In the suit, according to TMZ, Ford says Cena sold the car, of which only 1,000 were built, for a huge profit.

'Mr. Cena has unfairly made a large profit from the unauthorized resale flip of the vehicle, and Ford has suffered additional damages and losses, including, but not limited to, loss of brand value, ambassador activity, and customer goodwill due to the improper sale,' the complaint states. Ford wants Cena to hand over all the profits from the sale. They are also asking for damages.

Cena told the company he sold off the car along with other property to pay his bills.

The WWE star proposed to his longtime girlfriend during Wrestlemania in April.

He opened up to Yahoo Be this week he had been afraid of a 'negative reaction' from the crowd of 75,000 who might not like his idea.

John, who has been in Australia this week



You can't sue me!

promoting his new film Ferdinand, told the Kyle and Jackie O Show in June that was prepared to 'go down in flames' if Nikki had said no.

'We've been together for about four and a half years and I figured at that point if I was to go down in flames, I would go down swinging!' he replied.

'It was meant to be that way and I couldn't think of a better place to do it,' the wrestler added.

Watching the hulking wrestler test

the car on his YouTube show Auto Geeks, he barely fits inside its cabin.

The super car's super features include a ecoboost V6 engine, and Cena says it is made entirely of carbon fiber, making it an extremely light vehicle.

It is held on the ground by an aerodynamic 'buttress.'

The inside is also made from carbon fiber, which as Cena explains 'makes it a race car... that you can

Ford files lawsuit against WWE superstar John Cena for selling rare \$500,000 GT supercar for a huge profit before his contract allowed

put a license plate on... which is really fun.' Astros pitcher Justin Verlander and NASCAR driver Joey Logano also own the model.

New York model, 26, searching for work in Jamaica is found dead with her throat slashed on a road near Montego Bay



(News Agencies) A New York model seeking work in Jamaica was found dead on the side of a road with her throat slashed.

Desiree Gibbon, 26, from Queens, was found by locals bloodied and lifeless a few miles from Montego Bay on the Caribbean island's north coast on Sunday, LoopJamaica.com reports.

Mystery currently surrounds what appeared to be a heinous homicide - while investigators are conducting an

autopsy report.

The gorgeous Gibbon arrived to the country back in October with a three month visa.

Her body was spotted by the horrified residents in the bushes.

Police identified Gibbon after showing her photograph to hotel officials in the area where they thought she may have been staying, according to the New York Daily News.

Grief-stricken family members to

Gibbon were at a total loss for words about what may have happened.

'It has to have been a complete stranger. Desiree had a heart of gold, everybody loved her. Everything hurts. It's hard to breathe,' aunt Peggy Brunner told the Daily News.

Parents and relatives created a GoFundMe page to aid in transportation of her body back to the United States as well as funeral costs. 'My heart is truly broken!!! I asking you all to please help me and my sister at this very difficult and heartbreaking time,' her sister wrote to the page. 'My niece was murdered in Jamaica very brutally and we need to get her home as soon as possible!!!! Please help!!!! Thank-you all!!!!,' her aunt added.



German Mayor Stabbed In Neck For Pro-Refugee Stance, Saved By Kebab Shop Owner

Andreas Hollstein was at a kebab shop in the west German town of Altena on Monday evening when a man asked if he was the mayor, shouted criticisms of his asylum policies and then lunged with a foot-long blade.



(News Agencies) A German mayor who had won accolades for his welcoming approach to refugees was recovering Tuesday after being stabbed in the neck in an attack that authorities said was politically motivated.

Andreas Hollstein, a member of Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative Christian Democratic Union, was at a kebab shop in the west German town of Altena on Monday evening when a man asked if he was the mayor, shouted criticisms of his asylum policies and then lunged with

a foot-long blade.

Hollstein was treated at the local hospital and released. At a news conference Tuesday, he credited the kebab shop owner, Abdullah Demir, as well as Demir's wife and son, with intervening to save his life.

"I'm sure that if they hadn't reacted like that, I wouldn't be alive now," Hollstein said, his neck wrapped in bandages.

Demir, who is of Turkish family origin, told the German tabloid Bild that the mayor had just ordered a Turkish kebab sandwich when the perpetrator, who appeared to be drunk, confronted him. "I myself am hungry and thirsty," the assailant said, according to Demir, while the mayor "keeps bringing more refugees." The state premier of North Rhine-Westphalia, Armin Laschet, said security services believed the attacker, who was taken into custody, had a political motive.

Merkel on Tuesday tweeted that she was "outraged by the knife attack on Mayor Andreas Hollstein, and very

relieved that he is able to be back with his family. Thanks also to those who helped him."

"We must never accept attacks on people who are just helping others," tweeted Justice Minister Heiko Maas.

The attack comes at a time of growing concern over right-wing violence in Germany, two years after the European refugee crisis brought more than a million newcomers to the country.

The German daily Tagespiegel reported earlier this year that authorities had a list of more than 12,000 potentially violent right-wing extremists, significantly more than a year prior. The Interior Ministry said it had nearly 600 outstanding arrest warrants for right-wing offenders.

In September, Alternative for Germany became the first far-right party to win seats in the German Parliament in over half a century, having campaigned on an anti-Muslim, anti-migrant platform.

Bitcoin hits \$11,000 and then plummets. What next?

The bitcoin roller coaster is picking up speed.

(News Agencies) The virtual currency powered past \$11,000 for the first time on Wednesday, capping a jaw-dropping rally of more than 1,000% since the start of the year. But it then plunged by more than \$2,000, providing a stark reminder of its extreme volatility.

Long shunned by regular investors as a murky domain for cranks and criminals, bitcoin (XBT) has gained growing mainstream acceptance this year, helping propel its value higher and higher.

It's been smashing through milestones at an increasing rate: it soared above \$8,000 just over two weeks ago and only passed \$9,000 for the first time over the weekend.

On Wednesday, bitcoin climbed as high as \$11,350. But it then nosedived more than 18% to below \$9,300 as two major exchanges where it's traded said they were struggling to deal with a huge spike in traffic. By Thursday morning in Hong Kong, it had regained some ground to trade around \$10,400. While bitcoin's stratospheric rise this year has prompted warnings of a bubble, experts say that the gains in recent weeks have been driven in part by the expectation that more major investors — like hedge funds and asset managers — are gearing up to start investing in the digital currency.

Bosnian war criminal dies after swallowing poison in court

(News Agencies) A former Bosnian Croat general has died after apparently swallowing poison as a judge at the Hague upheld his 20-year sentence for war crimes.

Footage from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) showed 72-year-old Slobodan Praljak tilt his head back and drink from a small glass bottle as the presiding judge read out the verdict.

"Slobodan Praljak is not a war criminal. I am rejecting your verdict with contempt," Praljak shouted before swallowing the liquid.

The judge was then heard immediately suspending proceedings and asking for the curtains to be drawn. An ambulance was at the building shortly and paramedics raced up to the courtroom, Reuters reported.

The courtroom was being treated as a crime scene, an ICTY spokesperson told media. Croatia's Prime Minister, Andrej Plenkovic, later confirmed the former general had died and offered his condolences.

"On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and on my own behalf, I want to express my deepest condolences to the family of General Slobodan Praljak," Plenkovic said, according to a tweet from an official government account.

A prince's uncertain fate deepens mystery in Saudi Arabia

(News Agencies) It has been more than three weeks since Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, the most prominent investor in Saudi Arabia, was arrested on a Saturday night as part of the sweeping detention of several dozen elites. Since then, he has been holed up inside the Saudi version of prison for the ultrawealthy: the Ritz Carlton hotel in Riyadh, about a 10-minute drive from the prince's home.

He hasn't been heard from, nor have any charges against him been made public.

Because he was the longtime public face of finance for Saudi Arabia, Prince Alwaleed's arrest — and the lack of transparency around what has happened to him — is causing increasing consternation among his various business partners and in much of the Western business community.

His arrest has also created a sense of uncertainty among investors about whether to do business with Saudi Arabia and, by extension, could affect some of its partners, like Masayoshi Son's \$100 billion SoftBank fund, in which the kingdom holds a 45 percent stake. It could also affect the highly anticipated public offering of the state-owned oil company, Aramco, planned for next year.

"I'm surprised that he got swept up in this, because he had always been



such a positive figure both in reality and symbolically for Saudi progressivism — for participating in the modern world, in modern finance," said Richard Parsons, a former chief executive of Citigroup and Time Warner, in which the prince had also been a large investor.

"What is this all about?" Parsons added. "There is no transparency. Nobody understands what is going on. It is unclear why or what the rationale is. If you're an investor or a businessperson, you're going to take a step back from the starting line and say, 'I'm just going to keep my money in my pocket.'"

Many of the prince's longtime partners have sought information about him, but have not been able to learn about his well-being or the charges

against him. The Murdoch family, which has long had a relationship with the prince — he has been a large investor in 21st Century Fox, which in turn has a nearly 20 percent stake in Rotana, the media company he controls — has tried to find out more about his situation but has been stymied.

Known as the Warren Buffett of the Middle East, the prince has worked with Bill Gates on various projects, including their ownership of the Four Seasons resorts and several philanthropic endeavors.

"I'm only aware of what I've read in the press, and I can't speculate," Gates, Microsoft's co-founder, said by email. "Prince Alwaleed has been an important partner in my foundation's work to ensure that kids around the world receive lifesaving vaccinations. We've worked together to help stop the spread of polio, measles and other preventable diseases. His commitment to philanthropy is inspiring."

The Saudi Arabian government has officially described the arrest of Prince Alwaleed and dozens of other princes and businessmen as part of a long-planned "anti-corruption" effort. Inside the kingdom, the arrests were welcomed by many, especially by millennials, who think their job prospects and economic growth have been slowed by a culture of graft.

Today' host Matt Lauer fired for 'inappropriate sexual behavior'

(News Agencies) Matt Lauer's career imploded Wednesday as NBC fired the longtime "Today" show co-anchor following a female employee's allegations of "inappropriate sexual behavior," with fresh claims of misconduct toward women emerging hours later.

NBC News chief Andy Lack told staff shortly before the show's 7 a.m. broadcast that the network was responding to the first complaint it had received about Lauer's behavior, though he said NBC was "presented with reason to believe this may not have been an isolated incident." Variety reported Wednesday afternoon that several women said "they complained to executives at the network about Lauer's behavior, which fell on deaf ears given the lucrative advertising surrounding 'Today.'"

Lauer reportedly gave one colleague a sex toy and an "explicit note how he wanted to use it on her," and he was said to have exposed his penis to another female employee and later reprimanded her "for not engaging in a sexual act," according to Variety. Lauer also reportedly had a secluded office, complete with "a button under his desk that allowed him to lock his door from the inside without getting up."

The New York Times, which had also been investigating Lauer prior to his firing, reported Wednesday that NBC had "received at least two more complaints" that day regarding Lauer. One involved a former employee who said Lauer "summoned her to his office in 2001 and then had sex with her." The woman told the Times she

did not report the encounter at the time to human resources.

Lauer, who is reportedly paid around \$25 million a year to helm the NBC morning show, is the biggest television news star to fall after several high-profile journalists faced allegations of sexual misconduct in the workplace.

Garrison Keillor, the creator and former host of "A Prairie Home Companion," was fired for "inappropriate behavior," Minnesota Public Radio said Wednesday. Journalists including "CBS This Morning" competitor Charlie Rose, political reporter Mark Halperin and top NPR editor Michael Oreskes also lost their positions in recent weeks. Fox News star Bill O'Reilly was ousted last spring following revelations of settlements to several women

accusers.

Lauer's firing was reported Wednesday morning by "Today" show anchor Savannah Guthrie, who told viewers they were "devastated" by the news and promised to provide more details when they were available.

"I'm heartbroken for Matt. He is my dear, dear friend and my partner and he is beloved by many, many people here," Guthrie said. "And I'm heartbroken for the brave colleague who came forward to tell her story and any other women who have their stories to tell."

Lauer's departure rocks a \$500 million franchise that helps support the network's news division.

Lauer co-anchored "Today" for two decades, conducting interviews with U.S. presidents,



world leaders and major cultural figures. He was tapped to moderate a 2016 NBC candidates forum featuring Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, a performance panned by many in the media. He also traveled widely for the morning show, in recurring segments like "Where in the World is Matt Lauer," and was a familiar face during special networks events, from the Olympics to co-hosting its broadcast last week of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Right-wing blogger arrested at 'It's OK to be white' speech at UConn



(News Agencies) Lucian Wintrich, the White House correspondent for the right-wing Gateway Pundit website, was arrested Tuesday after a scuffle at the University of Connecticut.

Wintrich, who is also the Washington bureau chief for the Trump-boosting blog, was at the Storrs, Connecticut, school to deliver his "It's OK to be white" speech.

But many among the about 100 people who attended the event greeted him with chants of "Go home, Nazi!" and booed and interrupted Wintrich throughout his speech.

Chaos broke out when a woman approached the lectern and took a piece of paper from it, video shows. As the woman walked away, Wintrich is seen

following her, pulling at her backpack and grabbing her.

Police took Wintrich, 29, into custody shortly after the altercation and escorted him out of the room.

He was charged with misdemeanor breach of peace and was released Tuesday night on a \$1,000 bond, said Stephanie Reitz, a university spokeswoman.

"It's really unfortunate that some of the kids at @UConn felt the need to be violent and disruptive during a speech that focused on how the leftist media is turning Americans against each other. Tonight proved my point," Wintrich tweeted after his arrest.

Reitz said the investigation into the incident remains open, "and police are reviewing the videos to determine whether other arrests are warranted against anyone at

the event."

A student was arrested for allegedly breaking a window, and campus police are investigating after someone threw a smoke bomb inside the building as the crowd was leaving, Reitz said.

No injuries were reported, officials said.

University of Connecticut President Susan Herbst said it was a "very disappointing evening" that fell short of civil discourse. "We live in a tense and angry time of deep political division. Our hope as educators is that creative leadership and intellectual energy can be an antidote to that sickness, especially on university campuses," she said in a statement. "Between the offensive remarks by the speaker who also appeared to aggressively grab an audience member and the reckless vandalism that followed, that was certainly not the case on our campus tonight." Wintrich tweeted Wednesday that he would seek legal action against the university and the woman, who he says stole his property.

He had been invited to speak by UConn's College Republicans. He had planned to speak about identity politics in today's cultural and political landscape, CNN affiliate WTNH reported.

North Korea's missile launches: Don't take the bait

(News Agencies) The powerful recent PBS documentary on the Vietnam War offers a timely lesson about the sources of foreign policy disasters. They often follow a common, tragic script, built around two fundamental mistakes: untested assumptions about the need to act, and wishful thinking about magical schemes to act without consequences. And what's so disturbing today is that the US seems to be following the same script in the unfolding Korea crisis.

Modern foreign policy fiascos -- whether the war in Vietnam or the US invasion of Iraq or even the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan -- often begin with a sense of false urgency. In Vietnam, it was the domino theory (the theory that a communist takeover in one nation would lead to the collapse of other pro-Western governments nearby) and the obsession with defending every inch of global ground in the Cold War contest for supremacy.

In Iraq, it was the post-9/11 conviction that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and was cooperating with terrorists. In the case of Moscow's lurch into Afghanistan, part of the motivation was a sudden and obsessive conviction that the CIA was trying to topple the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. All of these assumptions turned out to be wrong. Vietnam's fall did not trigger a line of communist dominoes. Saddam had no WMDs and feared al Qaeda almost as much as the United States. The CIA had a very limited role in Afghanistan in 1979. In each case, more precise facts and interpretations were widely available even at the time. But facing strategic and political imperatives to act, national leaders did not take the time to assess them. Once a nation is convinced of the need to do something fast, it then often makes a second mistake on the way to disaster: It brushes aside the risks and costs of the escapade by concocting some scheme to avoid the worst outcomes.

Family reunion!

Ivanka Trump models ladylike coat to attend the National Christmas Tree lighting in D.C. with her husband and three children after returning from her trip to India

(News Agencies) Ivanka Trump opted for classic black and cream to attend the National Christmas Tree lighting in Washington, D.C. with her family on Thursday afternoon.

The 36-year-old first daughter joined her husband, Jared Kushner, her three children, and her half-sister, Tiffany Trump, at the annual ceremony held at the Ellipse in President's Park near the White House.

The mother-of-three, who was in India earlier this week, was the picture of elegance in a \$2,150 double-breasted cream coat by Altuzarra, which featured black piping and black buttons

Ivanka wore her long blonde hair pulled back in a ponytail, and she topped off her casual hairstyle with a black headband featuring pearl detailing.

The senior adviser was photographed arriving at the event with her husband and their children, Arabella, six, Joseph, four, and Theodore, one.

Ivanka, who was raised Presbyterian, converted to Judaism to marry Jared in 2009, and the two are raising their children as Orthodox Jews as well.

Although the family doesn't celebrate Christmas, that didn't stop them from enjoying the night's festivities.

Jared, 36, held little Theodore in his arms, Ivanka held her eldest children's hands

as they made their way to their seats ahead of the ceremony.

Ivanka was also joined by her sister Tiffany, President Trump's only child with his second ex-wife, Marla Maples.

Following her sister's lead, Tiffany donned classic black. However, her coat featured a plunging neckline that revealed her décolletage.

The 24-year-old law student at Georgetown University wore her long blond hair in loose waves around her shoulders.

Tiffany sat down next to her sister, who held her youngest son on her lap while he happily sucked his thumb.

While Ivanka and Tiffany opted for shades of black and white, First Lady Melania Trump donned a festive red tweed Chanel coat over a red dress, topping off the look with a pair of nude heels.

President Trump complemented his wife's outfit by pairing his suit with a bright red tie.

Donald Trump Jr. and his family were also in attendance at the event, but he did not appear to be sitting next to his sisters.

The lighting of the National Christmas Tree is in its 95th year, easily making it one of the country's oldest traditions.

President Calvin Coolidge first lit the tree on Christmas Eve in 1923 while on the Ellipse in front of more than 3,000 people.

Since then, every president has carried on the special

tradition. However, this year's event was the first for the Trump family since the president took office in January.

Dean Cain and Kathie Lee Gifford hosted the event, and a number of celebrities performed, including Boys II Bow Ties, Craig Campbell, Jack Wagner, Mannheim Steamroller, The Beach Boys, The Texas Tenors, Us The Duo, Wynonna Judd, and the U.S. Navy Band, led by Emmy-nominated music director Steve Gibson.

The program is set to air on the Hallmark Channel on December 4.

The event was a family reunion of sorts for Ivanka, who was in India on her biggest foreign mission yet earlier this week.

The first daughter traveled to Hyderabad solo on Tuesday to headline the Global Entrepreneurship Summit at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

After giving the opening address, Ivanka returned to the gathering on Wednesday, wearing a tea-length red dress.

The senior White House adviser stepped onstage to take part in a panel discussion as part of the summit and waved at the crowd before sitting down in the red number. Ivanka urged India to seize the untapped potential in women and promoted growing ties between the US and the South Asia powerhouse in a keynote



speech on Tuesday before Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

She returned to the theme on Wednesday, stressing businesses needed to stop thinking about gender considerations in the workplace as 'women's issues'. 'We are half the population so we need to start thinking about them as critical issues. We're seeing an explosion in women entrepreneurs,' she said. Later on Wednesday, Ivanka modeled a different outfit for a visit of the the historic Golkonda Fort on the outskirts

of Hyderabad. She shared three photos and two videos of herself during the visit on her Instagram account, including a short clip in which she makes sure to show both the front and back of the ankle-length black and white number.

Ivanka paired the long-sleeved dress - which was created by Surabaya-Indonesian designer Biyan - with bejeweled white flats and glamorous sunglasses, and took the time to twirl to give a complete view of her outfit. She called the tour a 'perfect end to a remarkable visit'.





Festive fun for all the First Family!

Trump and Melania light the National Christmas tree in front of the Kushner clan, Don Jr and Tiffany

(News Agencies) President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump kicked off the holiday season in the nation's capital Thursday evening by lighting the National Christmas tree for the first time.

For the special event that also included the Pageant of Peace ceremony, the first family was joined by hosts Dean Cain and Kathie Lee Gifford on the White House Ellipse.

Several White House officials were in attendance for the popular occasion including Donald Trump Jr.'s family and Tiffany Trump.

Ivanka Trump was also in attendance, as she brought along her young children -

Arabella, Joseph and Theodore -and husband Jared Kushner.

The busy mother-of-three, who has spent time recently traveling abroad as White House senior advisor to her father, was sporting an Altuzarra's AW17 collection \$3,000 Bellasio collarless double-breasted wool coat.

The program kicked off with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke introducing the president while speaking from the podium.

'Merry Christmas, America,' he said, referring to the glowing tree behind him as 'another iconic image of this blessed holiday,' along with nativity scenes, presents, and cookies for Santa.

He called Trump 'a man who



loves our parks, loves our military, and loves our country. The man who brought 'Merry Christmas' back to our nation's capital, and you did, sir.'

Trump then spoke for five minutes, and discussed the 'incredible national Christmas tree' while noting that the tradition goes back nearly a

century.

'The weather we have is the best it's been in 25 years. In fact I said it is always like this. The secretary said it hasn't been like this for a very long time, so we're very lucky.'

He noted that President Ulysses S. Grant signed legislation marking Christmas as a national holiday.

'For Christians this is a holy season, the celebration of the birth of our lord and savior Jesus Christ,' the president said.

'The Christmas story begins 2000 years ago with a mother, a father, their baby son, and the most extraordinary gift of all, the gift of God's love for all of humanity. Whatever our beliefs we know that the birth of Jesus Christ and the story of this incredibly life forever changed the course of human history.'

'There's hardly an aspect of our lives today that his life has not touched - art, music, culture, law and our respect for the

sacred dignity of every person, everywhere in the world. Each one of us is a child of God.

'That is the true source of joy this time of the year. That is what makes every Christmas merry.... We are called to serve one another, to love one another, and to pursue peace in our hearts and all throughout the world.'

He thanked those serving the needy throughout the year and during this season, and military and law enforcement, and teachers and pastor.

'And especially tonight I thank America's families... The family is the bedrock of American life... We ask for God's blessing for our families, for our nation,' Trump said.

At the outset of his comments, President Trump noted that people wait with anticipation all year for Christmas.

'Now as the president of the United States, it's my tremendous honor to finally wish America and the world a very Merry Christmas,' Trump said, and the audience cheered.

'We pray that our country will be a place where every child knows a home filled with love, a community rich with hope, and a nation blessed with faith.'



88 Girl Students Forced To Undress As Punishment By Teachers In Arunachal School



(News Agencies) Students of a girls' school in Arunachal Pradesh were allegedly forced to undress by three teachers as a punishment for writing vulgar words against the head teacher. Eighty-eight students of class VI and VII of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Tani Happa (New Sagalee) in Papum Pare district were subjected to the humiliating treatment on November 23, police said. The matter, however, came to light on November 27 after the victims approached the All Students Union (ASSU), who then

filed an FIR with the local police. According to the complaint, two assistant teachers and a junior teacher forced 88 students to undress before other students following the recovery of a piece of paper containing vulgar words about the head teacher and a girl student. Papum Pare Superintendent of Police Tumme Amo on Wednesday confirmed the filing of the FIR by ASSU. He said the case has been forwarded to the women police station here. "The officer in-charge of the (women) police station said the victims and their parents along with the teachers will be interrogated before registering a

case," Amo said. A team of All Papum Pare District Students Union (APPDSU) had met the students and teachers on Tuesday, and found that an unidentified student had used vulgar words in a piece of paper mentioning the name of the head teacher and a girl student, a release by APPDSU said. The teachers demanded an explanation from all the 88 students of classes VI and VII, who were later made to undress before the other students as punishment, it said. "The school authorities did not speak to the parents of the students before punishing them," APPDSU president Nabam Tado

said.

The Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) has condemned the incident and said such "heinous act" by the teachers might affect the students. "Tempering with a child's dignity is against the law as well as the constitution," it said in a statement. "To discipline a student is an attitude, character, responsibility and commitment of a teacher. Undressing a student is definitely not a corrective measure... Imposing such punishment is total violation of child rights, and more likely it may accelerate the risk of child abuse," the party added.

Must Ensure Women Entrepreneurs Have Access To Capital, Says Ivanka Trump



(News Agencies) U.S. President Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump kicked off a global business summit in southern India on Tuesday calling for better opportunities for women entrepreneurs battling heavy odds around the world.

Ivanka, also an informal adviser to her father, received a warm welcome in India's high-tech hub of Hyderabad with all the

and closing the gender entrepreneurship gap could help expand global GDP by 2 percent.

"Women still face steep obstacles to starting, owning and growing their businesses. We must ensure women entrepreneurs have access to capital, access to networks and mentors," Ivanka said to loud cheers from a packed audience in a heavily-guarded conference centre.

In developing countries, 70 percent of women-owned smaller businesses were being denied access to capital, she said, leading to a near \$300 billion annual credit deficit for them.

GES is an event conceived by former U.S. President Barack Obama. It has previously been held in countries such as the

United States and Turkey, but this year's edition is the first under the Trump administration.

The theme of the conference this year is "Women First, Prosperity for All". More than half the participants at the summit are women, and all-female delegations are representing countries such as Afghanistan, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Ivanka, who ran an eponymous clothing and jewellery business before becoming an adviser in the White House, has made women's issues one of her main policy areas.

She cited a Harvard Business Review report that found that in the United States investors ask men questions about their potential for gains, whereas they ask women questions about their

potential for loss.

Billboards with pictures of Ivanka dotted many parts of Hyderabad which is also home to major U.S. firms such as Microsoft. In recent days, authorities took beggars off city streets in a clean-up drive before the meeting, media said.

More than 10,000 police officials were deployed in the city and sniffer dogs as well as "spotters", or men trained to detect any suspicious activity or people, were on stand by, a police officer said.

On the sidelines, Ivanka held talks with Modi, as well as Indian foreign minister Sushma Swaraj. Later she toured the conference centre with Modi and met a few entrepreneurs, before watching traditional Indian dance performances in the inaugural session.

"This event not only connects the Silicon Valley with Hyderabad but also show-cases the close ties between the United States of America and India. It underlines our shared commitment towards encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation," Modi said.

India has become a major market for the United States, with two-way trade of about \$115 billion last year. They aim to raise that to \$500 billion by 2022. Military and strategic ties are also improving as China's influence rises in Asia and beyond. "The Trump administration sees India as a strategic partner and wants to engage with India more. When you look at sending of Ivanka Trump, it is sending a very strong signal," said Mukesh Aghi, president of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum

46k Indians got US citizenship in 2016, second only to Mexicans

(News Agencies) MUMBAI: Nearly 46,100 odd Indians obtained US citizenship during 2016, making them the second largest group, even as Mexicans continued to top the chart. Indians accounted for 6% of the total citizenship conferred by the US government+ on 7.53 lakh individuals during the fiscal year 2016 (October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016), according to recent data released by the US department of homeland security (DHS). A slight year-on-year decline in the number of citizenships being granted is already visible, with immigration from Mexico showing a negative growth. There is an extreme vetting of applications and an uptake in denials on 'odd' grounds that date back many years. At the same time, uncertainty on work visa policies has spurred a significant spike in the number

of applications. With 9.72 lakh applications for US citizenship (or naturalisation), the fiscal year 2016 saw a rise of 24% over the previous year. Comparatively, the 7.83 lakh applications in 2015 was only 1% higher than the number in 2014 (see table for more data). Normally, only green card holders+ can opt for naturalisation. While green card is a permit to live and work longterm in the US, the flux in visa policies and focus on more jobs for citizens is inducing many green card holders to opt for US citizenship. "Indians... more than ever recognise the value of citizenship. A citizen has certain rights and protections — a fundamental right being that to vote... additional job opportunities. Given the anti-immigrant rhetoric, immigrants are more aware of the need to be protected," says John C

Yang, president of the non-profit body Asian Americans Advancing Justice. A report by the National Partnership for New Americans says: The backlog of pending applications has increased by 77% over the past two years. At the end of June 2017, there were 7.08 lakh applicants for US citizenship waiting to be processed, up from 4 lakh at the same time two years earlier. The end result is a waiting time of over a year, in many US states, to be sworn in as a US citizen, whereas two years ago, it averaged around 6 months. NPNA is questioning whether this backlog is a deliberate process and is referring to it as a 'second wall'. California, New York, Florida, and New Jersey, which are among the states with the highest backlog in their administrative offices, have a significant number of Indians.

Indian Companies Should Empower Their Staff To Speak Up Against Sexual Harassment Faced By Colleagues



(News Agencies) "Oh, you are just being nice to her to get some action." Disquieting remarks like these, made about an employee's physical appearance are everyday occurrence at her workplace according to an associate at a leading advertising company in New Delhi. "What makes them even worse though is that everyone around just laughs at these comments," she adds.

Sexual harassment at the workplace, including offhand comments, outright sexual proposals or physical harassment by one's peers and bosses, is a global phenomenon. Polls by ABC Washington Post, Indian Bar Association, and Optimum Research reveal that 75% of American call workplace harassment a problem, and that 40% of the women in India and 1 in 5 women in the UK have experienced sexual harassment at the workplace.

Employees - both men and women - are immune to casual banter, says a senior manager at a leading hospitality company. "Usually, sexist comments are brushed off and not even acknowledged as being sexist. Comments such as, 'don't fight like a housewife' or 'you girls gossip all the time' are made even during formal meetings." Failure to implement anti-harassment policies by employers - coupled with a culture of tolerance, particularly by senior management, towards sexist behaviour has exacerbated the problem in India.

But even when policies are implemented, they often do not have the projected impact. Why is that? A report by Business Social Responsibility provides an interesting insight: "Sexual harassment is often a hidden issue. Communities often view violence against women as normal or acceptable, and the victims themselves may

normalize their experiences and not see a reason to report it." Another study, commissioned by the Government of Ontario, found that only 37% of bystanders believed they had an obligation to intervene when witnessing sexual harassment at the workplace.

So if we want to solve the problem of sexual harassment, we need communities to step in. One way of doing to in the workplace is to get bystanders to act. But why do bystanders fail to speak? According to a study, published in the Harvard Business Review, the bystander may fail to speak out against sexual harassment for two reasons - diffusion of responsibility, as people mistakenly believe that others will help or are in a better position to help and because people are misled by the inaction of the people around them and accept

that to be normal behaviour. The study also suggests that bystander intervention can be increased through bystander training, which can help with awareness and potential actions to take in a situation, and by improving organisations' culture. In the U.S., the Equal Employment Opportunity Council (EEOC), a federal agency, published a study recommending civility training and bystander intervention as effective approaches to prevent workplace harassment. The EEOC reports incivility at the workplace as an antecedent to harassment and gender biases, "as it creates a climate of 'general derision and disrespect' in which harassing behaviour is tolerated."

Therefore, holding civility training can be helpful as it teaches employees what to do rather than what not to do, to reduce

workplace bullying and conflict. After significant allegations of workplace harassment, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, implemented workplace civility training; it first experienced an increase in complaints - attributed to increased awareness after the training - and since experienced a 70% decline in complaints, and in severity of the types of harassment complaints, over the last three years. Another study in the Fortune 500 companies revealed the best practices to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace were those of the Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Texaco, and AlliedSignal. Because "their programs were a visible part of their corporate philosophy and utilised a variety of communication and training techniques; were adapted to the unique qualities of their organisations and employee

environments, and had a transparent complaint process with managers' roles well articulated." In the case of Kimberly-Clark employees are trained for 1-2 hours, and managers are trained for 3-4 hours, every two years. Further, since its employees often do 12-hour shifts at night, when there is less managerial supervision and chances of sexual misconduct taking place are higher, human resource managers often show up unannounced to conduct random checks. Green Dot - a violation prevention organisation focused on providing bystander training - implemented its program in Anchorage, the city of Alaska. As a result, the bar and restaurant owners developed a new cultural norm and "both staff and patrons acquired new skills to respond to potential harassment or violence."

My family is 'Shiv Bhakt', won't do 'dalali' over religion: Rahul Gandhi

Gandhi's visit to the Somnath temple got engulfed in a controversy after his name was found written on the entry register for non-Hindus.



(News Agencies) A day after a controversy broke out over his religion, Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said he and his family members were 'Shiv Bhakts' (devotees of Lord Shiva) but asserted that he did not want to use his religion for political gains.

Addressing traders in a closed-door meeting here, Gandhi said he did not need anybody's certificate about his religion, nor would he do 'dalali' (deal) over religion.

Some BJP workers entered his name in the register meant for non-Hindus at the

Somnath temple, leading to the controversy, the Congress leader alleged.

"My grandmother (late Indira Gandhi) and my family are Shiv Bhakts. But we keep such things private. We generally do not speak about them. Because, we think it is a very personal matter and we don't need anyone else's certificate about it," he said.

"We do not want to commercialise this thing. We don't want to do 'dalali' over it. We do not want to use it for political purposes too," he said.

A video of his interaction was shared with the media by local Congress leaders.

"I will tell you what had happened (yesterday). I went inside the temple. Then I signed the visitors' book. After that, BJP people wrote my name in the second book," Gandhi alleged.

On the relationship between Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru,

Gandhi said they were friends despite some political and ideological differences.

"Though they were friends and even went to jail together, some people here are spreading lies that they were enemies. Further, there is evidence that Sardar Patel was against the RSS. But some people here are spreading a lie that he was RSS sympathiser, which is not true," he said.

Gandhi's visit to the Somnath temple yesterday got mired in a controversy after his name, along with that of Ahmed Patel, was found written on the entry register meant for non-Hindus, with the Congress calling it "fake" and the BJP insisting the leader declare his religious faith before people. Gujarat Congress president Bharatsinh Solanki hinted that BJP president Amit Shah, who is a trustee of the temple, could be behind it.



The **ONLY** temple in the world outside India
dedicated to Shri Shani Maharaj

Shri SHANI DEV Mandir, New York

Sarvamangala Shri SANEESWARA Temple, New York

Regular Poojas' and Homas' are conducted on daily basis:

Special Poojas:

- + Sri Saneeswara homam
- + Sri Saneeswara - parikara pooja
- + Sri Saneeswara harati
- + Sri Navagraha Homa
- + Poornima: vrata Pooja
- + Pradosham Pooja
- + Sri Sankatahara chaturthi Pooja
- + Sri Satyanarayana Vratha
- + Birthdays / Weddings / Upanayanam & More... ..



**1616 Hillside Avenue, Temple Suits
New Hyde Park NY 11040
Ph: 718 740 9400 / 516 358 9400
Email: temple.navagraha@gmail.com**

Temple Hours: 8.00 am to 9.00 pm

The Temple entrance is in the western side parking lot behind Hot Breads & Maharajas in New Hyde Park NY

Functions of the space:

*Temple / Community Events / Senior Social Day Care Center /
Art & Music School / Library / Spiritual Lounge / Gift Shop*

www.NavagrahaUSA.com



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
Editor In Chief & Publisher**



Rex Tillerson Is Fiddling With PowerPoint While the World Burns

The secretary of state needs to ditch his strange obsession with his org chart and start being America's chief diplomat.

Imagine holding the job of representing the most important country on the planet, facing an exploding array of crises around the world, and focusing not on diplomacy but on fiddling around with your org chart and mundane tasks like fixing the email system.

Yet that's what Rex Tillerson has done in his bizarre and disappointing 10 months as America's secretary of state—a position held by such giants as Dean Acheson, Henry Kissinger and James Baker. Unlike his predecessors, who generally left the day-to-day management of the State Department to others, Tillerson has reportedly immersed himself in a mysterious, corporate-inflected overhaul of Foggy Bottom's bureaucracy.

The staff of the State Department has not taken kindly to Tillerson's ministrations: Experienced and talented diplomats are fleeing; top posts have inexplicably gone unfilled; and those left behind are demoralized and adrift. Applications for the foreign service are down by half. As the head of the Foreign Service Association, an alumni group, recently pointed out, the number of career ministers—the diplomatic equivalent of three-star generals—is down from 33 to 19, while minister counselors—equal to two stars—has fallen from 431 to 369.

Like any bureaucracy, the State Department tends to resist change; past secretaries have made attempts at reform with mixed success. But what's happening to the department

under Tillerson looks to many not like reform but sheer incompetence, if not deliberate sabotage. And what's especially strange about his focus on management issues is that, for a former CEO of one of the world's largest corporations—ExxonMobil—he doesn't seem very good at it.

Consider, for example, a recently leaked document out of the secretary's office that suggests he is relying on the 25-person Policy Planning office as the principal vehicle for day-to-day decision-making. As the previous director of that office, under former Secretary of State John Kerry, I was especially keen to understand how Tillerson is using my old shop.

The document, which was first reported by POLITICO, is a flow chart that attempts to streamline the making of foreign policy. It references no other office in the Department of State as playing a role besides Policy Planning, which appears to be the primary originator, implementer and monitor of policy.

It's not clear whether this is because the secretary thinks he is facilitating central planning, or because there isn't anyone else left with the requisite experience in the department to advise him—he hasn't filled scores of critical positions, and yet he is slashing the department's staff by 8 percent, or roughly 2,000 people.

There is nothing wrong with trimming bureaucracy, but using a Texas chainsaw instead of a scalpel, Tillerson is severing from the department its most valuable

expertise and experience.

Every secretary has a different model for decision-making. And Tillerson is certainly entitled to his own system; he seems to want fewer stops in the chain of command, perhaps to restrict the flow of information to a trusted close circle of advisers. This may streamline the decision-making process, but it won't necessarily produce a better outcome.

To understand why, it's worth taking a look back. Created during the Cold War era, the Office of Policy Planning was intended to help keep the big picture in view. Acheson, the undersecretary of state at the time, described its mission as to look “far enough ahead to see the emerging form of things to come and outline what should be done to meet or anticipate them.”

Acheson, of course, lived in the middle of last century, well before the communications revolution. The “form of things” seems to emerge more quickly these days, so it isn't surprising that in recent years Policy Planning has dialed up—and down—its operational role depending on the issue. It is something of a balancing act: To be relevant, Policy Planning can't remove itself from current crises. Yet it also needs to step back from the immediate, so that it can recommend actions to meet future challenges and take advantage of future opportunities.

When I was director of the Office of Policy Planning, sometimes “long-term” planning was reduced to weeks, such as during the 2015 Nigerian

presidential election, when we recommended that the secretary visit Lagos to highlight the critical importance of free and fair elections. At the same time, we were constantly adjusting our long-term strategies—for instance, managing the rise of China by working together on issues such as climate and development while confronting Beijing on cyber espionage and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

No matter the timeline for the policies we developed, we always worked with the various bureaus inside the department and with our embassies abroad. We knew that the assistant secretaries, our ambassadors and the career officials of the foreign service had valuable experience and therefore an important perspective. And we knew that for any strategy to be successfully implemented, we needed buy-in from those officers in the field.

Oddly, the power grab on behalf of Policy Planning does not appear in the “Redesign” plan submitted by the outside consultants Tillerson hired to advise him on reorganization. In their PowerPoint presentation, the consultants highlighted such obvious truisms as “People support what they help create” and “Build everything from the framework of supporting the mission.” In creating the Office of Policy Planning, Acheson wanted the staff to “do something else” beyond strategic planning: He wanted the office “to constantly reappraise what was being done.” The most important undertaking for Policy Planning

today should be to reappraise the secretary's evisceration of the foreign service and advise him to change course as quickly as possible.

Sidelining experts has led to some embarrassing mistakes. Tillerson began his tenure as secretary by initially announcing his decision to skip the NATO summit in April. He ultimately reconsidered, but it was an inauspicious beginning. And since then he has sent the message to Latin America that it is not a priority, when he couldn't find time to attend the OAS General Assembly in June or the Lima meeting in July. He invited the chair of the African Union to Washington and then backed out of the meeting, infuriating African diplomats. On his first trip to Beijing, he repeatedly adopted the diplomatic language of the Chinese to describe the relationship, leaving our allies in the region scratching their heads. And finally, he has downgraded human rights as a cornerstone of American diplomacy. Tillerson needs to stop playing management consultant and be the secretary of state. He needs to devote the necessary resources to diplomacy and development. He needs to lay out his vision of international relations and articulate actual policies to meet the many challenges the United States faces around the world, including the development of a diplomatic strategy in Afghanistan, the implementation of a global sanctions policy against North Korea, and a plan to reinvigorate the trans-Atlantic alliance.

The politics of Padmavati

Did a mythical queen trigger turmoil in the nation?

A still unseen film about a mythical queen has the nation in turmoil. Where will it end?

Push and shove and slap the filmmaker in January 2017. Vandalise the sets in Nagpur in March. Threaten to chop off the leading lady's nose. Call to behead the two for Rs 10 crore. Attack a cinema hall in Kota. Declare a nationwide bandh.

The Padmavati versus the politics drama has played out in troubling fashion with threats of Tarantinoesque violence. At the end of Kill Padmavati: Part One, it's the bad guys who win.

The Shri Rajput Karni Sena, a minor group of Rajputs headed by Lokendra Singh Kalvi, presently a BJP supporter and son of the late Union minister Kalyan Singh Kalvi, has temporarily won the battle by forcing the producers, Viacom 18 Motion Pictures and Bhansali Productions, to postpone the film's release. The filmmakers insist Padmavati "captures Rajput valour, dignity and tradition in all its glory" and that the film "will fill every Indian with pride". That the blow to Indian cinema comes when the Smriti Irani-led Information and Broadcasting Ministry celebrates Indian and world cinema at the International Film Festival of India in Goa is an irony not lost on anyone.

With the Sena, Kshatriya Samaj, Bajrang Dal, Rajasthan's royalty and more convinced that the film will distort history and hurt public sentiment, Bollywood finds its creative licence under siege. In an interview to India Today, Kalvi suggests that the Centre is complicit in Padmavati's delay. "The film's release has been postponed because of pressure from the people as well as an active role played by the top leadership, the PM and the I and B minister," he says.

This isn't the first time the decade-old outfit has locked horns with Bollywood in the name of Rajput pride. In 2008, it was Jodhaa Akbar, targeted for depicting Jodhaa as Akbar's wife. Nine years later, it's Padmavati. "The three-minute trailer gives us an idea of what the film is about. That is enough to express dissent," says Kalvi who hasn't seen the film and doesn't trust Bhansali to show him the final theatrical cut. "Deepika (Padukone, the heroine) is a nalayak (stupid).

She challenged us, saying the film will be released at any cost. Now we are determined not to allow the release of the film anywhere."

This time around, the Sena's angry rhetoric has been empowered by the Rajasthan government whose Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje wants a committee of historians, film experts and Rajput community members to scrutinise the film. The UP, MP, Gujarat and Punjab governments have also refused to allow the release of the film until the objectionable material is removed. At the time of writing, Maharashtra and Telangana too were contemplating a ban. In their opposition, there is consensus: Padmavati's release is a threat to law and order as it will hurt Rajput sentiments.

RAJNEETI AT PLAY

For the concluding Kill Padmavati: Part Two to unfold, one hopefully with a better ending, the makers have been told to wait until Gujarat votes, according to sources at the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). At stake is the Rajput vote in Gujarat, amounting to six per cent of the voting population. For the BJP, the growing alliance between the Karadia Rajputs and Patels, traditionally seen as rivals, in the coastal belt of Saurashtra is a worrying development. The Patels, under the leadership of Hardik Patel, have accused BJP state president Jitu Vaghani, a Patidar himself, of not fighting for the community's rights. The Rajputs, meanwhile, believe Vaghani is guilty of arm-twisting tactics and "has an anti-Rajput mindset". Anxiety looms furthermore with both Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh (which has the second highest Rajput population, after Rajasthan), going to polls in 2018.

Cinema being an easily accessible art with commercial interests involved has always been a soft target. The Padmavati row is unprecedented because a major film studio, Viacom18, in which the Mukesh Ambani-owned Network 18 has a 50 per cent stake, under pressure from the political powers that be, has voluntarily "deferred" the release of one of the most anticipated films of 2017. Besieged by attacks and threats, Team

Padmavati has chosen to shun communication. Their silence only highlights the cacophony of the rowdy antagonists.

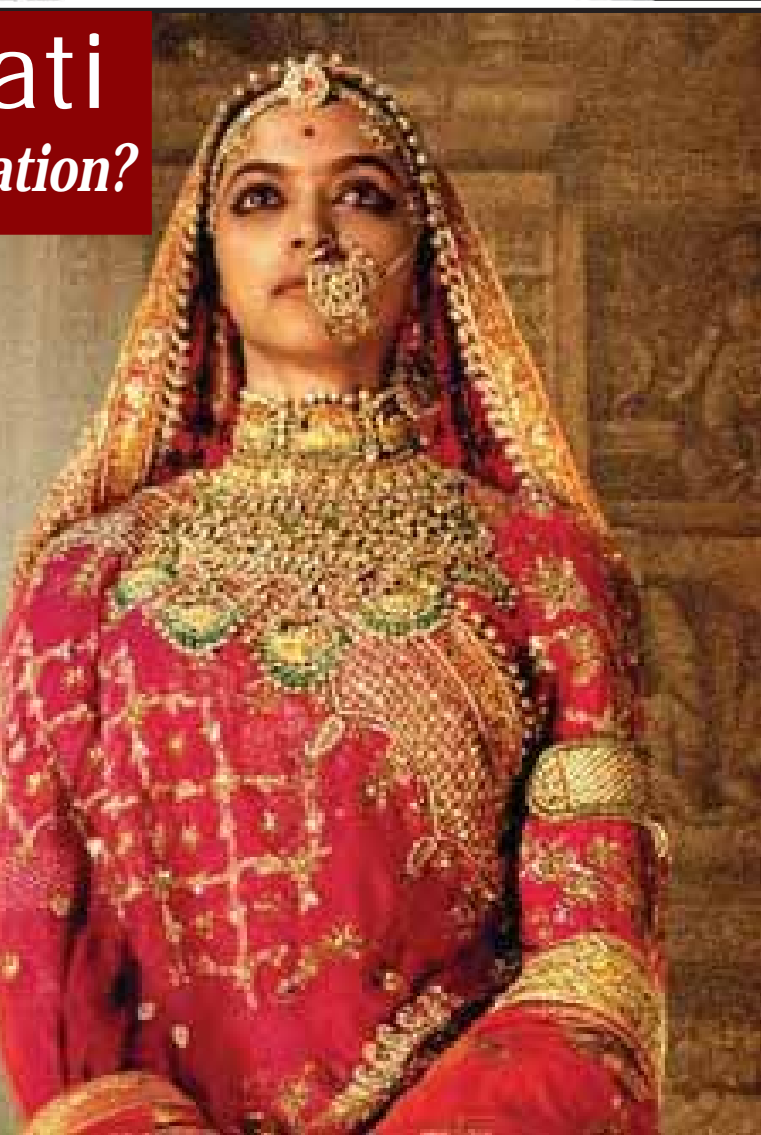
Padmavati becomes one of the many footnotes in India's history of suppressing artists, be it banning author Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in October 1988 or allowing the vandalism of artist MF Husain's works of goddesses Durga and Saraswati in 1998. For National Award-winning Prakash Raj, one of the few actors critical of the Centre, the Padmavati episode is further proof of how organised trolling plagues the country. "Where have these people found this courage of late? They decide to give death threats, kill," says Raj. "I am worried about the ambience this is creating. This is unacceptable."

The Centre's lack of corrective action in the face of threats and the silence of key figures like Irani has surprised many. The Prasoon Joshi-led CBFC denying the film a certificate — citing an 'incomplete' application — was another blow to the filmmakers. That the furore is based predominantly on rumours about an unseen film makes a farce of the proceedings.

ONE QUEEN TO INFURIATE THEM ALL

At the centre of the vitriol, brow-beating and protests is Rani Padmini, the storied Rajput queen of Chittor, India's equivalent of Helen of Troy whose beauty is said to have provoked an attack on the kingdom. Legend has it that she and the other royal women immolated themselves — a practice known as jauhar — to defend their honour against a lustful invader, the Sultan of Delhi, Alauddin Khilji, in the 14th century. Malik Muhammad Jayasi's Awadhi poem *Padmawat* (1540) was the first popular account of Khilji's obsession with Padmini and the much-celebrated Rajput resistance, they may have lost the war but their pride was intact, given Padmini's sacrifice.

There's no historical evidence that Khilji attacked Chittor for Padmini, rather than merely to expand his empire. Eminent historian Banarsi Prasad Saksena noted how Amir Khusru, Ziauddin Barni and Abdul Malik



Isami and other historians of the era made no mention of Padmini's existence. "We have no reasons for thinking that he [Khilji] bothered about Rai's (Ratan Singh's) wives or women," observed Saksena. Kalvi, who claims to be the 37th blood descendant of Padmini, counters: "If Padmavati was a fantasy, how come I am a real character? If she was a fantasy, why did one president, two prime ministers and 15 CMs visit the Padmini Palace (in Chittorgarh Fort) and bow before her memory?"

There's more to the legend of Padmini / Padmavati than her celebrated suicide. Lindsey Harlan, a retired professor of religious studies based in the United States, explores why Padmini was worshipped among women in her book *Religion and Rajput Women: The Ethic of Protection in Contemporary Narratives*. She points out that in popular legend it was Padmini's heroism which saw her plan an operation to rescue her husband after he is captured by Khilji. 'In going out to war, she disregards female custom and performs male duty,' writes Harlan. 'Treading on male territory, she assumes her husband's command. Padmini is heroic not because she fulfils the codified role of the pativrata (dutiful wife) but because she departs from it to assume another, more urgent role.' Meanwhile, in the popular Amar Chitra Katha comic, Padmini, part of the 'Glorious Heritage of India' series, she is

described as 'the perfect model of Indian womanhood'.

SYMBOL OF HINDU PRIDE

In a series of interviews for her book, Harlan asked Rajput women why they idolise Padmini. "I admire Padmini because she was very clever; she showed the Muslims that!" said one. For most, the folklore demonstrates Padmini's bravery as she would rather die than become a hostage or wife to a man who happens to be a mighty king of another faith. Ramya Sreenivasan, a professor of religious studies at the University of Pennsylvania, describes in her book *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen* how the Padmini narrative has been reinterpreted as exemplifying 'Rajput' and now 'Hindu' patriotism in the face of 'Muslim conquest'. 'By the 18th century, the narratives in Rajasthan articulated an emergent demonisation of the conquering enemy as the iconoclastic, unclean Muslim,' she writes.

Sreenivasan's work suggests that not just Rajputs but other Hindu groups too have appropriated Padmini as the epitome of Hindu valour. And sure enough, it has happened. The Hindu Janjagruti Samiti (HJS), headquartered in Goa and also active in Maharashtra, MP, Gujarat and Rajasthan, warns that it will hold the CBFC responsible for "public outrage" if Padmavati is released without clearing objections.

**We Thank Our Customers for Their Trust & Loyalty
22 Years of Excellent Customer Service**

FOR COMPETITIVE RATES CALL

1-800-870-5845

PICK-UP & DELIVERY

ANYWHERE IN USA



INDO US EXPRESS, INC.

World wide Couriers*Freight Forwards

Domestic & Local Delivery

43-50, 11th St., Suite No, 109, LIC, New York, N.Y. 11101

Tel: 212-447-5720. Fax: 5169323750

www.indousexpress.com

Email : gsingh9070@aol.com (or) indousexpress@gmail.com

7Days A Week

**CALL ABOUT OUR SPECIAL RATES TO
INDIA**

How a suicidal pizza man found himself ensnared in an FBI terror sting

Every day was the same for Khalil Abu Rayyan, 21, a depressed pizza delivery man from Dearborn Heights, Michigan. Working for a pizzeria in Detroit, he'd drive late nights on desolate inner city streets, smoking pot hoping to keep boredom at bay. He carried a pistol to protect himself from robbers.

Rayyan wished he could meet a girl but his strict Muslim parents didn't allow him to date. He'd been troubled since the age of 12, when he was sent into counseling after telling his teacher he had a nightmare about bringing a gun to school and killing everyone in class. Tormented by bullies, he later got into fights that led to at least three suspensions. When he was 17, he started using marijuana.

Now, high school was over and Rayyan

had a stable job at his dad's pizza shop but he still felt lonely, bitter and powerless, consumed with revenge fantasies. When he got home from work and logged onto his computer, he sought out shocking content in the darkest reaches of the Internet. He began watching ISIS videos in 2014.

He posted images of the terror group's atrocities on social media, a gruesome montage that included the beheadings of Coptic Christians, the burning death of a Jordanian pilot and men being thrown from high-rise rooftops for suspected homosexuality.

Rayyan felt insecure around the weightlifters at the gym, but online he portrayed himself as a menacing Islamist warrior. In one picture, he's cloaked in

camouflage, holding a pistol and pointing his index finger skyward. It's a gesture that signals support for ISIS. It's a gesture that put the pizza man on the FBI's radar, according to a CNN review of ISIS prosecutions in the US.

Late one autumn day in 2015, Rayyan was at his lowest. He'd been pulled over by Detroit police for speeding and was arrested after the officer found a concealed revolver, four plastic bags of marijuana and sleeping pills in his 2001 Buick Century. Rayyan was released on bond but things looked bleak, with a seemingly endless series of court appearances on the horizon. Chronic gloom gave way to suicidal thoughts.

He tried to purchase a new pistol and was turned away because of his arrest.

That same day, he went to a firing range and rented an AK-47-style rifle as well as an AR-15-style rifle. Background checks are not required for individuals renting firearms to use exclusively at gun ranges, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation. Retailers may, however, use their discretion and decline to rent guns to individuals they suspect may be prohibited from owning firearms by law.

Two weeks later, Rayyan tweeted a picture of himself holding a rifle with a caption: "Sahwat hunting." In ISIS vernacular, a sahwat is a person who opposes the terror group. Sahwat refers to the Sunni tribesmen who fought alongside US-led coalition troops during the surge in Iraq.

The Unbelievable Story of How the CIA Helped Foil a Russian Spy Ring in London Newly released documents reveal a real-life plot that seems ripped from a Cold War novel.

A quiet residential street, like any other, in northwest London. Neighbors say the occupants of 45 Cranley Drive, in Ruislip, are friendly and host good parties. They are antiquarian booksellers in London, owning a shop on the Strand. But their home is not ordinary, it is a house of secrets: Under cover of bland suburbia, they are using it to run a sophisticated deep-cover Russian spy ring, which has penetrated to the heart of a highly sensitive British government research establishment, which shares military secrets with the United States. Their spy network is even linked to deep-cover Kremlin agents in the United States stealing atomic secrets.

This is not a new bombshell revelation from the on-going Trump-Russia saga, nor a scene from the TV series *The Americans*, nor is it taken from a John Le Carré novel—though Russian spies posing as London antiquarian booksellers is like something from the pages of Le Carré. This is fact, not fiction—and the facts are important to understand Russia's intelligence operations today.

This story is revealed in remarkable tranche of records declassified on Tuesday by the British Security Service, better known as MI5, about a major Russian spy network that operated in Britain in the post-

war years, known as the Portland Spy Ring. Its discovery in the early 1960s set off alarm bells in capitals across the Western world. Unlike all previous post-war Soviet espionage cases investigated by MI5 in Britain, the Portland spy ring did not involve Soviet KGB and GRU (military) intelligence officers using official ("legal") diplomatic cover. Instead, more alarmingly for British and Western intelligence agencies, it involved a deep-cover Soviet "illegal," with no diplomatic cover, living out in the cold, under a false name and nationality—and almost impossible to detect. As British and U.S. intelligence were to discover, the spy network they uncovered was linked to some of the most important Soviet illegals operating in the United States, including Rudolf Abel, who was recently depicted in the Steven Spielberg film *Bridge of Spies*.

MI5's multi-volume declassified files on the Portland Spy Ring are the first records from the archives of British intelligence to reveal how it was detected. They show that the tip-off for British intelligence came from a well-placed agent the CIA was running in Polish intelligence, Michal Goleniewski, codenamed "SNIPER" (Goleniewski later defected to the U.S.). In April 1960, Goleniewski reported that Polish intelligence had recruited an agent in the British naval attache's office in Warsaw, but

when the agent returned to Britain, he had been handed over to Soviet intelligence, the KGB.

MI5 was soon on the case. The prime suspect was quickly identified as Harry Houghton, a clerical officer at Britain's Underwater Detection Establishment (UDE) in Portland, Dorset, on England's south coast. Houghton had previously served in Warsaw, until being sent home for alcohol abuse. Embarrassingly for MI5, the agency discovered that Houghton had previously been on its radar and it had made serious errors about him. In 1956, MI5 had been asked for security concerns about Houghton working at the UDE and was even sent a report from Houghton's wife warning that he was revealing classified information. At the time, MI5's vetting section had erroneously concluded, without serious investigation, that Mrs. Houghton was claiming this out of spite because their marriage was breaking up—a striking failure for MI5. When it later questioned Mrs. Houghton, who had since remarried, in 1960, she revealed that he used to bring classified papers home with him from work at the UDE and took them to London at the weekends, sometimes returning with bundles of cash. Mrs. Houghton had been too afraid to report this to the police



because Mr. Houghton was violent.

Surveillance on Houghton soon showed that was having an affair with a record-keeper at UDE, Ethel "Bunty" Gee, who had considerably more access to classified documents than he did, including sensitive U.S. information on underwater technology. On both sides of the Cold War conflict, it was a well-practiced intelligence technique not to recruit senior officials, who were hard to get, but instead aim for lower-level secretarial staff with wide access to records. Houghton and Gee's thick MI5 files, now available at the National Archives in London, show that in July 1960 MI5's plain-clothed officers followed the couple on a weekend trip to London and observed them meeting a man, called "A" in the initial surveillance reports, who was believed to be "an illegal agent working for either the Russian or Polish intelligence service." The man drove off after the meeting in a car registered in the name of "Gordon Lonsdale." MI5 soon set to work finding out

all it could about Lonsdale, even placing a listening device in his apartment in central London. He was revealed to have an exciting playboy lifestyle in London's swinging early 1960s, with fast cars and faster women. He was a successful businessman, directing several companies that installed juke boxes and bubble-gum machines. Conspicuously, he drove a large, U.S.-imported Studebaker car.

It was all a smokescreen. Only later, after his espionage trial and conviction, did MI5 discover that Lonsdale was really Konon Molody, a KGB illegal using bogus identity documents. He was run by the KGB's Directorate S, responsible for illegals overseas, whose cover lives, "legends," were some of the most closely guarded KGB secrets. KGB illegals were responsible for running agents and also acted as sleeper-agents, to be activated when war between the West and the Soviet Union—World War Three—broke out.

Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2017

US President Donald Trump's daughter and his advisor Ivanka Trump is on a three-day visit to India. Ivanka who is also an American television personality, fashion designer, author and businesswoman is visiting the country on the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During the visit, she will lead the US contingent to Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2017. This is the first time that the Global Summit is being held in South Asia. Niti Aayog in partnership with the Governments of the United States is hosting the eighth edition of the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Hyderabad. Prime Minister Modi will inaugurate the summit today at 4:30 PM. After the welcome remarks by the Prime Minister and

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy will address the summit. She is likely to stress on ensuring women entrepreneurs have access to capital, access to networks and mentors, and access to equitable laws, PTI today reported. According to excerpts of her speech obtained by PTI, Ivanka is likely to speak on fuelling the growth of women-led businesses and how all over the world entrepreneurs are revolutionising our economies, and improving our societies. The theme of the summit for this year is: Women First, Prosperity for All. "This will be the first GES in which women are the majority, over 52.5 per cent, of the participants," Niti Aayog said in a press statement. More than 10 countries will be

represented by an all-female delegation, including from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. A number of leading female voices including tennis champion Sania Mirza, Google Vice President of Next Billion

Users Diana Louise Patricia Layfield, and CEO of Afghan Citadel Software Company Roya Mahboob will also participate in the summit. In addition to entrepreneurs travelling from across the

globe to share their stories and innovative projects, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will also participate in GES.

Congress leader Baba Siddique to be interrogated for Rs 500 crore scam

The investigators have started an in-depth analysis of the documents submitted by SRA, before it could implement its next action-plan.

"Almost for a month the agency was waiting for some crucial documents from SRA. It includes hundreds of ration-cards, agreement copies, etc. from 2004-05 to the present. Now, all these documents are in our hand and our in-depth scrutiny has begun," as source from the agency told India Today. Once the examination of documents is done, the ED is likely to issue a summon to Siddique again for second round of interrogation. In June 2017, Siddique was questioned for at least nine hours.

According to sources, Siddique had denied all allegations of financial irregularities, money laundering and allegedly used the 'religion-card' before the investigators.

The agency has recorded statements of about 10 individuals including the accused directors of Pyramid Developers and Pioneer India and key officials of Satra Group, alleged partner of Pyramid in super-luxurious residential project located right opposite

Bandra-Worli Sea Link in Mumbai. Each apartment in this project is priced at around Rs 25 crore.

In May 2017, the ED had filed an Enforcement Case Investigation Report (ECIR) against Siddique along with eight others (total 9) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), suspecting foul play in a Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) project, worth Rs 500 crore. Subsequently, searches were conducted at seven locations in Mumbai.

The agency is investigating if the three-times MLA from Bandra region had misused his position as the chairman of MHADA to violate the FSI rules and help Pyramid Developers to bag this residential project from Satra Group.

ED suspects, Pyramid and Pioneer are two front companies floated by Siddique and the money created by sale of flats in Bandra project was laundered to create his assets.

Investigation details shared with India Today reveals some shocking information. For instance, the entire plot of Jamaat-e-Jamoori slum at Bandra Reclamation, which got converted into a SRA colony,

was developed at the cost of Rs 90 crore.

The construction cost of converting that slum into a SRA colony was managed and financed by Pyramid Developers. But Pyramid was getting funding by another layer of company named Pioneer (India) Developers Pvt Ltd.

Seized documents has revealed that at the time of development of these SRA buildings in year 2003, both companies were not having funds more than Rs 10-15 crore in its bank accounts. "So the question arise, where the money was coming from and who was funding Pioneer Developer?" the source said.

On June 1, 2017, IndiaToday.in was first to report that the agency is probing a money trail of almost Rs 2000 crore in this case, generated by the sale of flats and contractual agreements signed between Pyramid and Satra group. In addition to Siddique's benami properties, his underworld links is also under ED's scanner.

The agency claims that it has enough documents in hand that proves crucial role played by Baba Siddique when he was the chairman of MHADA in year 2002.

Tough time for Anil Ambani as Chinese lender drags RCom to NCLT

, junked the insolvency petition reports, saying "the company is engaged through the JLF (joint lenders forum) with all its lenders for a successful resolution of the SDR process. The China Development Bank has also been actively participating in the JLF." With the filling of the insolvency proceedings, all hopes of an out-of-court settlement for the company seem to be dashed. The latest blow to RCom also kills the debt structuring plan proposed by the company to its lenders. The current insolvency petition also poses the biggest challenge to RCom to even secure a minority stake in RCom. Reliance Communication had earlier offered pay Rs 27,000 crore of the total debt through asset monetisation, Rs 7,000 crore through a 'non-loan write-off' plan to lenders to convert it into equity, and Rs 6,000 by carrying forward it to new business. The recent development comes a month after the company's a merger deal with Aircel fell off. Swedish telecom equipment maker Ericsson, Manipal Technologies, and Tech Mahindra had also approached the bankruptcy court, though Tech Mahindra and RCom later decided to settle the dispute out of the court. In its application before NCLT, reported the Economic Times, the Chinese bank nominated Abhilash Lal as an independent resolution professional, with an understanding that Alvarez & Marshal (A&M) will be his advisors to take over the company. "Within a month it is expected that A&M will be in

charge and then propose a resolution plan," the ET quoted a source. On November 27, Business Today had reported that telecom giant Bharti Airtel was likely to buy select spectrum and some equipment from RCom. A loss-making entity with Rs 45,000 debt to pay, RCom had earlier announced to close 2G and 3G operations from November 30. The company on November 11 confirmed a quarterly loss of over \$27.09 billion as compared to 620 million of profit a year earlier. In the absence of potential buyers for its businesses - wireless telecom, DTH, optic fibre - RCom had scaled down operations in the recent past. By doing so, it was trying to save on costs, and make it attractive to buyers. The company claimed by shutting down the 2G business, it would cut back on losses of about Rs 80 per subscriber per month, aggregating to some Rs 3,840 crore annually. RCom brags about its pan-India spectrum in 800/850 MHz and 1,800 MHz bands. But half of this spectrum expires in 2021. As part of its asset monetisation plans, RCom had been working on finding investors or buyers for prime real estate assets, including at Dhirubhai Ambani Knowledge City, Navi Mumbai, measuring nearly 125 acres with development rights of potentially over 17 million sq ft and prime property of 4 acre near Connaught Place, New Delhi. The company is in a standstill period (for interest and principal repayments) till December 2018 and expects to complete the SDR process as per the RBI guidelines.

Michael Flynn Pleads Guilty to Lying to the F.B.I. and Will Cooperate With Russia Inquiry

to stop meddling in foreign affairs before the inauguration. The documents do not disclose what Mr. Trump knew about Mr. Flynn's discussions. But in at least one instance, prosecutors say, Mr. Flynn was directed by a "very senior member" of the presidential transition team to discuss a United Nations resolution. Mr. Trump's lawyers believe that unnamed aide was Mr. Trump's son-in-law and close adviser, Jared Kushner, according to a lawyer briefed on the matter.

The transition team was led by Vice President Mike Pence. Its top members included Mr. Kushner; Reince Priebus, Mr. Trump's first chief of staff; and K.T. McFarland, who was Mr. Flynn's deputy and was later appointed to be the ambassador to Singapore. Mr. Flynn spoke to Ms. McFarland about another of

his conversations with Mr. Kislyak, according to the lawyer. Mr. Flynn's decision to plead guilty to lying to investigators about those conversations marked a significant new phase in the investigation of the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, and a politically treacherous development for the president and his closest aides, whose activities in the West Wing are being scrutinized by F.B.I. agents, lawmakers, federal prosecutors and the media.

The admissions by Mr. Flynn have the potential to reshape the public's understanding of what the president's associates said and did in the days after Mr. Trump's unexpected election victory. And they suggest that prosecutors now have a cooperative source of information from inside the Oval Office during the

administration's chaotic first weeks. Mr. Flynn's plea deal could deeply undercut the claims made in January by Mr. Trump and his aides that they were misled by Mr. Flynn about his discussion with Russians regarding sanctions imposed on Moscow by the Obama administration over the election interference. In fact, the documents say multiple members of the team coordinated the specifics of Mr. Flynn's outreach to Russia and knew that the conversations were about sanctions. Mr. Flynn's agreement also provided new context for Mr. Trump's efforts to get F.B.I. officials to back off their investigation of Mr. Flynn James B. Comey, the former F.B.I. director, has said that the president asked him to shut down the investigation one day after Mr. Flynn was fired in February.

Arun Jaitley says no loan waiver for big capitalists

should know that the previous government - rather than taking firm decision against debtors - had relaxed the loan classification norms to keep defaulters as non-NPA account holders. In a blog post on Tuesday, Jaitley said a rumour was being propagated about the waiver of loans of capitalists by banks. "They should also be asked that when these debtors delayed repayment of their loans and interest thereon to Public Sector Banks, what decision was taken by the then government," the finance minister asked, adding that rather than taking firm decision against debtors, the then government relaxed the loan classification norms.

The finance minister also stressed the new Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code would help in addressing cases against such defaulters. "Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was enacted, and by amending it, in respect of companies whose money was not returned to the banks, a decision was taken that the debtors concerned would not be allowed to participate in the business of such companies," he wrote. The Finance Minister said on the contrary, under the bankruptcy code, cases had been instituted for timebound recovery from 12 largest defaulters in six to nine months in NPA cases of Rs 1,75,000

crore. The government in 2015 had conducted the asset quality review (AQR) for clean and fully provisioned balance-sheets. The AQR revealed the loans of about Rs 4,54,466 crore, which were actually fit to be NPA, were recognised after intensive scrutiny under AQR, said the finance minister. It is the same time, he said, banks were given necessary capital so that Public Sector Banks could become strong and capable of contributing to the nation's development. "The reason for giving capital to banks is that these banks may become mazboot, i.e., strong, rather than

mazboor, i.e., hard-pressed. Public Sector Banks have been provided capital in the past as well. During 2010-11 to 2013-14 too, the government provided banks an amount of Rs 44,000 crore for recapitalisation. Was that also for waiving loans of capitalists?" he said. Citing integration of the State Bank of India, Jaitley said that the government policies had not only addressed the problems earlier perceived as legacy but also boosted the strength of Public Sector Banks. He assured honest businesspersons would be able to access loans from strong and reformed banks, and the strict law and the

government's clean-up policy would result in a transparent system. The Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code is likely to play an important role in addressing the non-performing assets (NPA) of the banking sector. The banking sector is facing issues due to the bad loans on its books, which have created a risk of capital erosion. NPAs have also constrained the banks' ability to lend. Credit is an important ingredient of economic growth and the lack of credit could lead to economic contraction. It's not just public sector banks that are staring a mountain of NPAs - private sector banks are also taking a hit.

Real Estate & Insurance



Thinking of Buying/Selling Home?

**We Specialize in
Income Producing
& Investment
Properties**





Whitestone
REAL ESTATE

Honesty * Integrity * Experience * Knowledge

Insurance Services

**Business,
Liability,
Disability,
Workers Comp,
E & O, Auto,
Home,
Personal &
Commercial
Accident, Life,
Health, Visitor
& Travel**

Phone : 516 280 0576, 917 612 3158

Email : sst@whitestonecorpUSA.com

www.whitestonecorpUSA.com

Sharnjit Singh Thind, Licensed Insurance Broker (Property & Casualty)
Navjot Kaur Licensed Insurance Broker (Life, Accident & Health)

Whitestone Real Estate & Asset Management Corp is a Licensed New York State Real Estate Broker
 All Commercial Loan are arranged through excellent third Party Lenders

Khaki Meets Khadi

Politicians often turn a blind eye to police-lawlessness so that cops are beholden enough to do their bidding. -Policing suffers the most due to this symbiosis.

When Delhi Police's much-feted "encounter specialist" ACP Rajbir Singh was shot dead by a property dealer friend in the latter's Gurgaon office back in 2008, there were immediate signs that something was not quite kosher. The then top cop ordered that nobody from the force was to attend his funeral. For a fabled officer credited with 42 "kills" and conferred with two out-of-turn promotions, a PRO was the sole representative of the 85,000-strong Delhi Police in attendance. The most nominal of gestures possible.

Political leaders, who had often patted him on his back and benefited from his kills, too preferred to give it a quiet miss. So did sundry former commissioners and heads of the anti-terror Special Cell, who had basked in the glory each of his encounters brought them. His "kills" included western UP gangsters notorious in the 1990s, Kashmiri militants and Pakistan-trained terrorists. He was the key officer in charge of two of the biggest terror cases—the Red Fort attack of 2000 and the Parliament attack of 2001—both heralded as great investigation successes, but also questioned, in equal measure, by lawyers and human rights activists.

Rajbir's rise in Delhi Police was meteoric and unprecedented—from a mere sub-inspector to an ACP in 13 years, a non-IPS officer who cracked the top echelons, aided by those out-of-turn promotions. His exploits earned him the praise of politicians, helped him forge close bonds with intelligence operatives, as also a network of underworld informers. What, then, brought about such an end? That very conspicuous avoidance by the system? "Acquiring a larger-than-life image and beginning to believe the legend built around him, he

had waded into the grey zone," says a former Delhi Police colleague. "In his impatience for results, he disregarded procedures and methods, much like some other encounter specialists. It was his adrenaline-driven bluster and near-manic daredevilry that had made Rajbir the star of Delhi Police. His seniors knew his methods were questionable, but they preferred to turn a blind eye. He was giving them results."

But the glory had begun to fade by the time he was killed. His methods and encounters were under a cloud; allegations against him had become stronger. Rajbir was shot twice from close range by a revolver he himself had "arranged" for property dealer Vijay Bhardwaj, a long-time friend. CBI investigations revealed Rajbir had "business dealings" with Bhardwaj and the latter owed him Rs 65 lakh. That day, he had gone to pick up the money after sending a threat via SMS: "Give me my money or you are no more."

By this time, ACP Rajbir Singh's name had been linked with the drug mafia and satta racketeers; extortion was being spoken of, and land-grabbing and cutting advantageous deals in property disputes. He operated out of a plush two-storied house in Lajpat Nagar. While investigating the Amar Singh phone-tapping case in 2005, he is believed to have established a good rapport with the politician.

Thanks to his political connections, Rajbir somehow managed to escape serious legal wrangles even though he was investigated a few times—by the vigilance department, by the narcotics wing and also the CBI. Even the Delhi High Court had issued notices on charges that he and his colleagues manhandled some people in west Delhi's Kirti Nagar in

connection with a property dispute.

Rajbir is believed to have had gained the trust of then home minister Lal Krishna Advani after an anti-terror operation he led in Kashmir in 1998, in which Hizbul Mujahideen's deputy supreme commander Ali Mohammed Dar was gunned down. Later, as deputy PM in 2002, Advani even visited Ansal Plaza in south Delhi—the site of a controversial encounter in which two all-eged LeT terrorists, Ejaz Ahmad and Abu Anas, were gunned down—along with the IB director. The visit was cited as the biggest defence by the police to show the encounter was authentic, not stage-managed.

"He had somehow inveigled Advaniji and had unhindered access to him. In fact, Rajbir even used to brag about having a hand in the appointment of a police commissioner, someone not particularly seen as deserving. He apparently assured the officer that he would get him the top post and then promptly went and arranged it," a retired police official tells Outlook. Sources say Rajbir had become so emboldened by his connections that he was willing to throw all caution to the wind. "Many of his kills were genuine but several others raised doubts. But he always had friends from the IB to certify his encounters or the identity of the 'terrorist' killed. It was a win-win situation for all. That's the reason he had an unbridled run," the former cop explains.

It's been over nine years since Rajbir met his end, and the Special Cell of Delhi Police is certainly not the same. An officer mentored by Rajbir, Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma, died six months after him in the controversial Batla House encounter. The "encounters" have more or less died down with a new

breed of officers taking over the reins of the force. The new generation includes Rajbir's son, Rahul Rajbir Singh. He was 16 when his father died and realised the ACP's dream of seeing him as an IPS officer in 2016.

The young officer, understandably, refuses to be drawn into the controversies surrounding his father's way of operating or whether an extra-legal edge colours the fight against terror. "I cannot say anything about it. I don't have the requisite experience," says Rahul Rajbir Singh. He is posted as ACP in Patel Nagar, West District. His father's first stint as ACP too was in West District, where he is credited with several high-profile encounters while heading the Operations Cell.

Rajbir is hardly the only police officer who operated in an ethical grey zone. The Indian police forces are replete with stories of officials who enjoy political patronage and in return allow themselves to be used by the state to settle scores. Even the CBI, the country's premier investigating agency, has failed to escape allegations of bowing to political pressure—recall that it was the Supreme Court that called it a "caged parrot" that "speaks in its master's voice". This was in May 2013, during hearings on the coal scam—a time when there was no dearth of political pressure or vested interests to be served.

R.K. Raghavan, former CBI director (and now high commissioner to Cyprus), has talked about political interference in policing on several occasions. He wrote once how "the DGP has become a handmaiden of the chief minister, doing the latter's bidding, legal and illegal. Or else he can't survive. The northern states, especially Bihar and UP, take the cake for the politicisation of the police force."

Not that other regions are immune. Raman Srivastava, a Kerala cadre 1973-batch IPS officer, who now lives the quiet, retired life of a pepper farmer in his adopted state, prefers not to revisit his halcyon days when he was known to be very



close to then CM K. Karunakaran. Another sobriquet bestowed on him was that of "Laloo's blue-eyed boy". As the SP of Jamshedpur (in undivided Bihar), he was responsible for nearly two dozen encounters and the arrest of three big dons.

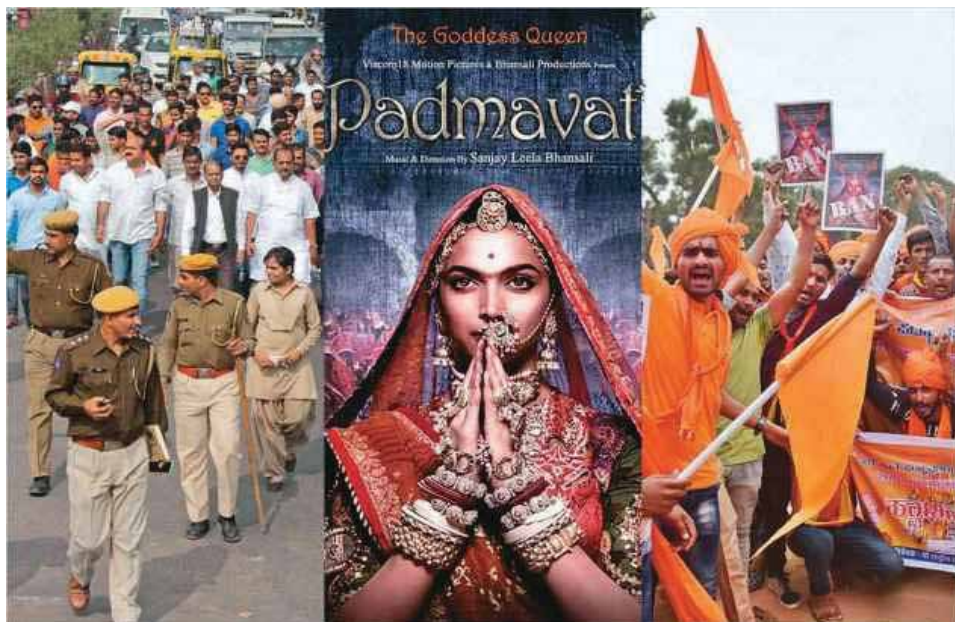
One of his batch-mates says the pressure got too much for him. One incident he recalls was a raid on the residence of a minister. After the raid, Kumar was asked to give a complaint against his own officer. However, he preferred to quit. He joined the Congress in 2014. Kumar is candid as he talks about the symbiotic relationship between khaki and khadi. It's the police leadership at the IPS level that's mainly responsible for politicisation, he says, as they have mostly forsown their independence.

He says 99 per cent of policing doesn't involve politicians, and brooks no interference from them. But that leaves a crucial one per cent. "It's in this minuscule number of cases that politicians use the police to influence outcomes or to protect someone. The police leadership obliges because they want their little favours—transfer/postings of their choice," he explains.

Rani & Rogues

The contrast between the way the police dealt with protests by Dalits in UP's Saharanpur and Rajputs in Rajasthan is part of a pattern of selective aggression and selective silence that goes deep and wide

PRAGYA SINGH



The police. The very other is of the Rajputs, They have arm-twisted mention of the word could who overran two fort- touch off conflicted palaces in Rajasthan, responses. Frustration denied the public access would be a universally to these popular tourist shared feeling. Their destinations and elsewhere. It's almost as presence is likely to bring vandalised a theatre. if they are the law.



on a sense of fear, rather than security. More troubling, however, is their -absence—the patterns of where they choose not to be. This week brought a fresh instance in the controversy around Bollywood film Padmavati. The -aggressive, violent protests by Rajputs have an unsta- ted enabling factor: the silence of the police.

That hate speech could fill the airwaves with such impunity is a sign of how feudal attitudes and caste structures shield dominant groups, allowing them to use the state and the police to establish their writ. Contrast the role of police in two recent cases. One relates to Dalits, in UP's Saharanpur. And the

The leader of a caste outfit called Shree Karni Sena even threatened to disfigure actress Deepika Padukone, who plays the lead role in Padmavati. An array of politicians too promised exorbitant "rewards" to "behead" Deepika and murder producer-director Sanjay Leela Bhansali. While Maharashtra has ramped up protection for the two, no police force has yet tried to arrest the rampaging clansmen. The police in Rajasthan, where the protests began, have not tried to detain Karni Sena members. The rabble-rousers are roaming the country, delivering provocative speeches. The self-conscious

'traditionalism' is a kind of Superintendent of Police, Yet, it is not a neutral default politics. What Chittorgarh. "It was only an air gun, commonly used at celebrations. It only makes a sound. They didn't implicitly share this held a peaceful gathering. The whole region was already fraught with 'tensions' for some time, after a series of Rajput- neither in sync with reality under investigation", the ASP says. He does not think the gathering was disruptive either: "Tour guides had informed Yogi Adityanath, a fellow caste man, became chief minister. A section of Dalits, on the other hand, were feeling dispirited by a sequence of terrible electoral losses that came the way of Mayawati's BSP. It was against this backdrop, and reflecting this fraught politics, that a new Dalit organisation, Bhim Sena, and its chief Chandrashekhar came into focus. How the police acted to neutralise him is an exact inversion of how it is now acting in Rajasthan. The young activist immediately faced arrest for having mobilised these words and act- ions to extol Dalits.

Chandrashekhar's charisma and powerful counter-assertion led many to see a subaltern hero. Some predicted he could one day challenge both the BSP and the BJP. The law soon took special interest in him. The police, 'intelligence reports' and politicians labelled him 'Naxal', 'anti-national', 'violent', even 'terrorist'. The chatter stopped only after his arrest in June.

In the assessment of the police in Chittorgarh The incident at Rajasthan. The young (which faced the first Shabbirpur was triggered serious demonstration), when Rajputs led a procession to extol Maharana Pratap. Local Dalits apparently demanded that the procession be a little less noisy. This ended in a skirmish. After a small number of local policemen dispersed the crowd, one Rajput died. Then, hundreds of Rajputs regrouped and torched 20 Dalit homes. Several police vehicles too were damaged in the air, but not with criminal mayhem—as a symbol of the state, it is frequently the target of protesters.



CBI books former Enforcement Directorate official Gurnam Singh for graft



(News Agencies) The agency in its FIR alleged that Singh and his family members purchased a luxury car, properties and also carried out high-value cash transactions. THE CBI has booked a former Enforcement Directorate (ED) official for alleged corruption and amassing wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income. The official was a deputy director

with the central agency.

Gurnam Singh, from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory, Chandigarh, was on deputation in the ED between 2012 and 2017. The value of the assets he amassed is 328 per cent more than his genuine income, the CBI alleged in an FIR. Singh was relieved by the ED in January this year, sources in the directorate said.

It is alleged that at the start of his deputation with the anti-money laundering agency, Singh had assets worth Rs 12.86 lakh. The value grew to Rs 1.85 crore in five years, the CBI said. The agency in its FIR alleged that Singh and his family members purchased a luxury car, properties and also carried out high-value cash transactions.

UK's Indian tycoons to maintain Ganga banks

(News Agencies) LONDON: Union minister Nitin Gadkari said here late on Monday night that Vedanta's Anil Agarwal had taken up the Patna riverfront and the Foresight Group's Ravi Mehrotra had offered to look after the Kanpur section as part of the Indian government's offer to UK businesses to maintain stretches of India's longest river. The minister also said he hoped to roll out a green replica of London's iconic red double decker buses in India. "...the Patna riverfront has been taken by Anil Agarwal. He has taken

the responsibility. We have a plan but they can change the plan... and for 15 years they are responsible for maintenance and operation (sic)," Gadkari said at the Indian Journalists' Association dinner. "Mr Ravi Mehrotra is ready to take Kanpur," said Gadkari, who has the Ganga Rejuvenation portfolio. He said the government was planting 10 crore trees along riverfronts. "And we are planning to clean the lakes, gardening, landscaping, and things that are important from the tourism point of view," he said.

Gadkari said the idea was to give the responsibility of maintaining Ganga's banks to corporates and industries — "the big people, those who are having an emotional attachment with Ganga (sic). This is the plan." Agarwal grew up in Patna while Mehrotra was brought up in Kanpur. Gadkari is in London to attend the 30th Assembly of the International Maritime Organisation and drum up support among UK corporates for his Clean Ganga Mission, for which the Indian government



has committed Rs 20,000 crore. "Pollution of water is a big problem in the Ganga," he said. "Many people from India, their faith, respect and sentiments are related to the Ganga and I feel

your cooperation is a big part," he told NRI business leaders. He told TOI: "I really like London's double-decker buses. We want to make them in India following the model and experience of the UK." He added he was planning to "copy the London Underground system" on the metros in India too. On Monday, he held a meeting with UK transport secretary Chris Grayling and TfL, the body responsible for the transport network in London, with which India has signed an MoU. "We are planning double decker buses in India," Gadkari told the Indian Journalists' Association (IJA). "TfL is doing an excellent job in London; on that basis, we plan to start electric buses, biodiesel and bio-CNG buses. Our priority is to make public transport with electricity because we have electricity and coal surplus, so import substitutes, cost-effective, pollution-free and indigenous technology is our priority." On the river project, he said there were 95 projects to clean the Ganga. "They will all start by March-end," he said. "We look over the coming years to strengthen our ties, our trade agreements, political and security partnerships with countries around the world, and India is right at the top of the list," British transport secretary Grayling told the guests. "Brexit is not and never was about Britain becoming an inward-focused nation shutting itself off from the world."

Don't comment on 'Padmavati' till censor call: SC warns netas

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court has taken strong exception to people in "responsible posts", such as ministers and chief ministers, rushing to comment on "Padmavati" even before the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has cleared the controversy-hit Bollywood movie. With several states banning the film, the apex court said the film was being prejudged and the actions of those in office could prejudice the minds of CBFC members and pulled up the petitioner for filing a frivolous plea. "Padmavati" director Sanjay Leela Bhansali said reports that the film was being released abroad were incorrect and added that he would await certification. "The movie is before CBFC and a decision has not been taken yet. But people holding responsible posts are commenting on it. CBFC is a statutory body and it should be allowed to take a call as per rules and guidelines. Nobody should comment on the film. This is not done," a bench of CJI Dipak Misra

and Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud said on Tuesday. The court's remarks assume significance with the chief ministers of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh banning the film. The SC bench's comments came while it was hearing a plea seeking criminal proceedings against Bhansali and the film's producers for defaming a "historical figure" in the queen of Mewar. The petitioner alleged Bhansali has "distorted and twisted historical facts" in the movie. It was argued that the filmmaker wrongly depicted Rani Padmavati in the movie, causing anger among people and screening of the film in its present form would cause law and order problems. The bench said the censor board should not be influenced by the opinion of politicians. The court said it had earlier refused to examine the issue as it did not want to pre-judge the case but people in power were getting involved in the controversy and expressing opinions in violation of rule of law. "One thing we

must say that no one who is holding public office should comment on whether the board should grant certificate or not. That amounts to prejudging the minds of board members. If the court cannot pre-judge the movie, then can others pre-judge it? We should bear in mind that we are governed by basic tenets of rule of law. When the matter is pending, responsible people in power should not say something which violates the principle," the court said. At the outset, senior advocate Harish Salve, appearing for Bhansali, told the bench that the film will not

be released in other countries till it was cleared by the censor board. He said speculation that the film was to be released in the UK on December 1 was wrong. The court also pulled up advocate M L Sharma for filing a frivolous petition against the directors and producers of the film. It had earlier dismissed two similar petitions saying the CBFC had the statutory power to examine the film before it was released for public screening and the court could not usurp the board's power to judge the film.

When the matter is pending, responsible people in power should not say something which violates the principle. The CBFC is a statutory body and it should be allowed to take a call according to rules and guidelines

If the court cannot pre-judge the movie, then can others pre-judge it? We should bear in mind that we are governed by basic tenets of rule of law

— SUPREME COURT

WhatsApp Now Lets Users Play YouTube Videos Without Leaving Chats

(News Agencies) WhatsApp for iPhone has been updated, and brings two new features - the ability to watch YouTube videos directly within a conversation, and, the ability to lock recording so users can record a voice message without holding the button down. Notably, the YouTube feature comes with Picture-in-Picture (PiP) mode, allowing users to keep watching the video even when they navigate to another chat. The new WhatsApp v2.17.81 app for iPhone is now available to download via the App Store, and details the changes in the

What's New section.

The update was first spotted by WABetaInfo, which adds that the YouTube feature may need to be enabled with a server side switch. We were also not able to replicate the built-in player or PiP on the latest version of the iPhone app, but, the voice message recording lock is there.

"When you receive a link to a YouTube video, you can now play it right within WhatsApp. With picture-in-picture, you can also keep watching the video while you navigate to another chat,"

the App Store description reads. Earlier, when users clicked on the link, the YouTube video would open in YouTube app installed on the smartphones.

The latest update can also help you record long messages with ease. "Want to easily record long Voice Messages? When recording a Voice Message, just swipe up to lock recording so you can continue to record without keeping your finger down," read the description. WhatsApp is also working on a new feature that will allow users to quickly switch from voice to video call while the

voice call is in progress.

According to WABetaInfo, in a new Android update, WhatsApp is developing a new button that will allow users to quickly switch from voice to video call without stopping the voice call in progress. The recipient, however, will be able to reject the upcoming video call if he or she wants.

"WhatsApp is also testing a feature that will allow to directly mute a video," the report added. WhatsApp has over 200 million monthly active users in India and 1.2 billion users worldwide.

Donkeys spend 4 days in UP prison for eating expensive plants at Jalaun jail

A herd of donkeys spent four days behind bars in Uttar Pradesh's Jalaun district. They had ignored authorities' warning over eating expensive plants near Urai jail.

(News Agencies) In a bizarre development, a herd of donkeys in Uttar Pradesh was detained at a jail in the state's Jalaun district last week. The donkeys were apprehended near the Urai district jail.

Jail officials said that the donkeys were detained for destroying plants outside jail. The donkeys were released today after four days of

detention. Donkeys apparently ate and destroyed plants recently bought for Rs 5 lakh.

"These donkeys had destroyed some very expensive plants which our senior officer had arranged for planting inside jail and despite warnings the owner let loose his animals here so we detained the donkeys," Urai jail head constable RK Mishra was quoted by news

agency ANI as saying. The eight donkeys were detained on November 24, following which the owners made frantic search for the animals. Someone informed the owner, identified as Kamlesh, about the donkeys having been detained by police. Kamlesh, then, approached the jail authorities with his request to let the animals go free but the authorities refused to release the



donkeys for four days. He leader accompanied Kamlesh to rushed to local BJP leader the prison and secured release Shakti Gahoi for help. The BJP of the donkeys.

REAL ESTATE * INSURANCE * COMMERCIAL LOANS

Real Estate Services Offered :

Brokerage, Investment Advisory, Asset Management

We specialize in Investment & Income producing properties.

Insurance Services Offered :

Business, Liability, Disability, Workers Comp, E&O, Auto, Home, Personal & Commercial

WHITESTONE

Real Estate & Asset Management Corp.



Sharnjit Singh Thind

Licensed Real Estate/
Insurance Broker NYS
Notray Public

HONESTY * INTEGRITY * EXPERIENCE * KNOWLEDGE

Email : ssat@WhitestonecorpUSA.com WWW.WhitestonecorpUSA.com

Whitestone Real Estate & Asset Mangment Corp is a Licensed New York State Real Estate Broker

All Commercial Loans are arranged through excellent third Party Lenders



JUST MARRIED

Vietnam's untouched landscape, exotic environment, lush-green scenery, long coastlines and vibrant culture are sure to enamour every honeymoon couple; (above-left) stay in cave resorts and experience sensual Turkish baths in Turkey.

HONEYMOON is one of the most beautiful times in life for a married couple. Planning for a honeymoon is quite exciting as there are a plethora of options to choose from. However, to find the perfect place that takes the love birds away from the maddening crowd can be little tricky. Most cliché honeymoon destinations in India and nearby are overcrowded and lack the peace and solitude newlyweds look for. If you are looking for an offbeat destination to wind off the stress post wedding and spend moments of privacy and intimacy with your better half, here are six best and novel honeymoon destinations for you. These places listed by Kapil Goswamy, CMD, BigBreaks.com, provide an ideal setting, along with an opportunity to spend some quality time with each other.

Honeymooning in Shimla and Maldives is a passé. Here are some new destinations that have made it to the young couples' list

LAKSHADWEEP

EXOTIC islands and coral archipelagoes of Lakshadweep are one of the most secluded beach destinations in India. Covered by a thick green carpet of coconut palms, threaded by an untainted line of silvery white sands, set in an ocean, whose colours change from palest aquamarine and turquoise to deepest sapphire and lapis lazuli, the islands of Lakshadweep are a perfect retreat for those newlyweds who wish to enjoy blissful beach surroundings with an idyllic sense of privacy. Moreover, if you two love water sports, you can enjoy various water sport activities like

scuba-diving, fishing and snorkeling at this romantic getaway.

KHAJJAR

IF mainstream hill stations like Shimla or Manali do not interest you anymore, head-off to Khajjar, a little Himalayan gem near Dalhousie. Surrounded by green meadows, forests and snow-clad mountains, Khajjar is Himachal Pradesh's best kept secret and is unspoiled and less crowded. Often touted as the mini-Switzerland of India, due to its resemblance to the country, Khajjar is a perfect offbeat honeymoon destination in India. Adventure sport activities like Zorb-

ing, trekking and paragliding also take place here which add to the element of thrill to this pleasantly charming hill station.

TAWANG

TAWANG is a sparsely populated town in Arunachal Pradesh, with mesmerising views of valleys and mountains. Perched at a height of 10,000 ft above sea level, Tawang is an ideal honeymoon destination providing the much needed tranquility to newly married couples. The town is immersed in the colours of Tibetan culture, with various attractive monasteries and Buddhist structures scattered all around. It is a perfect bet for couples who wish to explore a distinct culture in the realm of nature.

SHILLONG

CAPITAL of the wettest state of India, Meghalaya, Shillong is a picture perfect honeymoon destination in the northeastern region of India. Also, known as Scotland of the east, Shillong is home to cascading waterfalls, pretty lakes dense forests, mystical caves and fascinating ancient tree root bridges. The city has a very young vibe as it adorns a Westernised culture and has many musical events running throughout the year, making it a lively place always bustling with activity.

VIETNAM

A PERFECT amalgamation of natural beauty and culture, Vietnam serves as an ideal honeymoon retreat nearby India. Its untouched landscape, exotic environment, lush green scenery, long coastlines and vibrant culture are sure to enamour every honeymoon couple. Revel in the ancient architecture of the country or relish the one of its kind floating villages. Experience the peace at Buddhist pagodas or relax at the many beach resorts and boutique hotels in the country. The scenic beauty of this country is boundless and inexpressible in plain words.

TURKEY

IF YOU and your partner fancy history and culture, then honeymooning at the Mediterranean land of Turkey is the best option for you. With one foot in Europe and another in Asia, Turkey represents a truly remarkable culture and a distinct race of people. Experiences like staying in cave resorts, traditional Turkish spas, sensual Turkish baths and romantic Fayton rides add to your honeymoon memoirs. Captivating architecture, lively bazaars and pristine beaches along with a vibrant nightlife, are some other key reason to invest in a honeymoon trip to Turkey. It's all you have dreamt of!

— By Mail Today Bureau

Often touted as the mini-Switzerland of India, due to its resemblance to the country, Khajjar (below-left) is a perfect honeymoon destination



(Right) Tawang is an ideal honeymoon destination, providing the much needed tranquility to newly married couples.

Bhansali Should Never Have Made "Padmavati"



Chandan Mitra

Sanjay Leela Bhansali's "Padmavati" has gripped the nation's mood in a hysterical and negative way as probably no other film, (that too one not yet released for public viewing), has done in recent memory. Rajputs across the country, especially in erstwhile Rajputana that is Rajasthan, are up in arms. Some of their self-styled leaders have issued despicable threats to the lead actress Deepika Padukone. While one worthy has said her nose shall be chopped off, another (a BJP leader from Haryana) has put Rs. 10 crore as bounty on the life of Bhansali and Padukone. Saner voices of some Rajput princelings offering mediation have been drowned in the raucous cacophony of calculated hate.

Last Monday, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, not usually given to rabble rousing, announced the film would not be shown in his state even if it

gets Censor Board clearance. Except for some film industry voices, none have come forward to defend Bhansali's right to produce a work of art.

In India's volatile society, demands for banning literature and art are common. If something is perceived to be offensive to a community, tempers flare and the concept of artistic or poetic license is rejected out of hand. Arguably, some practitioners of art push the envelop a little too far as celebrated painter M.F. Husain did with his nude paintings of Goddesses Durga and Saraswati. This caused widespread revulsion not only among hardliners but even moderate Hindus who felt that the paintings were a deliberate affront to their faith. Many queried if Husain would have dared paint his Prophet in a comparable manner. The one writer who did portray Prophet Muhammad in unflattering light, still carries a fatwa on his head. Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* faced such universal

condemnation that Rajiv Gandhi's government was compelled to ban it in India. Earlier, Indira Gandhi was forced to ban a poorly made slapstick comedy film "Badhti ka Naam Dadhi" as it was claimed to offend Sikh sentiment, just as a Madras masala film "Lok Parlok" was proscribed for allegedly denigrating Hindu gods and goddesses in 1979. In other words, communities are particularly sensitive to perceived insults to their collective psyche, irrespective of whether these works were intentionally derogatory or not. But most works of art and literature that have outraged sentiment faced protests once they were seen or read (although in Rushdie's case the Iranian fatwa was enough to convince many Indian Muslims that his past and present writings should not be available in this country). In the case of "Padmavati", however, the film apparently has been shown only to select TV anchors who have happily issued endorsement

certificates to its content. Ironically, however, the film is yet to receive clearance from the Censor Board whose chief has sharply criticised the selective screening.

The issue here is not about the content of the film which deals with the mass suicide led by Rani Padmini of Chittorgarh in the face of the siege by troops of Delhi's then Muslim ruler Alauddin Khilji. School textbooks, at least those in vogue till the 1960s, narrated in graphic detail about how Khilji was besotted by the beauty of the princess and insisted on marrying her especially after he saw her reflection in a mirror. Faced with impending dishonour at the hands of a rogue army of invaders, Padmini or Padmavati jumped into a well with a large group of consorts in the Chittorgarh Fort and committed collective suicide or jauhar by setting themselves on fire.

The story is based largely on a poem penned by Malik Muhammad Jayasi many years after the alleged incident. Most historians doubt the veracity of Jayasi's narrative and there are virtually no proven accounts of this story. But it is indelibly etched in Rajput memory and has been narrated by itinerant bards and later by tourist guides for centuries. The question facing protagonists on both sides of the fence is whether a writer or film-maker should have the license to interpret a story of debatable veracity embellished with contemporary ingredients. Rajput leaders are incensed that their iconic queen has allegedly been depicted dancing before commoners. Another claim is that Bhansali shows a dream sequence in which Khilji and Padmavati are supposedly

fornicating. The producer-director has stoutly denied the dream sequence charge and claimed instead that his film upholds and extols Rajput valour, certainly never denigrating it. But as the saying goes, people believe what they want to believe. As of now Rajput agitators are prepared to believe only the worst about Bhansali and his film. With the film's release delayed, perhaps indefinitely and the possibility of it being banned in more states, the country may not get to know for a while whether it indeed contains depictions regarded as objectionable by many. This may sound offensive in a democracy but historical characters are so divisive in India that prudence demands not making high-profile films on such contentious subjects. Especially on a subject involving a Hindu and a Muslim, feelings run deep and reopen wounds otherwise buried in collective historical psyche. Bhansali could have been better advised not to touch a subject as sensitive as this and to that extent he should have anticipated the groundswell of protest that has erupted. The question therefore is not whether "Padmavati" should be banned but whether it should have been made in the first place. India, unlike the West, is yet to become a stable society where artistic freedom reigns untrammelled. The religious faultline between Hindus and Muslims runs deep and has got exacerbated in recent decades. Communal riots take place routinely over trivial issues resulting in many deaths and injuries.

Padmavati Amidst Controversies Ready To Adorn The Throne Of Blockbuster

SONIA GABA

Deepika Padukone – Ranveer Singh – Shahid Kapoor Film – Padmavati – A grand movie by a grand director – Sanjay Leela Bhansali seems no less than Bajirao Mastani. Bhansali's unique creation depicting Shahid Kapoor as Maharawal Ratan Singh, Deepika as fabulous Rani Padmavati – Mallika-e-Chittor, Ranveer Singh as Turkic emperor and plunderer

Alauddin Khilji, is ready to rule over the box office in a victorious way. The tyrannical sultan Alauddin Khilji attacks the prosperous kingdom of Maharawal Ratan Singh to capture the unmatched beauty Rani Padmavati. Lively action scenes on one side, presentation of historical events on the other side will certainly attract the attention of viewers. At last Rani Padmavati

committing "Jauhar" the custom in which Rajput women surrender themselves into fire and embrace death rather than giving up in front of enemy, will indicate the determination, tenacity and sanctity of Rajput women. Though some controversy has hurdled the way of release of the movie, Bhansali's superb swing is sure to break the records on box-office...



Julie 2 movie review

Raai Laxmi is clueless in Pahlaj Nihalani's weirdly trippy film

For some strange reason, every time they play Julie's theme, it sounded like 'Nayak nahi khalnayak hoon main.'



Julie 2

Cast: Raai Laxmi, Aditya

Srivastav, Pankaj Tripathi

Director: Deepak Shivdasani

Rating: 0/5

When Julie (Raai Laxmi) wakes up in the morning with make-up on and yawns seductively right in the first scene, you understand she believes in the film's tagline: Bold, beautiful, blessed. Even then, you don't anticipate what's coming for you till she breaks the fourth wall (doesn't look intentional though) and says, "I am the best." Ok then. We still believe you, for the next 20 seconds maybe,

because you have already promised a helluva lotta fun.

Of course, everybody wants Julie's body. Still, to remove any iota of doubt, Julie speaks in public interest, "Sabko Julie ka sharir chahiye lekin use sirf pyaar chahiye." I don't think anybody other than her in the entire film actually understands it. You're in the wrong film, Raai Laxmi.

Julie 'compromises' and manages to become a really big star. So big that she catches the attention of a French filmmaker named Jean Claude who will make a film for her in Hindi. It's

oddly satisfying to see a foreigner as clueless as us in the film. Maybe this is why Pahlaj Nihalani decided to 'present' this film. He definitely needed a new trip after his stint at the censor board.

Anyway, Julie, the sweet child of Jesus (I swear they say this in the film), goes for jewellery shopping when some gun-toting weirdos attack the shop. They intend to kill our girl with machine guns. Who knows they might have parked a tank outside! They probably don't know that Julie lives alone in a mansion with hardly any staff around. Why am I even doing this?

Inspector Abhijeet of CID, err, ACP Devdutt (Aditya Srivastava) is investigating the case. Let me explain how he feels in the film. He says, "Sooraj barf pighla sakta hai aur ek shilpkar ki murti bhi sakht kar sakta hai (The sun can melt the ice and can also dry a sculptor's idol). Literal translation, I know. But he says this as his introduction line, for

no apparent reason. I am yet to figure out the context of his dialogue, if there was any. He never explains it either. Maybe the director wasn't on the set and Srivastava got a chance to do whatever he wanted to.

However, he does explain himself after punching a sidekick, "Ye dhai kilo ka nahi, dhai feet ka haath hai." We didn't deserve this. Actually, I didn't deserve this because there wasn't anybody else in the theatre.

For some strange reason, every time they play Julie's theme, it sounded like 'Nayak nahi khalnayak hoon main.' On top of that, Raai Laxmi actually says, "Apni baat keh ke mere dil ka bojh utar gaya, ab bahut halka mehsoos kar rahi hoon (I am feeling light after pouring my heart out)." That had to happen, because our hearts are burdened now. It was far better to see Rati Agnihotri as Akshay Kumar's mother in Singh Is Bliing than to watch her as Raai

Laxmi's guardian angel Annie in Julie 2. Apart from telling us, "Julie definitely Jesus ki beti hai", she looks on the verge of crying throughout the film. This may take a toll on her health if she doesn't forget this film real fast. From a beggar named Ambani to a southern film star Ravi Kumar (Ravi Kishan), Julie 2 is a mish-mash of astonishing characters. Kishan's superstar talks in heavy Bhojpuri accent and Ambani calls Raai Laxmi 'Maai' (mother). This is all surreal. In between bizarre and shocking, Raai Laxmi keeps gyrating in body-hugging suits and shiny bikinis. She also dances on a song titled 'Malasina (or Mala Sinha!) Dikhayegi Filmy Dance'. She oohs and aahs, even unhooks her bra twice or thrice, to make it work, but all in vain.

But you know what seals the deal for Julie 2? It's when Aditya Srivastava whispers, "Thanks for sharing Julie's story." Yeah, right. Zero star.

The Padmini mystique: Is Padmavati just a myth?

Rani Padmini (Padmavati) is not mentioned in a single historical, authentic document from that era. The nation is in a turmoil over a mythical character?

At the root of the controversy around Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film Padmavati is the fact that there is not a single historical and authentic document describing the life and times of Padmini, who was said to be queen of Chittorgarh when Alauddin Khilji attacked in 1302. Her name finds no mention in the known works of that era.

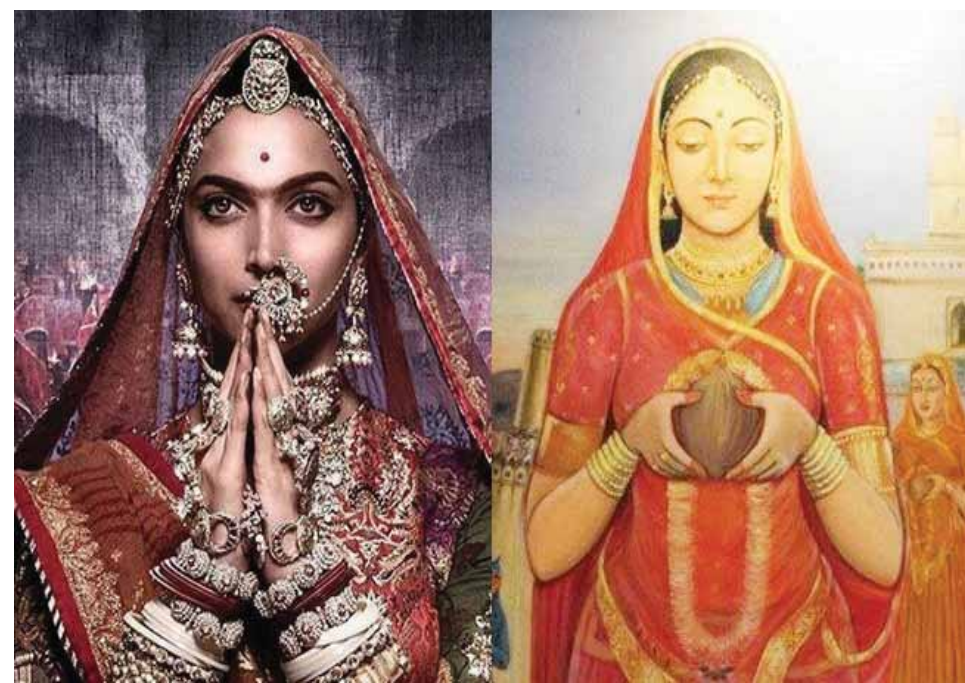
So those who have accused Bhansali of distorting history — without even watching the film — have no evidence to prove what exactly has been depicted wrong about her. Bhansali has claimed that his movie is based on the poem Padmawat, composed by Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi in 1540. Historians view Jayasi's work with scepticism and consider it a work of fiction. "I have made up the story and related it," are the words with which Jayasi ends his Padmawat.

There is a vague reference to Padmini in Amir Khusrau's Khaizain-ul-Futuh (The Treasures of Victory) in which the court

historian of Khilji narrates his conquest of Chittorgarh through the metaphor of Solomon, a hudhud bird, and Bilkis, the Queen of Sheba. Based on this, scholars such as Muhammad Habib conclude that Padmini was a historical figure and Khilji attacked Chittorgarh seeking her submission.

Jayasi's work influenced his contemporary Abu'l Fazl to write about the legend of Khilji's pursuit of Padmini but Abu'l Fazl described Padmini as a class of women, extraordinarily beautiful and not as the queen of Chittorgarh. Later, Persian historian Ferishta (1560-1620), 17th century historians Muhnot Nainsi and Khwaja Nizam-ud-din Ahmad, British scholar Col. James Tod (1782-1835), and Shyam Lal Das, who wrote a poetic history of Mewar in the early 20th century, have also written about Padmini. But there was no unanimity that Khilji invaded Chittorgarh for her.

Much later in the 20th century, works such as Annals of Jaisalmer



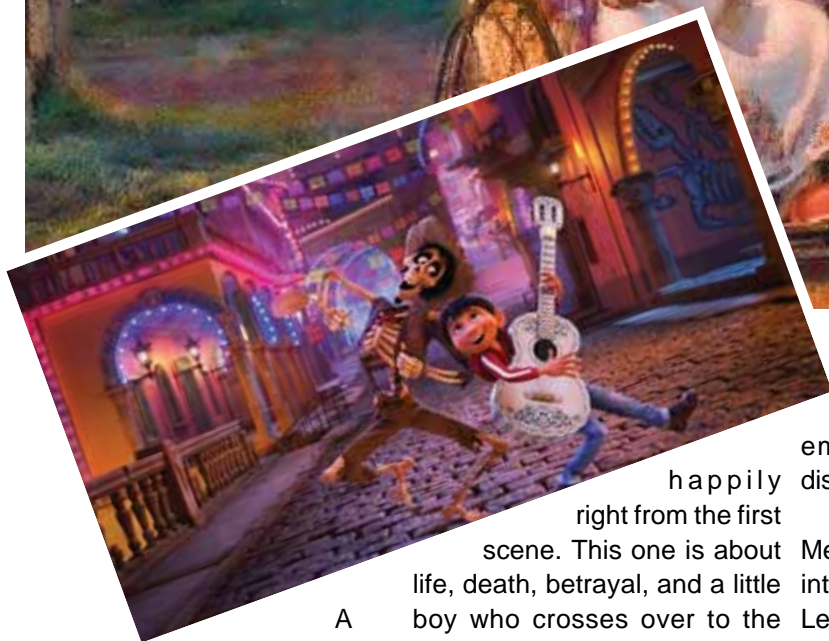
by Hari Singh Bhati, Pugal ka Itihas by Hukum Singh Bhati and Udaipur Rajya ka Itihas by G.H. Ojha make more specific reference to Padmini's existence. "She is described as daughter of Rawal Punpal Bhattai of Jaisalmer and his wife Jam Kanwar, who was born in Sirohi," says Ranbir

Sinh and Rao Shiv Pal Singh, Jaipur-based historians. Sinh denies that Khilji had set his sights on her.

What's ironic is that while Jayasi could get away with his fictional account in medieval India, Bhansali's celluloid drama got stuck in a political drama in 21st century India.



Coco is profound and heartwarming, says Dipanjan Sinha



A young boy wanders into the world of the dead, to find lively towns and skeletons full of pep. There's also danger here, a final death that comes when you are forgotten in the world of the living.

Pixar is back with another story that makes you grin

happily right from the first scene. This one is about life, death, betrayal, and a little boy who crosses over to the 'other side' and scurries about in the world of the dead.

There are rail routes in this afterlife, identity checks and Gothic architecture; there's even some fine urban planning. The dead move around as skeletons, their dangly parts dropping off from time to time. The great

achievement of Coco is that it makes these skeletons endearing, makes you empathise with their disembodied souls.

The story is rooted in Mexican culture, and is a plunge into new territory for directors Lee Unkrich and Adrian Molina. A 12-year-old boy named Miguel Rivera (voiced by Anthony Gonzalez), from the small village of Santa Cecilia, wants to sing and play guitar, but his family forbids music. They've been shoemakers for as long as they can remember.

In fact, they began making

shoes after Miguel's great-great-grandfather deserted his wife and child to pursue a career in music. The family revels in their sameness. Through most of their scenes, they are either hammering nails into leather or eating together.

Mama Coco (Renee Victor), Miguel's great-grandmother, is the one who listens to the tales of Miguel's adventures. She is silent now, and very old.

Suffocated in this place where he must sneak around to play, Miguel runs away from home and decides to go in search of his idol, the

musician Ernesto de la Cruz (Benjamin Bratt). He finds himself in the afterworld, where he eventually meets de la Cruz, members of his own family tree, and finally finds an opportunity to perform.

Coco's theme about the final death, when one fades from the memory of people, is a poignant one and yet the plot moves along at a steady clip. Nowhere, despite the depth of its ideas, does the film become ponderous. In fact, as unlikely as this may seem, you'll find yourself thinking of this movie long after it's ended.

Did you know that this is not going to be Meghan Markle's first marriage?

And what's more, this will not be the first 'second marriage' in the Royal family.



Being a Royal comes with its own set of cons. Back in the day, one of the biggest cons was that of not being able to marry a person who's been married even once before, as long as the former spouse of this person-in-question was alive.

With the recent announcement of Prince Harry's engagement to actress Meghan Markle, the Royals' age-old rule of not marrying a

divorcee has again come to light. Why? Because Meghan Markle has been married in the past, to producer Trevor Engelson.

Meghan, now 36 years of age, was only 23 when she met Trevor, in 2004, according to reports. The two tied the knot in a Bohemian ceremony in September 2011, in Jamaica, but got divorced in 2014. What's interesting to know, however, is the fact that Prince

Harry and Meghan Markle's marriage is not going to be the first 'second marriage' in the Royal family. Harry's father, Prince Charles, had divorced Princess Diana (in 1996) before marrying Camilla Parker-Bowles in 2005.

'Royal sacrifices' in the past The Royal family, however, was not always open to second marriages. In 1955 Princess Margaret (Queen Elizabeth II's sister) was forced to sacrifice her relationship with Group Captain Peter Townsend, her late father's equerry, because he had an ex-wife—despite him accusing her of infidelity.

Princess Margaret was told that she would have to renounce her rights of succession in order to go through with the wedding. She ended up marrying Antony Armstrong-Jones (1st Earl of Snowdon) in 1960, choosing to stay true to "the Church's teachings that

Christian marriage is indissoluble".

Just 19 years before Princess Margaret's affair with Gp Capt Townsend, her uncle, King Edward VIII, abdicated after just 326 days on the throne in order to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson.

King Edward VIII's decision to do so pushed the British royalty into a constitutional crisis, thanks to Church of England's teaching that remarriage is not allowed if the

former spouse is still alive.

On the wings of change Things, however, have changed for the Royal family now. The Queen giving permission for Prince Charles to marry divorcee Camilla Parker-Bowles in 2005 was a case in point.

Thanks to his dad's decision to marry Camilla Parker-Bowles then, it should be smooth-sailing for Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, when they do tie the knot, expectedly in the Spring of 2018.



When Serena met Katrina Kaif in New York

Success repeated, Serena looks ahead

(By Sushmita Ghosh) New York- Serena Milan, a professional Model & fashionista based in New York, recently met with Bollywood queen Katrina kaif. Meeting happened during an interview session meant for promotion of Katrina's upcoming film. Serena was present at the venue where Channel head was conducting one-on- one interview with Katrina along with her co-star Siddharth Malhotra.

The awe-inspiring personality and unparalleled nature of Katrina amazed Serena. The popular American model henceforth found out the very apt reason of Kat's secret of achieving such career success graph. "Katrina Kaif is as beautiful in person as she looks on screen and meeting her was a dream come true," expressed Serena. With such adorable words, once again she created a strong position to every Bollywood lovers' heart. Serena Milan, who gained massive popularity for her dance performance at recently held composer-singer duo Sajid Wajid live show in New York, is looking forward to repeat success. Promoted and managed by Indian television giant Zee TV, the event was extremely successful and widespread among the strong Indian community in the US. Sajid Wajid have expressed their zeal at the show to compose a matching number to launch Serena in the Indian film industry. An ardent admirer of Bollywood, she is also a die-hard follower of Bollywood icons like Salman Khan, Shahrukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Hrithik Roshan, Katrina Kaif and Jacqueline Fernandez, eager to visit India as soon as her schedule permits. Serena undeniably looks forward to repeat the achievement and accomplishment of Katrina, enabling her to enchant Indian movie enthusiasts.

