



Costume Drama

For all his sartorial elegance, Trudeau's India visit, haunted by the Khalistan issue, achieved little



(News Agencies) Justin Trudeau's easy and infectious candour, all of it framed by his youthful looks, hasn't ever missed its mark on overseas tours. At the Commonwealth leaders' summit in 2015, even Queen Elizabeth wasn't impervious to it. **(Contd on page 22)**



India's new season of scandal rattles global investors

Now, the spotlight is on an opaque business culture dominated by powerful families — known in Indian business parlance as 'promoters' — and the absence of controls to rein them in.

India bids tearful farewell to Bollywood superstar Sridevi

Huge crowds of mourners some carrying roses, others holding photos of the late actress lined Mumbai's streets to see their beloved idol embark on her last journey.



(News Agencies) Thousands of heartbroken fans and Bollywood actors paid their last respects to late superstar Sridevi Kapoor Wednesday following her shock death from accidental drowning in a Dubai hotel bathtub aged just 54. Huge crowds of mourners -- some carrying roses, others holding photos of the late actress -- lined Mumbai's streets to see their beloved idol embark on her last journey. At one point police had to use batons to force back those unable to get into the hall where her body was laid out, wrapped in the Indian flag. "It's a shock to believe that she is no more. We want to pay her one last visit today and thank her for all her wonderful performances," 32-year-old teacher Nandini Rao told AFP as she queued at the condolence event. **(Contd on page 22)**

At 7.2% in Q3, Indian economy grows fastest in 5 quarters, now fastest in the world

The Q3 GDP data has restored India's status as the fastest-growing major economy in the world, beating China which grew by 6.8% in the October-December period.



(News Agencies) The Indian economy has regained its momentum, with the Central Statistical Office (CSO) reporting a GDP growth of 7.2% in the December quarter (Q3) of 2017-18—the fastest in five quarters. This recovery was sparked by a revival in investment demand, registering a growth of 12%. Based on Q3 GDP data, the full year's growth has been revised upwards to 6.6%. If this GDP growth rate is realized, the size of the Indian economy is projected to grow to \$2.6 trillion at the end of March. Separately, data released by the controller general of accounts, India's fiscal deficit as of January end was at 113.7% of the revised estimates. **(Contd on page 23)**

CBI arrests Karti Chidambaram in INX Media case, Congress says vendetta

The 46-year-old was produced before metropolitan magistrate Sumeet Anand, who remanded Karti to a day's CBI custody for interrogation, though the agency had asked for 15-day custody.



(News Agencies) The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday arrested Karti Chidambaram for allegedly helping INX Media in scuttling punitive action by the finance ministry during the tenure of his father P Chidambaram as Union finance minister. **(Contd on page 23)**

New York City is ordered to pay \$180K to three Muslim women for forcing them to remove their hijabs for mugshots

(Press Release) New York City will have to shell out \$180,000 to three Muslim women for forcing them to take off their hijabs for mugshots. Settled in Brooklyn federal court on Monday, the suits sought to impact the NYPD's policy for taking pictures of people wearing head coverings. Dating back to 2012, the cases start with a Brooklyn teen known as 'G.E.' who was arrested after a dispute with two girls. While the criminal case was dismissed, her mugshot would be the root of the problem. G.E. was taken to the 62nd Precinct, which covers Bensonhurst, Mapleton and Bath Beach. When she got there, she was instructed to remove her hijab. Refusing, the teen was then taken to a private room and a female officer took the photo away from men. When she got to Brooklyn central booking, however, she was informed that the camera was in a fixed spot and that there were no women who could take the photo. G.E. claims that a male officer took

her picture, without the hijab. The teen claims to have felt 'exposed, violated and distraught' for having to remove her head piece for approximately 20 minutes while policemen and prisoners watched. An order was issued in March 2015 which changed the policy for people who refused to take off their headscarves. Officers now have to detail to people that the NYPD provides the choice for private photos - without the hijab - to be taken in another room with an officer of the same gender.

G.E.'s lawyer, Tahanie Aboushi, filed two other cases with women from 2015 and 2016 incidents. One woman alleges that she was forced to take off her veil at Central Booking and was denied a female officer. Another stated that her hijab was removed at the scene. 'We did our best to establish good precedent,' Aboushi said. 'On the one hand, it gives officers guidance, and on the other hand, it protects the exercise of religious freedom.'

New Jersey man is first to be charged under 'child erotica' law

(News Agencies) A New Jersey man has been charged in what prosecutors say is the first case since the state expanded

a law that bans sexually suggestive images of minors. NJ.com reports 25-year-old Anthony Domenick, of Belleville, has been charged with possessing explicit images



and having "child erotica" following a search of his home Wednesday. Prosecutors say the "child erotica" law that went into effect Feb. 1 criminalizes images where children are clothed but suggestively posed or inappropriately sexualized. If convicted, Domenick could face up to 10 years in prison. It's unclear if he has an attorney.

NRI held for misuse of duty incentive



(News Agencies) MUMBAI: After arresting the two businessmen from Surat for allegedly fraudulently availing duty drawbacks, the Directorate Revenue of Intelligence (DRI) on Monday arrested a NRI who aided and abetted in the racket. The DRI arrested Pradeep Kumar Premjani, businessman based in Dubai, after he landed from the UAE at the international airport on Monday. Officials said that the immigration cell alerted the DRI as a look-out notice had been issued. Premjani is the sixth person to be arrested in the duty drawback racket worth crores. Last month, director of Sawlani Group Murli Sawlani and director of accounts Viral Vora were accused of fraudulently exporting merchandise by wrongly declaring them and inflating its value and availing duty drawbacks and getting illegal remittances from abroad. It was found that there was no physical movement of goods from the firms concerned as shown in the sales and purchase invoices.



TRAGEDY OF MISSING MARY

(News Agencies) Police have released heartbreaking images of the remains of a woman who got stuck in the wall space of her home - and wasn't identified for three years. Harris County Coroner's Office identified the remains of 61-year-old Mary Stewart Cerruti in January after carrying out extensive forensic tests on bones found in the property. She vanished in 2015 - and her whereabouts remained a mystery until recently. Investigators believe she got wedged in the wall space after falling through a loose board in her attic.

In May 2017, the tenants who moved into her home, after it had foreclosed, found bone fragments. But it wasn't until Wednesday, the majority of her skeleton was recovered, including her skull.

Degraded clothing, sneakers, and a pair of glasses were also found. Pictures taken during the search show investigators holding the rat-infested skeleton being retrieved from the tiny space behind a bathroom wall where she came to rest. Before her tragic death,

she lived a secluded life and hung tapestries on the window to maintain privacy.

Her closest living relatives were cousins - making it hard to get a DNA match.

'In the attic, there was a broken board that led down to the space. Law enforcement thinks she may have been up in the attic and fell through the attic floor,' Tricia Bentley, spokesperson for the medical examiner, told PEOPLE. 'It is a one story home with an attic so she was found on the first floor. There was some space between the walls where a person could fit.'

'The cause of death is listed as undetermined because the remains were skeletonized. There is no evidence to say how exactly she died.' Police found no signs of trauma or foul play in what bones remained, although a great deal of evidence was victim to decay and animals. Before she vanished, Cerruti was in opposition to new housing developments in the neighborhood, even attending Houston Planning Commission meetings during which she

called the developers 'the bad guys.'

Video footage of Cerruti attending a February 2013 meeting showed her wearing a similar style of eyeglasses that matched the ones found with the skeleton.

In summer 2015, the elderly woman's neighbors became concerned after they noticed the mail piled up in front of her house that had a broken window, reported by The Houston Chronicle. The paper also reported that six dead cats were inside. Cages were found in the attic, hints of how Cerruti had taken care of stray cats. She'd taken photos of them when she'd been alive, giving them names like Slim, Sweetie and Little Spot. 'The gap in the boards appears to be maybe eight inches, and Mary was certainly very frail, but it's hard for me to believe that a person could step on a board, and their entire body would go down a crack that is two inches wider than a dollar bill,' Cerruti's neighbor, Roxanne Davis, told local news outlet KHOU.

Dr. Jagdish Gupta-led new Executive Committee 2018 of AAPI-QLI inaugurated



(Press Release) (Long Island, New York) During a solemn ceremony that was attended by over 250 physicians and community leaders, Dr. Jagdish Gupta and his new executive committee members assumed charge of AAPIQLI (American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin of Queens and Long Island) at the popular Akbar Restaurant in Garden City, Long Island, NY on February 9th.

Dr. Ajay K. Lodha, past President of AAPI-QLI and national AAPI, was elected unanimously as the Chair, BOT of AAPIQLI

in a subsequent meeting on Feb. 16th, 2018. Dr. Lodha assumed charge as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the inaugural event. Dr. Lodha called upon the AAPI members to "stand united, in order to be able to fight for our rights," while pointing to the fact that Indian American Physicians service every 7th patient in the nation and contribute immensely to the healthcare industry in the nation.

As the participants at the event cheered, the outgoing President of AAPI-QLI, Dr. Rakesh Dua, whose term ended

after serving as the association through a memorable and eventful year, passed on the gavel to Dr. Jagdish K Gupta, a practicing Gastroenterologist, serving the community for over 40 years.

Along with Dr. Gupta, other members of the Executive Committee 2018, were administered the oath of office included, Dr. Himanshu Pandya, President Elect; Dr. Raj Bhayani, Vice President; Dr. Abhay Malhotra, Secretary; and Dr. Vinod Jayam, Treasurer. Ten prominent physicians were inducted as Members at Large of the

Governing Body. The Organization is ably guided by 15 members, constituting Board of Trustees and Five Advisory Board Members from the community.

In his inaugural address as the incoming President, Dr. Jagdish Gupta, President-Elect of AAPI QLI, announced the exciting new programs for the members in the year 2018 under his new leadership. "We want to continue to be the most vibrant, transformative and politically active Chapter among all AAPI chapters in the nation," he said.

McDonald's Partners Up With Dance USA Dance Season II



(Press Release) New Jersey - Fast Food Giant McDonald's has partnered with 5678 Media Group and Zee TV to become the national title sponsor for the second season of the Dance USA Dance, a reality dance competition. This year McDonald's Dance USA Dance will tour across 15 cities around USA and Canada to select Top 30 regional teams to compete at the Grand Finale which will be held at the PlayStation Theatre at the New York City Times Square on July 15th, 2018.

"It is truly an example of how colossal brands continue to recognize the potential and impact of dance as a medium of youth culture and expression in the US." said Ashwani Kumar, CEO of 5678 Media Group.

McDonald's Dance USA Dance has tremendously grown since its first season last year where the tour consisted of six

cities under the tutelage of celebrated Bollywood choreographer Saroj Khan. Joining the selection tour this season will be three celebrity judges - Matt Steffanina, Nakul Dev Mahajan, Lauren Gottlieb - along with Miss Pakistan USA 2015, Sarish Khan who will host the reality series.

"Dance USA Dance is growing bigger each day and evolving into an international platform aiming to showcase talent from all across the world. Our partnership with McDonald's will further help us in empowering minority communities to reach their full potential." said Anjana Kumar, Co-Founder of 5678 Media Group.

Media Group aims to bring together multicultural communities across the United States and create the ultimate authentic experiences for

consumers and brands alike. Brand activations platforms on Season II of McDonald's Dance USA Dance include VIP booths, digital contests, sampling opportunities, venue branding opportunities, on-ground custom experiential activations, giveaway's, charging stations, digital & social custom branding,

photo booths, etc. To learn more about McDonald's Dance USA Dance - Season II please visit www.danceusadance.us. Dance USA Dance is currently accepting regional, national, and international sponsorship applications via email. Contact sponsorship@5678mediagroup.com.

The 5678 Media Group is a full-service entertainment agency connecting brands to the South Asian community. 5678 service offerings include branded-entertainment, influencer marketing, content strategy and production, targeted media distribution, and experiential activations.

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The proper functioning of regulatory institutions is central to our economic stability

While we debate the need for an independent banking regulator any knee-jerk reactions must be avoided

The financial malfeasance of the Punjab National Bank (PNB) has regrettably overshadowed the ongoing discussions on the budget proposals.

There is no doubt that the governance failure in the PNB case raises serious concerns about the health of India's public institutions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasised that paramount diligence is needed by those assigned with regulatory functions. Finance minister Arun Jaitley spoke of regulators having a third eye. Even if that requires more than extraordinary powers, the regulators cannot take their eyes off the ball.

The role of regulators raises several issues.

First, isn't it inexplicable that while the PNB fraud was a result of a systemic mismatch between SWIFT and the core banking functions of the bank, it escaped the attention of five supervisory entities within the bank: adequacy audit, compliance audit, internal audit, external audit and extrinsic audit? This casts a serious doubt on the credibility of the internal processes in the bank and the functioning of these specialised audit institutions. The mandate of the newly-constituted Malegam Committee by the Reserve Bank of India to investigate the Nirav Modi case will hopefully come up with a credible explanation. Second, there is the issue of an independent banking regulator: The financial sector already has several sub-sector regulators such as SEBI for capital markets, IRDA for insurance markets and PFRDA for pension funds. RBI is the obvious financial regulator, given its mandate for banking soundness as a pre-condition for an effective monetary policy, and also the lender of last resort.

The First Narasimham Committee on Banking Sector Reforms in August 1991, which looked into all aspects of the financial system, emphasised on the strengthening of RBI's supervision capabilities. The Second Narasimham Committee Report in 1998 suggested the segregation of the role of the RBI as a regulator from the owner of the bank. RBI, thereafter, transferred its respective shareholdings of public banks such as the State Bank of India, National Housing Bank, and National Bank For Agriculture And Rural

Development to the Government of India.

In 2007-08, the Centre decided to acquire the entire stake of RBI in these three banks. More recently, the Shri Krishna Committee Report on Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission (FSLRC) emphasised on rewriting and harmonising the financial sector legislation, spread over 60 Acts. More important, it suggested the creation of a unified financial sector agency as a regulator for the financial sector.

RBI performs its banking supervision functions under the guidance of the Board of Financial Supervision (BFS). This entity aims at upgrading the quality of the statutory audit and also oversees the functioning of the department of banking supervision (DBS), department of non-banking supervision (DNBS) and financial institutions division under a designated deputy governor.

The full import of the Narasimham Committee Report did not result in strengthening the human

resource capability, domain knowledge, and RBI's supervisory entities. It was partly stymied given the fact that it synchronised with the Harshad Mehta scam of 1992. It was felt that a structural reform by way of creating a separate entity would cast a shadow both on RBI as also on the credibility of the governor. It is ironic that the debate on an independent banking regulator synchronises with another fraud. There is little doubt that RBI acting as a banking regulator has some conflict of interest. It may be tempted to operate lax monetary policies to keep banks healthy, but more important, the risk towards reputation and in the event of a bank failure, which can undermine the credibility of RBI itself. To avoid this reputational contagion, should RBI keep supervisory functions at arms' length? Regulatory entities must ensure several dimensions of independence namely regulatory independence, supervisory independence,

institutional independence and budgetary independence. Even while we debate the need for an independent banking regulator any knee-jerk reactions must be avoided. The full spirit of the Narasimham Committee in creating an independent and separate entity within RBI, which performs its regulatory functions could be reconsidered. It must have domain knowledge, skills, expertise and manpower to undertake the detailed on-site inspection and verification, which are necessary for this close oversight. Second, is there a need for a super regulator as an overarching function? Most countries have accepted a hybrid regime. If the central bank is to be the super-regulator any conflict of interest must be avoided. Besides, in the event of a conflict between two financial sector regulators who is to act as the ombudsman? Finally, I wrote an article on September 22, 2015, in Mint that dealt on the issue of "regulating the regulators". The finance minister is right that

politicians are accountable but regulators are not. Enhancing greater parliamentary superintendence over regulatory functions must be considered. The present practice of sector regulators being, in some way, accountable to the parliamentary standing committees is inadequate. The parliamentary standing committee is overburdened and has shown little time or disposition for a more systematic review of the functions of regulators. Innovative mechanisms which enable greater parliamentary engagement would strengthen both accountabilities and the democratic framework. It would serve the twin purpose of consumer protection and a framework to buffer the excesses and failures of market instruments. This is a good time to carefully consider all viable options while segregating the issues of immediate concern. The functioning of regulatory institutions is central to our economic stability.

Controversies during Trudeau visit must not affect the broader bilateral relationship

Controversies during Trudeau visit must not affect the broader bilateral relationship

International heartthrob, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, succeeded in having the most controversial State visit to India of any foreign leader in the past five years. The visits of traditional Indian rivals like Pakistan and China have been much more troubled, but at least that is expected. Canadians like to see themselves as being an ethical grade above the rest. Mr Trudeau has projected himself as the poster boy of this national image. However, postmodern values do not necessarily sell well in countries like India whose attitudes towards security, identity and nationalism are more traditional.

The history of Indo-Canadian relations has been troubled. Ottawa was among the most vociferous opponents of India's nuclear programme, a stance it was only to change when the US ended sanctions against India a decade ago. Canada has a large Indian minority but that has generated its own problems. Studies have shown diaspora groups often hold on to distorted views of their original homes. This is evident in Canada's Sikh diaspora and the extremists' numbers are enough to have political leverage. The liberal arm of the Canadian political system has preferred to treat the issue of Khalistani extremism as a consequence of Indian State repression. This fits their worldview and is also part of



their electoral calculations. These are all problems that can be handled if care is taken to ensure official relations are firewalled from these other issues. Mr Trudeau failed to do so during his visit, though the inclusion of Khalistani groups in the counterterrorism framework did repair some of the damage done. It seems clear, however, that the broader bilateral relationship will continue to grow.

The Narendra Modi government has realised that second-tier economies are increasingly important to India's rise. Canada is a perfect example. A country with a \$2 trillion economy, India has a lot to contribute in terms of investment, technology and resources.

Capital flows from Canada to India in all

forms is now close to \$20 billion, five times official direct investment figures. It remains among the most open countries when it comes to immigration at a time when so many others are closing their doors. It may be the first Western country where South Asians will emerge as the largest minority. Canada may also be fated to become a major civilian nuclear partner. A Canadian firm now owns the nuclear power firm, Westinghouse, which India has been wooing for some years. There is irony in this given how much New Delhi and Ottawa used to spar on nuclear matters. It is also a reminder about how nothing is permanent in the affairs of the world and how all bilateral relations should be treated with care.

China Gains Over India In Neglect Is A Fraud's Best Friend Maldives, Lanka And Pak

The Maldives has extended the 15-day state of emergency imposed in that country on February 5 by another 30 days. It has done this in complete defiance of India's wish that the emergency should not be extended and in violation of its own constitution which lays down that such a resolution must have the support of at least 43 MPs in the Majlis (parliament). The Indian naval chief has confirmed on record that there has been a noticeable increase in the deployment of Chinese ships, submarines and research vessels in the Indian Ocean Region. Subsequent reports suggest that the Chinese are soon going to set up a 'joint ocean observation station' in the Maldives which will also have a military application with a provision even for a submarine base. Before imposing the emergency, President Abdulla Yameen had arrested the earlier long-time ruler of the islands, Abdul Gayoom, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, because on February 1 the Supreme Court had ordered the release of political prisoners and reinstatement of MPs who had crossed over to the opposition. Former president Muhammad Nasheed is already out of the country and presently in India.

When the UPA was in power, President Yameen had, immediately on assuming office in 2013, terminated the contract given to the Indian company GMR to run the airport in Male. The government of India did not take up the matter with the Maldivian authorities strongly enough with the result that the Indian company had to take the arbitration route for the settlement of the dispute. Yameen also entered into a free trade agreement with China, ignoring the reservations of India on this issue. There is no doubt that India's soft approach in the GMR case and on the issue of the FTA with China has encouraged Yameen to defy India again and again and emerge as a full-blown dictator. He has placed the Maldives firmly in the lap of the Chinese. India's role has been reduced to that of a helpless spectator.

The situation in Sri Lanka has also been less than satisfactory for India. There, the Chinese had financed the construction of the port of Hambantota through debt. The Sri Lankans could not service the debt with the result that they had to literally handover the port to the Chinese on a long-term lease. They also handed over a large tract of land near the port to another Chinese company for the development of a Special Economic Zone. In the meanwhile, former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is considered close to the Chinese, is on the comeback trail as he has swept the local body elections held recently in Sri Lanka.

In Nepal, KP Oli has once again become the Prime Minister and his party and the one led by Prachanda have merged to form a single and more powerful party of the Left. When Oli was Prime Minister earlier, he had faced the agitation of the Madhesis, which resulted in a blockade of the Indo-Nepal border leading to much suffering in Nepal. Oli is also considered to be more inclined towards China than India.

The China-Pakistan axis is not good news for India either. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor, which passes through Pak-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), will enable Chinese access to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea through the Gwadar port in Balochistan. The estimated cost of this project was \$46 billion. It has already gone up to over \$60 billion. There is doubt about Pakistan's ability to service a debt of this magnitude. It will not be a surprise at all if, as in the case of Sri Lanka, China converts debt into territory and takes charge of not only Gwadar port, which it has done already, but also the land which forms access to it.

There was recently a media report that Mandarin has been recognised as a 'national language in Pakistan. This confusion arose because the Senate of Pakistan passed a resolution stating that in view of the growing collaboration between Pakistan and China under CPEC, courses of the official Chinese language should be made compulsory for current and prospective Pakistani CPEC human resources in order to overcome any costly communication barriers. This resolution adopted by the Senate of Pakistani is rather funny, to say the least. In any other country, it would have been the Chinese who would have been called upon to learn the language of the host country. Instead, it is the Pakistani personnel involved in the project who have to learn Chinese. China does not merely convert debt into territory, it also takes control of the mind of its victim.

When the first phase of Chabahar Port in Iran was inaugurated in December last year by President Hassan Rouhani, the presence of Pakistani Minister for Ports and Shipping Hasil Khan Bizenjo, standing next to him, surprised many. According to media reports, a senior Iranian diplomat is reported to have said that "the objective behind this move was clear - Iran wanted to send a message that it would not allow India or any other country to use Chabahar against Pakistan. Pakistan, as we are aware, is a member of the Saudi-led Counter Terrorism Coalition. Iran is not. Pakistan, however, has assured Iran that Islamabad would not become part of any initiative that targets Tehran. The Iranian pledge about Chabahar is a quid pro quo for this favour." During his recent visit to India, Hassan Rouhani agreed to the leasing of operational control of a part of Chabahar port for 18 months to New Delhi. This is the first phase of Chabahar port. India will have to keep its fingers crossed to see how it plays out as the port develops further.

It is ironic that technology relied on to check malpractices in the financial sector and improve the ease of doing business has again proved to be an easily manipulated tool. Harshad Mehta breached technology safeguards to milk the banking system 26 years ago, using bank receipts to finance his deals. And now, Nirav Modi has taken advantage of loopholes and used letters of undertaking (LoU) issued by Punjab National Bank (PNB) to acquire around Rs 11,400 crore from overseas branches of Indian banks.

The best systems can fail without adequate checks and balances, opine experts. In Modi's case, safeguards failed in multiple areas. Can the scam be ascribed to a systemic problem in the operation of nostro accounts or a governance issue?

C.H. Venkatachalam, general secretary of the All India Bank Employees' Association, calls it a collective failure of multiple levels of control. "Such huge frauds cannot be committed over a period of 6 or 7 years without anyone knowing about it. It is naïve to believe so as, for issuing a LoU, two officials have to be involved—one to prepare the document and another to authorise it. Similarly, for Society of Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) transfers, one officer prepares the message and another higher authority has to sanction the payment," he says. And when the SWIFT message confirmation is sent by the overseas bank, it's received by the branch's chief manager

But in PNB's case, all this had reportedly been delegated to a junior officer, who unusually had not been transferred from the Mumbai branch of the bank or given any other position in the last several years. What is more astounding is that, in violation of the "maker and checker" concept, this official was given access to secret passwords issued to the higher authorities for sanctioning the transactions. "It is clearly a total failure of the banking system. What is surprising is that the concurrent audit, done on a daily basis, failed to unravel the malpractice. The fraud raises questions on the technology aspects, supervision, monitoring, audit, internal control, etc., besides the role of the Reserve Bank of India in the whole episode," states Venkatachalam.

In August 2016, the RBI cautioned banks about abusing the SWIFT interbank network for 'unauthorised transfer of funds'. Yet PNB, which has won vigilance excellence awards from the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), evidently chose to overlook this. The CVC didn't respond to email queries about its due diligence before conferring awards. Instead, it merely came out with a statement that the awards given to PNB were for 'outstanding contribution' in the category of 'timely completion of disciplinary proceedings'.



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The Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill is a welcome step

The Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill is a welcome step, but the challenge will still be to bring the economic offenders back to India to face the law

Nirav Modi is a fugitive from justice. His disappearing act complicates any serious attempt to recover the money that is due to banks and also hampers the criminal investigation. Yet, the far deeper impact is that citizens will continue to ask whether the rule of law applies to influential businessmen who have escaped to another country after defaulting. Such undermining of institutional trust in the rule of law is never a good sign. Thus, the news that the government is planning to introduce a new law

against such economic offenders is welcome. In February 2017, in his Budget speech finance minister Arun Jaitley had said that there was a need for legislation to deal with economic offenders who have fled the country.

There have been several moves against economic offenders over the past few years — ranging from clear rules from the Reserve Bank of India on how to identify wilful defaulters to the new insolvency framework that empowers creditors to take

control of the assets of defaulters. These policies assume that the economic offender remains within the country. The existing rules or laws are of little use in case the economic offender remains outside the jurisdiction of Indian law. Trying to co-ordinate with the legal systems in other countries can take too much time.

The Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill seeks to do two things. First, any property owned in India by the economic offender can be confiscated, as is

currently allowed in the case of those accused of money laundering. Second, it will ensure that the confiscation will not face any civil claims of managers, shareholders or other partners. The government has said that the bill will only cover cases where the total claims are more than Rs 100 crore, to allow the courts to focus on the meaningful cases.

However, the bill should not be seen as an alternative to making runaway defaulters face

the Indian courts. For example, the sale of a mansion in Goa or the attachment of a few retail outlets is only a limited form of punishment in cases where the economic fugitive has assets spread across the world, often through a web of holding companies registered in tax havens. It will do little to rebuild public trust in the rule of law. The far bigger task of making those who have escaped abroad come back to face Indian law will continue to remain a challenge.



PSU banks need radical restructuring

The edifice of the PSU banks is crumbling. There are many reasons behind this. They have neither market discipline nor regulatory discipline. The market cannot punish them for non-performance. Even if no one wants to touch their shares with a barge-pole, the government always steps in to infuse capital to keep them afloat.

Had Punjab National Bank (PNB) not been owned by the government, by now there could have been long queues at the bank's branches and ATMs for withdrawal of money — a run on the bank. This will never happen for a PSU bank as its majority owner, the government, will not allow it to fail.

The depositors' money is safe in all public sector banks. Or, for that matter, all commercial banks in India. But the Rs 11,300 crore letter of undertaking (LoU) fraud at PNB has exposed the soft underbelly of PSU banks. They have around 70% share of banking assets and a much higher, 90% share of bad loans or non-performing assets (NPAs). Banks do not earn any interest on NPAs and, on top of that, they need to set aside money or provide for them. No wonder then that only five of 21 PSU banks have reported profits in the December quarter; their collective loss is Rs 18,097 crore in that period.

Data available with India's largest credit bureau also shows that the share of PSU banks in cases related to wilful defaults is also far higher than private banks — around Rs 93,500 crore of Rs 1.12 trillion in September 2017.

Wilful defaulters are those who have money but do not pay up. When it comes to fraud, again these banks are softer targets. A recent Reuters study says Indian state-owned banks have reported 8,670 cases totaling Rs 61,260 crore over the last five financial years up to March 31, 2017. This amount will rise further in the current financial year with more frauds coming to light.

If you ask a public sector banker this question, he will narrate, with a tinge of pride, many stories extolling the stellar role this set of banks has played for nation-building. You may even be confronted with many counter questions: Who gives money to the farmers? Who keeps tiny deposits? Have the private banks gone beyond the city limits? All these come with an underpinning of romance and nostalgia.

The edifice of the PSU banks is crumbling. There are many reasons behind this. They have neither market discipline nor regulatory discipline. The market cannot punish them for non-performance. Even if no one wants to touch their shares with a barge pole, the government always steps in to infuse capital to keep them afloat. In the past

31 years, between 1985-86 and 2016-17, the government had infused some Rs 1.5 trillion in this set of banks. On top of that, it has committed to infuse Rs 2.11 trillion into them in phases; out of this Rs 88,000 crore has already flowed in. When it comes to regulation, it's not ownership neutral. This means RBI cannot treat these banks the same way it does private banks.

The biggest issue that has been plaguing the industry is the lack of accountability. The boards of such banks are often full of rent-seekers. Far from guiding an organisation with vision and mission, the directors — of course, not all of them — broker loan deals which often go sour. Even though these bank are listed, the norms which stipulate that at least one-third of the directors must be independent are not applicable to them. To make matters worse, the CEO and MD have a much shorter tenure compared with those in a private bank.

Frequent government interventions in various forms — ranging from being forced to support the infrastructure sector by giving big-ticket loans, to making the financial inclusion project a success, and even



picking up a broom and cleaning up neighbourhoods where bank branches are located as part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan — make matters worse. At the senior level, they also do not get market-related salaries.

Periodically, we discuss privatisation, mergers and consolidation of PSU banks but the status quo prevails. Privatisation is a politically sensitive issue while making mergers meaningful is a tough task. At the moment, 11 out of 21 PSU banks are under the so-called prompt corrective action or PCA framework of the RBI which

restricts their activities. Even after a fresh capital infusion, they will probably not be encouraged to grow. This is a new paradigm in Indian banking industry. Some of the PSU banks are becoming irrelevant. At the same time, new entities are encouraged to enter the fray. They are in different shapes and sizes — universal banks, small finance banks, payments banks. Unless we design a radically new governance structure for these banks, they will continue to cede market share to private banks and non-banking finance companies.



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I-T dept issues look out circulars against Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi

The I-T department has also attached four assets of Nirav Modi worth Rs70 crore



(News Agencies) New Delhi: The income tax department has issued a look out circulars against Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi to restrict their movement, officials said on Wednesday. The I-T department also attached four assets of Nirav Modi worth Rs70 crore, the officials added. Billionaire jewellers Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi of Gitanjali Gems are at the centre of the \$2 billion PNB fraud.

Delhi officials turn down offer for talks, demand action against CM, deputy CM



(News Agencies) Delhi bureaucrats on Monday turned down an invitation of dialogue by the AAP government to resolve the stalemate triggered by an alleged assault on the Chief Secretary and demanded action against the Chief Minister and his deputy, saying the attack took place in their presence. The Joint Forum of the Delhi Government Employees made it clear that they will settle down for nothing short of a "written and public" apology by the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The officials have been at loggerheads with the government ever since some AAP MLAs allegedly assaulted Chief Secretary Anshu Prakash in a midnight meeting at CM's residence on Monday. The Delhi government had deputed minister Rajendra Pal Gautam to initiate a dialogue with the protesting officials and break the week-long standoff. "The joint forum demands that the prerequisite to any dialogue with the political executive is a specific written and public apology from the CM and deputy CM. Communication between the political and permanent executive can only continue through formal written means and no talks are possible," said Pooja Joshi, one of the members of the forum, an umbrella body of various employee associations of the Delhi government. Joshi also said that the government officials will continue boycotting meetings of Kejriwal and his cabinet of ministers. "The joint forum notes that instead of apologising and admitting their mistake, the CM and deputy CM are in denial mode. This shows that they were a part of the conspiracy and since they are specifically identified in the FIR, we appeal to L-G and the police commissioner (Amulya Patnaik) to take action as per law against them," a resolution by the officers' body said. The Chief Secretary resumed work on Monday after four days. He came to office in the morning and later went to attend a meeting with Centre and then headed to lieutenant governor Anil Baijal's office for another meeting. He returned to the secretariat around 5.30 pm. Government sources said that the CS is not likely to apply for a transfer to the Centre. It remains to be seen if the CS will attend Tuesday's cabinet meeting. Gautam said building trust was not the sole responsibility of political leadership. "The government has taken an initiative to end the face-off. Now, the (agitating) officers should come forward in a bid to build trust and have a dialogue so that governance is not affected," Gautam said. The officers' body also said that the political executive not only "failed to condemn or regret" the incident, but AAP MLA Naresh Balyan gave an open threat to "thrash" the officers in the presence of CM and yet Kejriwal did not condemn it. "The joint forum resolves that all employees will continue their protest in the form of a five-minute silence at 1.30 pm (lunch time) in all government offices till such time a specific written and public apology is tendered by the chief minister and deputy chief minister, and steps are taken to ensure the personal safety and dignity of officers while they discharge their official duties," the resolution issued by the forum stated. The officers said they were working with "full vigour" and there is absolutely no hindrance to work.

Justin Trudeau supports 'rogue hand' theory, angers India

Jaspal Atwal, photographed with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's wife at an event in Mumbai on February 20, and three other men were convicted of the attempted murder for the 1986 attack on Akali Dal leader and minister Malkiat Singh Sidhu on Vancouver Island.



a "blacklist" by the Indian government.

Atwal and three men were convicted of attempted murder for a 1986 attack on Akali Dal leader Malkiat Singh Sidhu while he was visiting relatives in Canada.

Sidhu, then a minister of state in the Punjab government, was injured in the attack. He was later killed by Sikh militants in Punjab in 1991.

Trudeau faced embarrassment when it emerged that Atwal had attended an official event in Mumbai, where he was photographed with the Canadian prime minister's wife, and was invited to an official dinner reception hosted by Canada's envoy in New Delhi. The invitation was later rescinded. External affairs ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said India had noted the exchange in the Canadian Parliament regarding the invitations issued to Atwal to two official events. "Let me categorically state that the government of India, including the security agencies, had nothing to do with the presence of Jaspal Atwal at the event hosted by the Canadian high commissioner in Mumbai or the invitation issued to him for the Canadian high commissioner's reception in New Delhi. Any suggestion to the contrary is baseless and unacceptable," he said.

(News Agencies) Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is standing by a senior national security official's startling accusation that a convicted Khalistani terrorist's presence in India during his recent visit was an attempt by "rogue" elements in the Indian establishment to embarrass him on the issue of Sikh separatist activity on Canadian soil. Hours after Trudeau's remarks, the external affairs ministry said any suggestion that the Indian government had anything to do with Atwal's presence at two official events in Mumbai and New Delhi was "baseless and unacceptable". Trudeau's comment also brought a furious retort from Conservative MP and leader of Opposition, Andrew Scheer, who tweeted: "Justin Trudeau just made an incredibly serious charge against the Indian government - which has real implications for Canada's foreign relations and national security. He needs to provide proof of this immediately." Jean, during a news conference in New Delhi last Thursday, told the Canadian media it was "not an accident" that Jaspal Atwal was present in India and had been removed from know it to be true."

As the debacle that was Trudeau's visit to India captivated the Canadian political class, opposition Conservatives raised the issue in the House of Commons, the lower house of Parliament. They asked whether Trudeau agreed with the "conspiracy theory" advanced by the official, identified by Canadian media as National Security Advisor Daniel Jean. Responding to the Opposition attack, Trudeau said, "When one of our top diplomats and security officials says something to

Karti Chidambaram arrested in INX Media case: An explainer

The CBI alleges Karti Chidambaram used his influence in the finance ministry to help INX Media get approval for foreign investments from three Mauritius-based investors. His father, P Chidambaram, was the finance minister then.



(News Agencies) The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Karti Chidambaram in a case of corruption from the Chennai airport on his return from London on Wednesday morning. A CBI spokesperson confirmed that Karti, the son of former finance minister and senior Congress leader P Chidambaram, was arrested in what has come to be known as INX Media money-laundering case. The case was registered in May 2017. Here is a timeline of the case:

INX Media (Private) Limited, Mumbai through its then director	Indrani Mukherjea
	INX News (Private) Limited through its then director Pratim aka Peter Mukherjea
	Karti P Chidambaram
	Chess Management Services (Private) Limited through its director Karti P Chidambaram
	Advantage Strategic Consulting (Private) Limited through its director Padma Vishwanathan (the CBI has alleged that this company was indirectly controlled by Karti Chidambaram)
	Unknown officials of Union ministry of finance
	What happened?

INX Media was incorporated on August 8, 2006 with the purpose of creating, operating, managing and broadcasting a bouquet of TV channels. The company applied the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) on March 13, 2007 for permission to issues shares to three non-resident investors, Duneam Investment (Mauritius), NSR PE Mauritius and New Vernon Private Equity Limited, under the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) route. The company said shares were being issued at the face value of R10. The company further said once it received the money, it would make an investment (26% equity) in INX News Private Limited (this is called a downstream investment).

In May 18, 2007, the FIPB considered the proposal and approved an investment of R4.62 crore under the FDI route but ruled that for the 'downstream investment' from INX Media to INX News, a separate approval would be required. The FIPB didn't approve downstream investment

into INX News.

CBI has alleged that instead of R4.62 crore, INX Media brought in R305 crore and made further downstream investment into INX News in violation of the FIPB approval. The Income Tax department initiated a probe into the matter. The FIPB on May 26, 2008 sought a clarification from INX Media over this.

The CBI's theory, presented in its FIR, is that INX Media entered into a conspiracy with Karti Chidambaram, son of then Union finance minister P Chidambaram. The FIR alleged that the objective of the conspiracy was to get issues "resolved/addressed amicably by influencing the public servants of the FIPB Unit of the ministry of finance by virtue of his (Karti's) relationship with the then finance minister".

On the suggestion of Chess Management, INX Media on June 26, 2008 sent a letter and tried to justify its action on two counts: a) that the downstream investment in INX News was in accordance with the FIPB

approval (CBI says this is a false claim), b) and the excess FDI came from a premium of more than R800 per share.

CBI claims Karti's influence made the ministry of finance officials ignore serious illegalities and show undue favour by abusing their official position. The officials, CBI alleges, advised INX News to apply for fresh approval for downstream investment though it had already been made.

CBI says payment for services rendered by Karti Chidambaram was made to Advantage Strategic. In all, CBI says there were invoices for payments of R3.5 crore raised for companies in which Karti had sustainable interest in the name creation or acquisition of media content and consultancy in respect of market research. But for the record, INX Group recorded that Advantage Strategic received a payment of R10 lakh for 'management consultancy charges towards FIPB notification and clarification'.

NIA to probe human trafficking cases

According to officials of the ministry of women and child development, the NIA would receive financial aid under Nirbhaya Fund for safety of women in order to set up a cell for investigating human trafficking

(News Agencies) The federal anti-terror National Investigation Agency (NIA) will be India's nodal authority to probe human trafficking cases, the government said on Wednesday after a Union cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, cleared the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill. "We hope to introduce the bill in the budget session," women and child development (WCD) minister Maneka Gandhi told reporters. At present, the Indian Penal Code and the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act deal with trafficking, but the WCD ministry said that since it is an organised crime, a separate law is required. The new bill also addresses the need for immediate protection of victims, Gandhi added.

Official data for 2016, released in November last year, showed that more than 19,000 women and children were trafficked in India. Officials in the WCD ministry said the NIA would get money under the Nirbhaya Fund to set up an exclusive cell to investigate the cases. The NIA Act would also be amended, they added. The bill divides various offences into "trafficking" and "aggravated trafficking". It says that trafficking crimes would carry a jail term of seven to 10 years, and aggravated trafficking crimes of at least 10 years in jail, extended to life imprisonment. Aggravated offences will include forced labour, bonded labour, forced surrogacy, use of narcotics to induce forced labour, trafficking in the garb of marriage and those that lead to a pregnancy or grave illness such as HIV/AIDS.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs also cleared a proposal to increase its guarantee to the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India from Rs 9,500 crore to Rs 19,000 crore to help it get bank credits for procurement of pulses and oilseeds at the support price.

Khalistani terrorist Jaspal Atwal got an e-visa to India

Citizens of Canada, like Atwal are eligible for an India e-visa, a facility India extends to nationals of some 150 countries.

(News Agencies) Jaspal Singh Atwal, once a convicted Khalistani terrorist, and the man who spoiled Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's party during his now controversial visit to India that ended on February 24, came to the country on an e-visa, two persons familiar with the development said on condition of anonymity. Citizens of Canada, like Atwal are eligible for an India e-visa, a facility India extends to nationals of some 150 countries. Since Atwal's name was removed from the list of blacklisted Sikh militants by India's home ministry in 2016, there was nothing that could have possibly prevented him from getting an e-visa. Getting e-visa involves a completely online application for which no facilitation is required by any intermediary. "He as a Canadian national and obtained an e-visa," said an Indian official. This person added that this doesn't mean the "government of India had any role in him" being in India or being "invited to a reception hosted by



the High Commission of that country for the visiting Prime Minister". "The Canadian High Commission managed the guest-lists for the reception and government didn't have any role in it". The High Commission rescinded the invite, later. External affairs ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar had earlier said the ministry would ascertain how Atwal got the visa. Atwal served five years of a 20-year prison sentence after being convicted of

attempting to kill visiting Indian politician Malkiat Singh Sidhu in Vancouver Island in 1986.

India, Hindustan Times learns, had proposed that the visit begin with the official leg of the trip in New Delhi, including meeting with PM Narendra Modi and a ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapathi Bhavan. It isn't clear how the itinerary was finalised -- both sides would have signed off on it -- but this was later pushed to the final leg of the trip.



PNB fraud: Nirav Modi gives 'repay' plan, I-T issues blue corner notice

An Income Tax official said the department attached four more properties of the Nirav Modi group as part of its investigations into the PNB fraud case.

(News Agencies) Under-fire diamond merchant Nirav Modi has given a 'concrete proposal' to Punjab National Bank (PNB) offering it jewellery worth Rs 2,000 crore, current account deposits amounting to Rs 200 crore and immovable properties of Rs 50 crore to settle of his liabilities even as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) continued its probe, and arrested the bank's chief internal auditor on Wednesday.

Modi wrote a letter to PNB on February 26, a source familiar with the matter said, saying the communication was in response to the bank's letter asking to

provide an implementable and concrete plan to return his dues.

Modi's offer comes at a time when the Bureau of Immigration issued a Blue Corner Notice against him and his uncle Mehul Choksi on Wednesday in connection with the Rs 12,600-crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud case.

The notice was issued on the request of the Income Tax department.

PNB has accused Modi and Choksi (who owns Gitanjali Jewels) of committing a fraud of more than Rs 12,600 crore in the issuance of Letters of Understanding and foreign letters

of credit from the Brady House branch between 2011 and 2017. A Blue Corner notice is issued to locate, identify or obtain information on a person of interest in a criminal investigation, and, in this case, will be valid for a year starting February 22 at all ports of embarkation.

Meanwhile, the I-T department attached four more properties of the Nirav Modi group, including a Rs 13 crore farm house in Alibaug – around 100 km south of Mumbai – and a 5.24MW solar power plant spread over 135 acres of land in Ahmednagar worth Rs 70 crore,

as per official records. Ahmednagar is around 270km east of Mumbai. The department also attached 34 more bank accounts and fixed deposits of the Gitanjali Group with a balance of Rs 1.45 crore.

The CBI also arrested PNB's chief auditor MK Sharma, a chief manager-ranked official. CBI officials said he was responsible for auditing the practices of the Brady House branch.

According to a person familiar with the content of Modi's letter, "Modi has told the bank that his intention was to resolve the matter and ensure justice is served to all." Modi is believed to

have told the bank that the seizure of his assets and the crackdown against him have brought company operations to a standstill. A person familiar with the development said, "He has told the bank to take charge of his companies under a relevant Act and operate them in order to ensure that employee dues are cleared. The ED-CBI investigation and action are eroding the value of his companies." The CBI has asked Modi to return to India and join the investigation. "He had written to us saying he cannot appear in front of our investigators," a CBI officer said.

Lockheed Martin says offer to build F-16s in India stands firm

Lockheed and Swedish firm Saab are the only two companies exploring opportunities to build F-16s and Gripens in India under the single-engine programme.



(News Agencies) At a time when the government seems disinterested to pursue plans to locally produce single-engine fighters in collaboration with a global defence contractor, US military contractor Lockheed Martin on Wednesday said its offer to build F-16 jets in India "stands firm". "We haven't heard anything officially from the government and continue to pursue opportunities to build F-16s under the Make in India framework," said Vivek Lall, Lockheed vice-president (strategy and business development). India is preparing to launch a fresh hunt for fighter aircraft to sharpen the combat edge of the Indian Air Force that is grappling with a shortage of warplanes, Hindustan Times had reported last week. However, there has been no official announcement. Lall refused to comment on whether the F-35 stealth fighter was being offered to India, saying it was "a government-to-government conversation." He, however, said "technology improvements" would continue to flow

between the single-engine F-16 and F-35 at the fraction of the cost to F-16 operators. He also said that almost half of the F-16 supply chain was common with the F-35. Lockheed and Swedish firm Saab are the only two companies exploring opportunities to build F-16s and Gripens in India under the single-engine programme. Making a renewed pitch for the F-16, Lall said the "exclusive production" of the planes in India represented a significant opportunity to further defence diplomacy as 25 global air forces operated over 3,000 F-16 jets. He said the production of F-16s could begin in India within three years of a deal. "F-16 production opportunities currently total around 400 (Indian requirement included) in central Europe, South America, Mediterranean and Asia," he said. What if the government announces it will float a new global tender or take the government-to-government route to buy new jets? "We will still be in that competition. We are here for the long term," Lall added.

Will poll strategist Prashant Kishor be a part of Team Modi for 2019 campaign?

(News Agencies) Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2019 re-election bid may see the return of election strategist Prashant Kishor to his side. The two have met in recent months, and considered the possibility of Kishor working for Modi's campaign in the year ahead, said a key political interlocutor familiar with the development.

After having worked closely with Modi during the BJP's Gujarat 2012 campaign and the Lok Sabha 2014 election, Kishor developed differences and went his separate way — working for BJP's political adversaries, including the Grand Alliance in Bihar and Congress.

But Modi and Kishor had "personally" been in touch over the past six months. This, it is understood, led to direct meetings where both discussed the possibility of working together again and a role for Kishor in the 2019 campaign. Kishor is also learnt to have met BJP chief Amit Shah. Reports had indicated his split from the BJP had come due to differences with Shah after the 2014 campaign.

"The meetings have happened. But it remains tentative. Modi is not the Modi

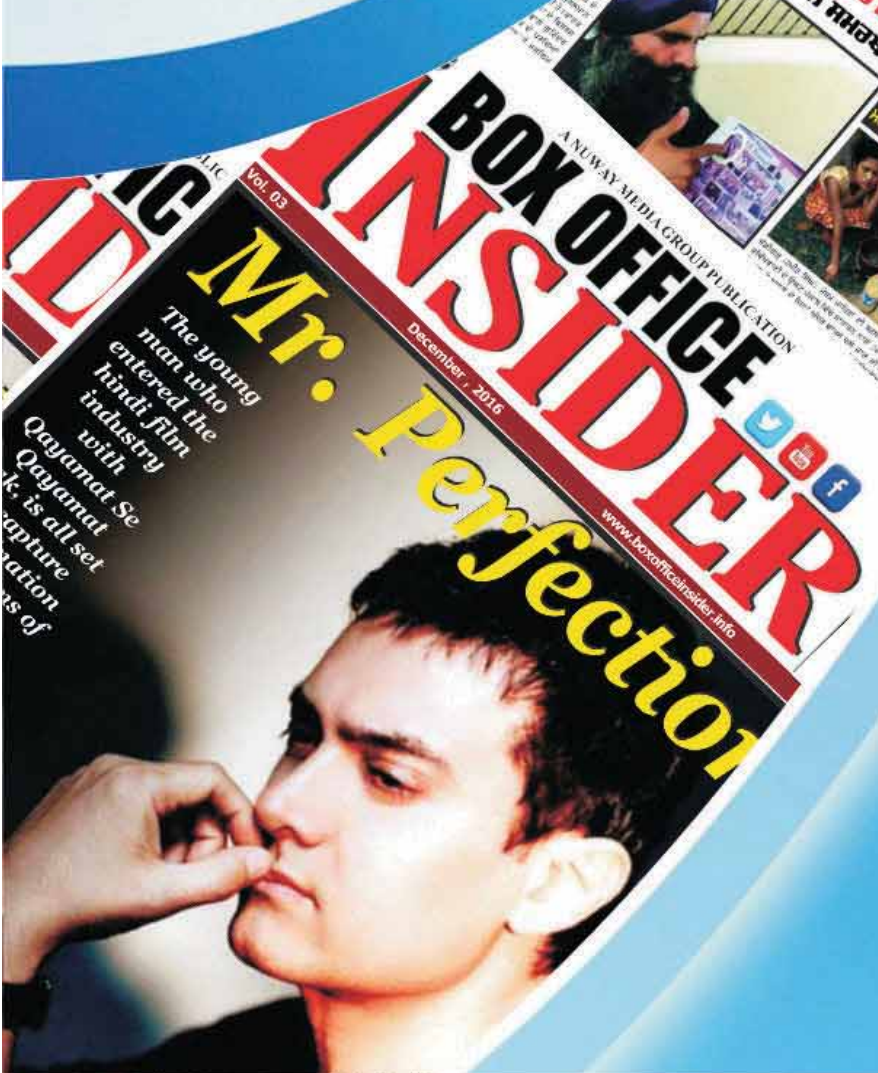
of 2012 when Kishor had first joined his office in Gujarat — he is the PM and India's tallest leader. The BJP is not the BJP of 2014 when Kishor ran a parallel campaign from Gandhinagar — it is a much stronger party. And Kishor is also not the same Kishor — he has gone his separate way over the years. But it is on the table," said the person aware of the conversations. Nothing, he reiterated, was final. Kishor, who runs the Indian Political Action Committee, works on personal leadership branding, political strategy, macro and micro campaign events, communication, messaging and speeches, besides proving inputs on ticket distribution and constituency micro-dynamics.

If he returns, he is likely to work directly with PM Modi on his personal campaign. "The BJP organisation is robust. But its role is act as a converter - to turn support into votes. That support comes from the brand, which is Modi. And the 2019 elections will focus once again on the brand," said the person quoted above. Kishor's role, if conversations reach a final conclusion, will focus on how to convey a new message for 2019 to the electorate.





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SIBERIA blasted Britain and Ireland on Thursday with the worst weather since 1991, trapping several hundred motorists on roads in Scotland, closing thousands of schools and grounding planes.

With up to 90 cm snow and temperatures as low as minus 10.3 degree celsius in Scotland, Britain and Ireland issued their most severe red warnings which advised people to stay home as travel is too dangerous.

Hundreds of people were trapped in their cars overnight on the M80 motorway between Glasgow and Edinburgh, and flights and trains were cancelled across both Britain and Ireland.

"We have seen a lot of snow overnight, blizzards and drifting," said Clare Nasir, a Brit meteorologist. "Communities have been cut off and roads have been locked. London's busiest railway station Waterloo showed more than half of trains cancelled or delay at the height of rush hour. Southern railways said an 8-foot icicle in a tunnel was delaying services.

BLIZZARDS BLAST BRITAIN

Hundreds of people trapped in cars overnight; red weather warnings in Scotland, Ireland and England

Worst weather condition in Britain since 1991

Wholesale gas prices soared to their highest in at least 10 years on Thursday and the British power network National Grid warned of a deficit in the market and sought to buy gas from market players to unblock local bottlenecks.

The cold spell has been caused by a jump in temperatures high over the Arctic which has weakened the jet stream that brings warm air in. More than 150 flights were cancelled at Dublin airport.

The Met office warned that freezing rain was likely across southern England as Storm Emma pushes northwards from Portugal and France. *Reuters*



The cold spell, dubbed the the Beast from the East, has been caused by a jump in temperatures high over the Arctic which has weakened the jet stream that brings in warm wind from the Atlantic. Scotland and Ireland reeling under temperature as low as -10.3 degree Celsius.



Father beats girl, ties her to bike, drags her

A SCHOOLGIRL has been brutally beaten by her father and tied behind a scooter before driving off on a road in southwest China.

It's said the 10-year-old girl was disobedient to her father and got punished. Local police found her covering in bruises and scratches soon after they received reports.

A 38-year-old man, surnamed Wei, was arrested in Guangxi and detained in connection with child abuse allegations.

A three-minute-long mobile phone footage shows Wei beating his daughter's bottom, back and head with a wooden stick. She can be heard screaming and crying loud but no one is stopping the father. The man then drags his daughter behind a scooter and drives away along a road covered in rubble.

The video was believed to be

taken in Ya Long town in Da Hua Yao Autonomous County of Guangxi on February 28.

Da Hua Police have launched a probe soon as they received the footage at 3.50 pm on Wednesday.

According to the official statement, police found the duo at a market 20 minutes later.

Cops arrest man, launch a probe into the case

The kid was taken to a hospital where doctors treated her scratches and wounds, including shoulder and back.

She will be staying at the hospital for a head scan and a psychotherapy session.

Wei was arrested and detained by police for child abuse. Wei



Wei pulls the 10-year-old by her leg after thrashing her.

admitted that he went to his relative's house to take her to school and ended up beating her as she refused to leave, reported Beijing News.

Da Hua Police are undertaking an investigation for further details.

US study: Gun injuries drop during NRA annual meets

GUN injuries in the United States drop by about 20 per cent whenever the powerful gun lobby, the National Rifle Association (NRA) holds its big annual convention, said US researchers.

The study in the New England Journal of Medicine was observational in nature and stopped short of being able to prove any cause-and-effect.

But researchers hypothesise that the decline they witnessed was due to the brief period of gun abstinence during such conventions. The findings also counter the belief that accidents and injuries are more common among people who are inexperienced with guns.

Fewer people using guns means fewer gun injuries, which in some ways is not surprising, said senior author Anupam Jena, associate professor of health care policy at Harvard University Medical School.

But the drop in gun injuries during these large meetings attended by thousands of well-trained gun owners seems to refute the idea that gun injuries stem solely from lack of experience and training in gun use.

The study examined nearly 76 million medical insurance claims for emergency department visits and hospitalisations related to firearm injuries between 2007 and 2015.

Gun wounds on non-convention days occurred at 1.5 per lakh people, compared with 1.25 on convention dates — a 20 per cent difference

Rohingya refugees test Bangladeshi welcome as prices rise and repatriation stalls

(News Agencies) across thousands of acres of KUTUPALONG REFUGEE CAMP, - The first Rohingya refugees who arrived on Jorina Katun's farmland in Bangladesh last year were worn out and traumatised after fleeing violence in neighbouring Myanmar. They wept and begged to stay, and Katun, moved by their plight, said yes. "I really regret that," she said. "They said they would stay for only a month. They're still here and more are coming." Katun now has 25 Rohingya families living on a patch of land where she used to grow rice and vegetables. Since August, nearly 700,000 Rohingya have crossed from Myanmar's Rakhine State into Bangladesh. Makeshift camps housing the Rohingya sprawl

what was once a government forest reserve, butting up against - and sometimes overwhelming - Bangladeshi homes and land. Jorina Katun lives on the edge of the largest such camp. Officials and aid workers fear that the welcome is wearing thin, due to the unprecedented number of refugees and growing doubts over whether Myanmar will ever take them back. Repatriation was due to begin in January under an agreement signed by Myanmar and Bangladesh. But the plan has stalled due to safety and logistical concerns, and meanwhile Rohingya continue to flee across the border. "We've accommodated them, but for how long?" said Kazi



Abdur Rahman, a deputy fellow Muslims they see as being oppressed because of their religion. There have only been a handful of anti-Rohingya protest, all small and peaceful. But many also blame the Rohingya for driving up food prices and stealing jobs, and feeling duty-bound to help

bring with them an increased risk of disease, militant activity and drug trafficking. Residents have been told to report any Rohingya seen outside the camps, said Rahman. "It's for our security, so they can't get up to any terrorist activity," he said.

Sri Lanka shops, mosque damaged in Buddhist-Muslim clash

(News Agencies) COLOMBO (- a statement. "This form of mob At least five people were wounded and several shops and a mosque damaged in a clash between majority Sinhalese Buddhists and minority Muslims in eastern Sri Lanka, police said on Tuesday. Renewed tension has been growing between the two communities since last year, with some hardline Buddhist groups accusing Muslims of forcing people to convert to Islam and vandalising Buddhist archaeological sites. Police had been deployed in the eastern town of Ampara to control the unrest after a Sinhalese mob attacked a mosque, four shops and several vehicles late on Monday, spokesman Ruwan Gunasekara said. Gunasekara said no arrests had been made so far. The Muslim Council of Sri Lanka (MCSL), an umbrella body that includes most Muslim organizations in the country, condemned the attack and requested the government to conduct an impartial inquiry into it and arrest the perpetrators. "The government has the sole responsibility to ensure the safety and security of all its citizens irrespective of religious belief, caste or ethnicity," the Council said in

violence is continuing to grow and Muslim business establishments are targeted." Last year, diplomats condemned violence against Muslims and urged the government to uphold minority rights and freedom of religion after more than 20 attacks on Muslims, including arson at Muslim-owned businesses and mosques. President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe have promised to protect minorities, but attacks against Muslims have continued. Muslims comprise about nine percent of Sri Lanka's population of 21 million. Buddhists make up about 70 percent and Hindus about 13 percent. The government ended a full-blown 26-year civil war by defeating mostly Hindu Tamil Tiger rebels in 2009, with claims of atrocities on both sides. The United Nations criticised Sri Lanka last year for slow progress in addressing war crimes and human rights abuses. The United Nations and rights activists have accused the Sri Lankan military of killing thousands of civilians, mostly Tamils, in the last weeks of the war.

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- Basement: None Fin: N
- 1 Family, Att
- Fireplaces: 0
- Garage: Drive: Pvt
- Bedrooms: 4 Rms: 9
- Waterfront: N
- Taxes: \$10,170.91
- Baths Full: 2 Half: 0
- Waterview: N
- Villages Taxes:
- Master BR 1st Floor: N
- Lot Size: 60X100
- Total Taxes: \$10,170.91
- Wood Floors:
- Sect:
- Taxes w/Basic STAR: \$8,547.00
- New Construction: N
- Adult Comm: N
- Schools: 5 Levittown
- Approx Year Built: 1948
- Handicap Access:

Bsmt/Subfl:
1st Floor: Lr/Eik/Den/Br/Bth
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If The Brain Withers

Over four million Indians have dementia, the disease with no cure. And, not more than 10 percent of them are diagnosed.

What would it mean to be at the peak of your abilities, to have a busy job and hectic schedules, and then to be suddenly robbed of the very faculties that shaped your life? All around us there are many tragic stories of snatched memories among the elderly—and, though rarer still, among the middle-aged too. Some of that plays out in many ways, at many places, and those who suffer, often do so silently. Not long ago, outside one of Bangalore's government offices, an officer arrived in a car and wanted to be let in. There was some confusion because the officer didn't work there anymore, but, tragically, the person had forgotten that. In the mid-40s, the officer had been diagnosed with early-onset dementia some months earlier.

For the majority of people affected by dementia, whether it's due to Alzheimer's or some other syndrome, the devastating condition sets in mostly after the age of 65. "But we do come across people in their 50s and early 60s developing dementia," says Dr Jacob Roy K., who founded the Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India (ARDSI) in 1992 after his experience of caring for his father at a time when dementia was hardly acknowledged as a problem that affected people in India.

Dementia affects around 50 million people worldwide and there are nearly 10 million new cases every year, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Though it mostly affects older people, it is not a normal part of aging. The most common form is caused by Alzheimer's. After China and the US, India has the world's third largest number of people with dementia: over four million.

"Not even 10 percent of those estimated to be affected are diagnosed. That's no surprise as many think it is a part of ageing or a purely psychiatric problem, or that nothing much can be done," says Roy.

"That's just the number of those diagnosed with dementia—not even 10 per cent of those estimated to be affected. That's no surprise as many think it is a part of ageing or a purely psychiatric problem, or that nothing much can be done," says Roy, adding that our understanding of the condition

has definitely got better in many ways, and so have the diagnostic tools. "More and more people are bringing in their relatives with cognitive decline and behavioural problems," he says.

As far as a cure is concerned, however, Roy believes things haven't changed much in the two-and-a-half decades since he started ARDSI. "It is so not just in India, but globally too," he says. "That's because we are still far away from a cure, and the currently available medications are mostly symptom mod-ifiers." The biological causes of dementia, which leads to a -devastating loss of memory and decline of brain functioning, are still a mystery.

Wendy Mitchell, 61, whose book *Somebody I Used to Know* was released this month, was a non-clinical team leader with the National Health Service at Yorkshire in the UK, managing rosters for hundreds of nurses. She was in the middle of her annual vacation and out on a run. It was a way to get away from a strange fuzziness that she had been feeling for some time. Then, a fall. Luckily, no serious injury. But a few months later, another one. For Mitchell, then 58, a workaholic, that feeling of life being a little less sharp was the start of a series of medical checks that led to a painful diagnosis. Young-onset dementia.

That was in 2014. She began writing a blog to allow her "to write all my thoughts before they're lost". She has calendars to take care of the future, writes Mitchell. "But this blog serves as a reminder of what I've done and said in the past—it now serves as my memory."

The global search for drugs to treat such diseases has been -difficult—experts say most attempts over the past decade-and-a-half have failed. One of the keenly watched drug candidates now in late stage trials is Aducanumab—an antibody that -targets amyloid plaques in the brain—which is being developed by the US firm Biogen Inc. The accumulation of amyloid, a -protein, in the brain is linked to Alzheimer's.

Last month, American pharma firm Pfizer announced its decision to end drug discovery in neuroscience—news received by many as disappointing for

research into Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. "Pfizer scientists have worked for decades to advance potential therapies for these devastating diseases. However, after our internal programmes faced continual setbacks, we had to come to terms with the fact that our research efforts were simply not making the progress necessary to translate into truly transformational therapies for patients," the firm said in a statement. It now plans to create a venture fund, which would invest in biotech companies -conducting promising neuroscience research.

According to Prof Vijayalakshmi Ravindranath from the Centre for Neuroscience at Bangalore's Indian Institute of Science (IISc), much of the current thinking is about how we could diagnose dementia earlier and would we be able to intervene, at least through non-pharmacological means? "Hopefully, whenever a drug comes, we should be able to intervene earlier. But, at least, we can start -intervening because we know all the cardiovascular risks—diabetes, hypertension, obesity, smoking etc—are risk factors for dementia too, while exercise is a very positive factor," she says.

This month, Ravindranath's lab reported a new finding in the search for a biomarker, or an early indicator of the disease. Long-term research studies show that the amyloid build-up starts happening 20-30 years before the onset of clinical symptoms. The lab studied the role of filamentous actin (F-actin), a protein that shapes the spines on dendrites, the threadlike contact points on a neuron that receive inputs. A neuron makes contact with another neuron through synapses, or junctions located at their tips. When the structure of F-actin was affected, the spines disappeared. "So that meant there was no cross-talk happening," says Smitha Karunakaran, who has co-authored scientific articles with Ravindranath and Reddy P. Kommaddi.

"We found that the synaptic dysfunction—a dysfunction of the points that actually signal in the brain—starts in animals as early as one month of age, whereas the symptoms of dementia are normally visible



only at about eight to nine months," says Ravindranath. The team conducted a Pavlovian fear-conditioning test on genetically-modified mice, which showed the animals weren't making associations and forming memory. But when the F-actin was stabilised using a drug, their behaviour reversed and the mice started to remember an experience.

Once they found that F-actin played a role in loss of memory in animals with Alzheimer's, the team collaborated with the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center in Chicago to procure post-mortem samples from human subjects. "We looked at the status of actin in them and, sure enough, we found what we saw in the animals replicated in the human body," says Ravindranath. "This was quite surprising because until then the structural component of the synapse had never been associated with the disease—we always thought the structural component was there only to give the shape and that they may not actually participate in the disease process itself." The team is planning further research into the possible role of F-actin as a biomarker.

Data on dementia in India, researchers point out, has generally been insufficient. The risk factors differ from population to population—socio-economic background and literacy levels are contributing factors. Therefore, studies of aging populations done elsewhere

may have their limitations.

"It was during the decade from 2000 to 2010 that research in the field of dementia was beginning to emerge in the country," says Dr P.S. Mathuranath of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) in Bangalore. In 2012, Mathuranath had reported incidence rates of Alzheimer's in Thiruvananthapuram after a study of 2,466 elderly people over a period of 10 years.

According to Dr Vijay Chandra, who recently published a paper on the common occurrence of Lewy body dementia (LBD)—it's milder and progresses slowly, but could cause hallucinations—"the focus has now turned to all dementias, primarily because it is a public health problem". "The tragedy is these hallucinations are considered a psychiatric problem and they are given all kinds of antipsychotics, which can be harmful to them," says Chandra. "There isn't much awareness about this condition in the general population."

Over the past couple of months, researchers at the Centre for Brain Research (CBR) at IISc, Bangalore, have embarked on a new study at Srinivasapura, around 90 km northeast of Bangalore, to track at least 10,000 middle-aged people as they grow old—and until they die.

Xi Sets China on a Collision Course With History



There was always something different about China's version of authoritarianism. For decades, as other regimes collapsed or curdled into dysfunctional pretend democracies, China's held strong, even prospered.

Yes, China's Communist Party has been vigorous in suppressing dissent and crushing potential challenges. But some argue that it has survived in part by developing unusually strong institutions, bound by strict rules and norms. Two of the most important have been collective leadership — rule by consensus rather than strongman — and term limits.

When the Communist Party announced this week that it would end presidential term limits, allowing Xi Jinping to hold office indefinitely, it shattered those norms. It may also have accelerated what many scholars believe is China's collision course with the forces of history it has so long managed to evade.

That history suggests that Beijing's leaders are on what former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton once called a "fool's errand": trying to uphold a system of government that cannot survive in the modern era. But Mr. Xi, by shifting toward a strongman style of rule, is doubling down on the idea that China is different and can refashion an authoritarianism for this age.

If he succeeds, he will not only have secured his own future and extended the future of China's Communist Party, he may also establish a new model for authoritarianism to thrive worldwide.

If Mr. Xi stays in office for life, as many now expect, that will only formalize a process he has undertaken for years: stripping power away from China's institutions and accumulating it for himself.

It helps to mentally divide dictatorships into two categories: institutional and personalist. The first operates through committees, bureaucracies and something like consensus. The second runs through a single charismatic leader.

China, once an almost Socratic ideal of the first model, is increasingly a hybrid of both. Mr. Xi has made himself "the dominant actor in financial regulation and environmental policy" as well as economic policy, according to a paper by Barry Naughton, a China scholar at the University of California, San Diego.

Mr. Xi has also led sweeping anti-corruption campaigns that have disproportionately purged members of rival political factions, strengthening himself but undermining China's consensus-driven approach.

This version of authoritarianism is harder to maintain, according to research

by Erica Frantz, a scholar of authoritarianism at Michigan State University. "In general, personalization is not a good development," Ms. Frantz said.

The downsides are often subtle. Domestic politics tend to be more volatile, governing more erratic and foreign policy more aggressive, studies find. But the clearest risk comes with succession.

"There's a question I like to ask Russia specialists: 'If Putin has a heart attack tomorrow, what happens?'" said Milan Svobik, a Yale University political scientist. "Nobody knows."

"In China, up until now, the answer to that had been very clear," he said. A dead leader would have left behind a set of widely agreed rules for what was to be done and there would be a political consensus on how to do it.

"This change seems to disrupt that," Mr. Svobik said. Mr. Xi, by defying the norms of succession, has shown that any rule could be broken. "The key norm, once that's out, it seems like everything's an option," Mr. Svobik said.

Factional purges risk shifting political norms from consensus to zero-sum, and sometimes life-or-death, infighting.

And Mr. Xi is undermining the institutionalism that made China's authoritarianism unusually resilient. Collective leadership and orderly succession, both put in place

after Mao Zedong's disastrous tenure, have allowed for relatively effective and stable governing.

Ken Opalo, a Georgetown University political scientist, wrote after China's announcement that orderly transitions were "perhaps the most important indicator of political development." Lifelong presidencies, he said, "freeze specific groups of elites out of power. And remove incentives for those in power to be accountable and innovate."

In 2005, Bruce Gilley, a political scientist, wrestled with one of the most important questions for any government — is it viewed by its citizens as legitimate? — into a numerical score, determined by sophisticated measurements of how those citizens behave.

China, his study found, enjoyed higher legitimacy than many democracies and every other non-democracy besides Azerbaijan. He credited economic growth, nationalist sentiment and collective leadership.

But when Mr. Gilley revisited his metrics in 2012, he found that China's score had plummeted.

His data showed the leading edge of a force long thought to doom China's system. Known as "modernization theory," it says that once citizens reach

a certain level of wealth, they will demand things like public accountability, free expression and a role in government. Authoritarian states, unable to meet these demands, either transition to democracy or collapse amid unrest.

This challenge, overcome by no other modern authoritarian regime except those wealthy enough to buy off their citizens, requires new sources of legitimacy. Economic growth is slowing. Nationalism, though once effective at rallying support, is increasingly difficult to control and prone to backfiring. Citizen demands are growing.

So China is instead promoting "ideology and collective social values" that equate the government with Chinese culture, according to research by the China scholar Heike Holbig and Mr. Gilley. Patriotic songs and school textbooks have proliferated. So have mentions of "Xi Jinping Thought," now an official ideology.

Mr. Xi's personalization of power seems to borrow from both old-style strongmen and the new-style populists rising among the world's democracies. But, in this way, it is a high-risk and partial solution to China's needs. A cult of personality can do for a few years or perhaps decades, but not more.



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.”

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The Americans Left Behind by Deportation

In the fall, I traveled to rural Ohio to meet with the children of a man who had been recently deported to Mexico, even though he was considered a model citizen by his neighbors and had no criminal record beyond driving without a license. I had seen video footage of his three young boys and little girl saying goodbye to him at the airport. They looked like orphaned bear cubs, wandering around aimlessly in the terminal, their faces frozen in fear.

Eric, the oldest at 14, is in the eighth grade and wants the local Wendy's to make an exception to its minimum age requirement so he can work there. "I'm the man of the house now," he told me. When their father left, so did the only member of the family who could drive. Eric walks several miles to the grocery store and returns carrying heavy bags of food even in the snow. Their mother, who is also undocumented, is now the family's sole source of income and works long hours at a factory, so Eric has to come straight home from school to take care of his younger siblings. (He had to scrap plans to try out for the wrestling team.)

Edwin, 12, has nightmares about his father and crawls into his mother's bed almost every night. Classmates taunt him that they hope his mother gets deported, too. Anuar, 10, who calms himself by doing equations in his head, brought me his report card with a perfect 100 in math. Elsiy, 6, has not been eating well since her father's been gone.

America's historic uneasiness with interracial marriage and mixed-race children has found a new incarnation in the persecution of families with mixed legal status. There are nearly six million citizen children who live with at least one undocumented parent, and perhaps millions

of other Americans who are married to undocumented immigrants. Reports are multiplying of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents picking up immigrants at their green card couple interviews, while their American spouses are left speechless and powerless. The Trump administration's aggressive detention and removal of undocumented immigrants is not only inhumane in its treatment of immigrants, but a direct attack on the rights and well-being of their American family members.

I recently met Jim Chuquirima, a 16-year-old American citizen whose mother is undocumented. He is bespectacled, painfully shy and builds computers out of spare parts that his mother, Nelly Cumbicos, buys him. Ms. Cumbicos is a movie-star-beautiful single mother from Ecuador who had sworn off men before she met Ramón Muñiz, a roofer and die-hard union man who lived on the first floor of the multifamily home in Meriden, Conn., where Jim and Nelly rented the third floor. He would fix Nelly's car, pick Jim up from school while she was at work and leave unsigned love letters on the windshield of her car. They married in their home on Halloween in 2015.

An American citizen, he insisted in 2015 that she let him petition for her green card, even though she was afraid it would put ICE on her trail. She was right: When ICE became aware of Ms. Cumbico's whereabouts, it located a deportation order from more than a decade before that she says she had never received because it was sent to a wrong address. ICE gave her a temporary stay on Feb. 5 only to inexplicably rescind it four days later. Like a botched execution, it left the family newly traumatized. Their legal fees have nearly bankrupted them. Her deportation is set for



Wednesday.

"I feel like this is my fault," Mr. Muñiz said. "I put her in danger, but all I wanted was to protect her. I'm lost without her." In the early 1900s, American women who married foreigners lost their citizenship. Those laws are off the books now. But does that mean American citizens have the constitutional right to be protected from the deportation of an immediate family member? Lower courts haven't thought so. In one case, the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit decided the deportation of an American-born infant's parents didn't violate her right to grow up in this country because either her parents could surrender her to foster care in America before they left or she could leave with them and return to the United States as an adult. The Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit has declared that a parent's deportation has only "incidental impact" on a child. Studies, however, have shown that children with parents who are under threat of deportation or have been deported fall into depression and anxiety and are more likely to have behavioral problems and to experience drastically decreased academic performance. Couples who are separated by oceans are very likely to end up divorced.

The Supreme Court has historically declared that it is "intolerable" to force a citizen

to choose between two constitutional rights. But what then of the American families of deportees? Isn't the Trump administration forcing them to make a terrible choice, between either staying in the United States and having their families rived in two, or forfeiting their lives in America so that they can keep their families intact?

I, too, had to worry about this dilemma. I am the child of undocumented immigrants from Ecuador who brought me to this country when I was 5. I am the American dream incarnate, with an Ivy League education and a book deal. Now I am married to an American citizen, but there is no guarantee that my spouse's status will shield me from deportation.

For my own green card interview, I wore the collared pink silk J. Crew dress I wore to our wedding. I dress glamorously and wear a face full of designer makeup in any situation where I might be detained, out of pride and defiance. But this interview was not bait to detain me, the way interviews have been for so many less fortunate immigrants.

"There is nothing I wanted more than to be able to protect you from your nightmares," my partner told me after we'd read about the tragedy that had befallen other citizen-undocumented couples. "I

wasn't thinking so much about the literal, legal rights that the green card would afford; I was thinking about what do I need to do to keep my family safe, and that meant making sure we could be a family. It was such a low bar."

I got my green card. Our marriage is real. My guilt is as well. It is so hard to imagine that Ramón's desire to keep Nelly safe provoked the exact opposite result.

Short of comprehensive immigration reform, which seems so unlikely these days, there are ways to end these inhumane deportations. In February 2017, John Kelly, then the secretary of homeland security, issued a memo essentially doing away with enforcement priorities for ICE, which generally called for not targeting undocumented immigrants if they did not have serious criminal records. The Kelly memo made all undocumented immigrants targets — even if they had spotless records, and even if they had spouses or children who were citizens. A return to Obama-era priorities that focused on criminals and security risks would restore some level of compassion to enforcement in the short term. Though far from the best solution, that would at least protect the rights of citizens.

Unless protecting American citizens was never the point of any of this.

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Gabriel García Márquez lives on in Colombia, especially in the city of Cartagena, which inspired many of his novels.



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(Above) The Charles Dickens Tour covers Southwark near the site of the now-demolished Marshalsea Prison among other places; (left) the Jane Austen Centre leads the tour in Bath.

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Manmeet Ahluwalia, Marketing Head of Expedia in India swears by this tour. It highlights the culture of the Regency Period of Great Britain, the style which inspired Austen's novels *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. The Jane Austen Centre leads this walking tour of literary highlights each weekend. Tours depart 11am on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, fee £12 (₹1,081). Book and find out more about Austen's Bath at janeausten.co.uk.

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A well-known community of Chinese and International literature enthusiasts, this tour takes place in Hongkou in the city's north. The walk focuses on bringing writers and enthusiasts from varied backgrounds and languages together. The walk also visits the neighbourhood where the romantic poet Xu Zhimo once lived and hosted guests such as Indian writer Rabindranath Tagore and Irish writer George Bernard Shaw. This tour is occasionally scheduled but otherwise operates by commission. For fees and bookings email publicwalks@shanghai-flaneur.com

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India's new season of scandal rattles global investors

In India, the name of billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi was once synonymous with glamour and the good life. It could be seen on billboards next to Bollywood starlets, and his diamond-studded creations were sold as far as New York's Madison Avenue. Now, the name is synonymous with allegations of fraud.

On Valentine's Day, Punjab National Bank, one of India's largest banks, accused the jeweller of being the mastermind of a financial scam—a seven-year heist in which fake guarantees worth \$2 billion were purportedly used to get loans.

A string of other corporate scandals are also in Indian headlines right now. Earlier this month, Bloomberg News reported the scions of New Delhi's prominent Singh brothers were said to have taken about \$78 million out of a hospital company they controlled without board approval. The brothers had already been accused by a New York-based investor of siphoning at least \$300 million from the lending arm of their financial-services firm.

Then the owner of a pen manufacturer based near the Ganges was arrested with his son after accusations they defrauded banks of about \$570 million. And in recent days, federal police registered a complaint against the chairman of a sugar company for allegedly causing losses to a state-run bank. The company soon after pledged to repay all the outstanding loans.

The executives in the spotlight all deny wrongdoing, but corporate India suddenly seems awash with cries of fraud. The accusations are a blow for a nation fighting to shed its reputation for entrenched corruption and win the confidence of global investors. They are "taking the shine off India at a time when India is firmly on top of every investor's mind," says Manish Singh, the London-based chief investment officer at wealth-management firm Crossbridge Capital LLP. "Just when more investors were ready to say 'I do,' the past has come to haunt again." The bad publicity couldn't have come at a worse time for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. Capital-starved

India is desperate for foreign investment to resuscitate employment and growth, which has slumped to a four-year low. Government bonds have suffered their worst sell-off in almost two decades, and the rupee and stocks have been under pressure.

The alleged corporate misdeeds have prompted wide-ranging government probes. The Central Bureau of Investigation is probing the claims against the jeweller, who denies the allegations.

Meanwhile, the stock market regulator and the government's Serious Fraud Investigation Office are said to be looking into the movement of funds at the two companies controlled by the Singh brothers, Malvinder and Shivinder. They've denied siphoning money from their financial services firm and have said the transactions at the hospital company were in fact loans originally made to unrelated companies which subsequently became part of their corporate group, have since been declared, and are in the process of being repaid.

Now, the spotlight is on an opaque business culture dominated by powerful families—known in Indian business parlance as 'promoters'—and the absence of controls to rein them in. "There's probably the highest level of sycophancy in India than anywhere you've seen," said Krishnavia Dutt, Mumbai-based managing partner at corporate law firm Argus Partners. "If the promoter does something, then short of murder it's unquestionable." An annual survey of senior executives by the risk consultancy Kroll Inc. found reports of fraud rose in India last year, with 89% of those surveyed saying their firms had been affected.

While the survey didn't give reasons for the increase, it comes amid a backdrop of concentrated corporate ownership and weak regulation. A report last year from the Credit Suisse Research Institute showed that India ranks third globally—after China and the US—on the number of family-run businesses.

The entrenched power of many business families, combined with a weak legal system

offering few protections to whistleblowers, can contribute to a culture where no one wants to oppose a promoter, said JN Gupta, managing director of proxy advisory firm Stakeholders Empowerment Services. "If I make a complaint I will be harassed more than the person who has committed the fraud."

Also, perpetrators of white-collar crime rarely have to fear serious regulatory consequences, said Sanjay Kallapur, a professor of accounting at the Indian School of Business in Hyderabad. He notes that the US securities regulator has 15 times more employees in its accounting and corporate governance unit than the equivalent Indian regulator.

That culture of impunity is now the problem of Prime Minister Modi—no relation to the jeweller—who came to power four years ago promising to fight corruption.

Economic growth took a hit after his

government imposed a disruptive cash ban late in 2016. More recently, Modi faced a bruising contest in his home state of Gujarat which highlighted voter anger towards his economic policies. To placate them before a general election in early 2019, he unveiled an expansionary budget that breached fiscal targets.

"The fiscal slippage was an unpleasant surprise," said Komal Sri-Kumar, president at US-based Sri-Kumar Global Strategies Inc., a macroeconomic consulting firm. "Global investors were of the belief that the deficit was on its way down until the deterioration was announced." For the people doing the investing, the recent scandals are a reminder to do it carefully, said Andrew Macintosh, Mumbai-based executive director at consultancy Control Risks. "You need to ensure you're looking carefully at who you're doing business with."

At 7.2% in Q3, Indian economy grows fastest in 5 quarters, now fastest in the world

Not only does this signal that the Indian economy is tiding over the disruptions—triggered by demonetisation of high-value currencies and rollout of the goods and services tax—but the latest quarterly corporate earnings data suggest that consumer demand too is reviving. To achieve the 6.6% growth projection of the second advanced estimate, the Indian economy will have to grow at 7.1% in the last quarter, as against a growth of 6.5% in Q2 and 5.7% in Q1. The Indian economy had expanded by 7.1% in 2016-17, 8.2% in 2015-16 and 7.4% in 2014-15. The CSO had in its January projections estimated that the economy will grow at 6.5% in 2017-18 but has now marginally revised it upwards, though it is still lower than the 6.75% estimated by the Economic Survey. In the quarter, economic activity picked up across sectors, with the exception of mining and quarrying, data released by CSO showed. Significantly, gross fixed capital formation—an

indicator of investment demand in the economy—also registered a sharp increase of 12%. Private final consumption expenditure grew at 5.6% while government final consumption expenditure was up at 6.1%. To be sure, a part of the acceleration can be attributed to the base effect. India cancelled the legal tender of high value notes on 8 November 2016 leading to widespread disruption in economic activity. Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Care Ratings, said the Indian economy should grow gradually to 7.5% in 2018-19. "Manufacturing has benefited in the third quarter from the restocking exercise post demonetization which is also evident in the IIP growth numbers which should be maintained," he said in a note adding that the pickup in activity across sectors, supported by private consumption and gradual revival in investment could push India into the high growth trajectory.

India bids tearful farewell to Bollywood superstar Sridevi

After a public service, Sridevi's flower-bedecked funeral cortege made its way slowly to a crematorium where her family said their final goodbyes. She was cremated with full state honours at a private Hindu ceremony late in the afternoon after her husband, film producer Boney Kapoor, performed the last rites. Bollywood stars, including actresses Aishwarya Rai and Kajol, were among the mourners at the Celebration Sports Club in the Andheri West area of Mumbai -- the home of the Hindi film industry. Several tearful fans chanted prayers as Sridevi's body was brought the short distance from her home to the club at 9:00 am (0330 GMT). "I'm an

avid Sridevi fan. I loved her smiling personality. She had such a commanding presence in the Indian film industry. Her death was so sudden and I feel terrible," said 45-year-old Kuldeep Singh. Heavy security was in force along the streets to control the crowds, which included people who had travelled hundreds of kilometres to be there. Sridevi was considered one of the most influential Bollywood actresses of all time and her sudden death at the weekend sparked an outpouring of grief in India. Tributes poured in from fans and fellow actors as well as Prime Minister Narendra Modi. - Life in the spotlight -

The star of hit films such as Chandni and Mr India drowned in her bathtub after losing consciousness late Saturday in a hotel in Dubai, where she was attending a wedding. Police in the emirate said a post-mortem examination found that she had drowned after losing consciousness. On Tuesday they ruled out any foul play and released the body to Sridevi's family. It arrived in Mumbai on a private jet on Tuesday evening, accompanied by her husband and her stepson, actor Arjun Kapoor. Sridevi, born Shree Amma Yanger Ayappan in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, appeared in around 300 films and was awarded the Padma Shri, India's fourth highest civilian

award, for services to the movie industry. She made her acting debut at the age of four and her career spanned more than four decades. Sridevi worked in India's regional Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam-language films before making her Bollywood debut in 1979. She became a national sensation with a string of blockbuster films including *Himmatwala* and *Tohfa*. Sridevi took a 15-year break from the silver screen after marrying Kapoor but returned in the 2012 hit comedy-drama *English Vinglish*. Her most recent film was last year's *Mom*. Sridevi was set to see Jhanvi, the elder of her two daughters, make her Bollywood debut in a movie scheduled for release later this year.

Costume Drama

For all his sartorial elegance, Trudeau's India visit, haunted by the Khalistan issue, achieved little

But, Trudeau's week-long, first official visit to India did not quite go according to the Canadian script. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not present at the Delhi airport to receive him and his family members—an expectation raised by the fact that the Indian Prime Minister had often broken protocol to receive many of his “valuable guests” at the time of their arrival with his famous bear-hug. That warm gesture, it's given to understand, is reserved for India's special friends. The Canadian prime minister either did not fall in that exalted category, or India wanted to convey a message that not only Canada, but even sympathisers of the Khalistani separatist cause in Canada, were supposed to pick up. If this was a perceived ‘snub’, it didn't end here. Trudeau wasn't welcomed on arrival by any of the chief ministers of the states he visited—Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra—though they met him later at other events. Moreover, his visit was overshadowed by that of Donald Trump Jr, who was in India on a business visit.

South Block denied that Trudeau was being snubbed; they said everything was governed by strict protocol. But a senior Indian diplomat acknowledged that the PM Modi didn't go out of his way to break protocol, as with some others earlier. “The PM broke protocol for some visiting leaders, not all who come to the country,” he said. Modi's absence made it clear that India took note of the growing practice of soft-peddling pro-Khalistani elements in Canada. Optics' is crucially important in bilateral visits, and Trudeau got it right from the moment he emerged

at his aeroplane's door: the well-choreographed ‘namaste’ by all five members of his family on touchdown, the obligatory picture with his wife and children in Agra in the backdrop of the Taj Mahal, spinning the charkha at Gandhiji's Sabarmati Ashram, trying his hand at making rotis at the Golden Temple langar with his wife and rubbing shoulders with Bollywood celebrities in Mumbai—the photogenic PM's visit was not short of photo-ops.

Yet, even as Trudeau stressed that he and the Canadian government believed and supported the ‘unity of India’ and were not supporters of any secessionist groups, the slow crescendo of confident volubility of a Khalistan movement nurtured in Canada hung in the backdrop throughout his weeklong visit.

That phosphoric, unlovely shadow took solid shape in the person of convicted Khalistani terrorist Jaspal Atwal, who was photographed with the PM's wife Sophie at a dinner event in Mumbai. Once a militant of the banned pro-Khalistan outfit, International Sikh Youth Federation, Atwal was convicted of the attempted murder of Punjab minister Malkiat Singh Sidhu on Vancouver Island in 1986. As the controversy created a media furore—it was reported that Atwal was included in the premier's entourage—red-faced Canadian officials hurriedly managed to do some damage control, striking off Atwal's name from the New Delhi reception cum dinner that Canadian High Commissioner Nadir Patel had organised for Trudeau on February 22.

The reason why a marked Khalistani

like Atwal finds himself in the touring party of the top office-holder of the realm (Canada denied this) has to do with the cherished ideal of Canadian liberalism, with “freedom of expression” as its cornerstone. It's that which has allowed a slow revival of the Khalistan spirit, seen in such acts as the banning of Indian officials and elected representatives from a number of Canadian guru-dwaras, as also petitions and resolutions in a regional parliament. Outlook magazine, in its February 12 cover story, had red-flagged this area of concern for India (Panth And A Foreign Hand; A Few Queries, Just In...). This sparked off a series of reportage in national and foreign media, highlighting the closeness of Khalistani sympathisers to the Trudeau administration.

Yet, Canadian ‘liberalism’ has its limits. After this correspondent was extended an invitation (after the stories were published) to the February 22 reception with the PM in New Delhi—initially through email and later through a phone-call—it was withdrawn on the very eve of the event. Hours before the event, an email said that the invitation was “an error”; a phone call indicated that it was the PM's advisors who instructed that Outlook be kept out. Even the newest face of world liberalism reacts with an autocratic response to critical reportage. Enough grounds for ‘freedom of speech’ to be suspended.

Indeed, throughout the visit, it was the Canadian PM's friendly relations with pro-Khalistani and militant sections of the Sikh diaspora in Canada that dogged every step of his. The Indian government

too, using strict ‘protocol’ norms, conveyed to Trudeau how his liberal policies were encouraging Sikh militants to revive a movement that effectively calls for the break-up of the Indian Union. Even Punjab CM Amarinder Singh expressed his concerns on the matter when he met Trudeau on February 21.

On February 23, when the two prime ministers and their delegations are scheduled to meet in New Delhi, this would be the issue that Modi would seek to convey candidly to his Canadian counterpart how his liberal policies were being misused by Sikh militants in Canada to revive the Khalistan movement, which has a history of using violence and terror to further their cause. As Trudeau heads back home, he will have enough time to ponder whether his ‘liberal’ policy needed urgent course correction to ensure Canada does not become the launch pad for Sikh militancy and the revival of the Khalistan movement.

While Trudeau's inclusive policy of making different ethnic groups a stakeholder in the country's progress has succeeded in making Canada a more pluralistic society, it leaves sufficient room for Sikh militants to revive the Khalistan cause. Demands for justice for the 1984 pogrom forms an emotional core for a large number of Sikhs in India and abroad. Its hijacking by a coterie of religious secessionists besmirches those sentiments. In India, too, it opens up painful memories that hark back to the bloody deaths of hundreds of people, the Kanishka tragedy, the killing of the then Indian prime minister and its bloody aftermath.

CBI arrests Karti Chidambaram in INX Media case, Congress says vendetta

The arrest triggered a political battle, with Congress terming it a “vendetta” and the BJP insisting that “law is taking its course”.

The 46-year-old was produced before metropolitan magistrate Sumeet Anand, who remanded Karti to a day's CBI custody for interrogation, though the agency had asked for 15-day custody. The magistrate asked the agency to apply again before the regular CBI judge, who was on leave.

When he was brought to the Patiala House court complex, Karti said: “It is absolutely a political vendetta. I will be vindicated.” In the court, too, his lawyer and senior Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi took the same line and said the basis for his client's arrest were “bizarre” and “fake”. The CBI has alleged that INX Media, then owned by Indrani

and Peter Mukerjea, received ₹305 crore from offshore entities by way of Foreign Direct Investment without an approval from the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB), which has now been disbanded.

The CBI's FIR states that when the income-tax department launched a probe into the alleged violation, the Mukerjeas sought help from Karti to get the punitive action against them by the finance ministry scuttled. The CBI alleged that Karti's companies got Rs 3.5 crore from INX for services rendered. Asked why the CBI was arresting Karti almost nine months after the registration of FIR in the case in May, 2017, the agency's counsel VK Sharma told the court: “On February 17, an accused in the case recorded a statement in front of the

magistrate stating that Karti Chidambaram asked for \$1million in foreign currency to clear the FIPB case.” A CBI official familiar with the developments said that the counsel was referring to Indrani Mukerjea, who was questioned by the agency in the first week of February. She then recorded the statement before a magistrate under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code, said the officer who asked not to be named.

An officer in the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which is probing the money laundering angle in the case, said that Indrani had recorded another statement with the agency in which certain references were made about Karti and his father P Chidambaram. Though HT was shown the statement, it could not independently

verify its authenticity. P Chidambaram was not immediately available for comments.

The CBI counsel said in court that Karti did not cooperate with the agency in the probe and that he was travelling abroad too frequently. “The accused has not cooperated in the investigation. The accused has been frequently visiting abroad. There are many things which we cannot disclose in the open court,” Sharma said, making the case for a 15-day remand. He also argued that Karti appeared before the agency for questioning only after a Supreme Court order. Rebutting the CBI claim, Karti's lawyer Singhvi told the court that his client cooperated with the investigation and had reported to the CBI whenever summoned. “One of the interrogations lasted for 22

hours. They (CBI) had no questions left to ask me after 22 hours,” said Singhvi while defending Karti. On the charge

of Karti travelling abroad frequently, Singhvi said: “I (his client) have gone abroad but I have come back also...” He added that Karti was not a “Hindustan leaver” like others but a “Hindustan returner”.

Law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad defended the CBI action, saying the government had nothing to do with the agency's actions: “The law is taking its course. The law must take its course. The CBI will explain all the details. We do not wish to interfere. There is no interference of the government.”

Congress spokesman Randeep Surjewala said Karti's arrest was a “diversionary tactic” by the government to “hide its scams”.

Bill Gates casts doubts on the Hyperloop

Microsoft founder claims safety will be an issue for Elon Musk's high-speed system - and says he's 'not sure the concept makes sense'

(News Agencies) Count Bill Gates as part of the growing camp of Hyperloop skeptics.

Billionaire tech mogul Elon Musk has gotten closer to making his radical, pod-based transportation system a reality.

But the Microsoft co-founder has cast some doubt on whether or not Hyperloop, which promises to ferry passengers hundreds of miles in a matter of minutes, will actually work.

'I am not sure the Hyperloop concept makes sense,' Gates said Tuesday during a question

and answer session on Reddit. 'Making it safe is hard,' he added.

Gates didn't elaborate on why he felt Hyperloop might be unsafe, but said he feels more confident about the future of electric vehicles and self-driving cars.

'I think electric cars and autonomous vehicles will be great things,' Gates explained.

The comments came after a user asked why the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation hasn't focused on transportation

issues.

The Gates Foundation has donated billions of dollars to health and humanitarian causes.

He said the Gates Foundation is experimenting with drone delivery of medical supplies in Rwanda and Tanzania.

As far as fixing issues with transportation, Gates believes that task is more suited for the private market, however.

'I think the private market rewards innovation in this space quite well,' he noted.



There has been a flood of activity among private corporations around autonomous vehicle technologies, space exploration, flying cars and boats, as well as high-speed pod travel, such as Hyperloop.

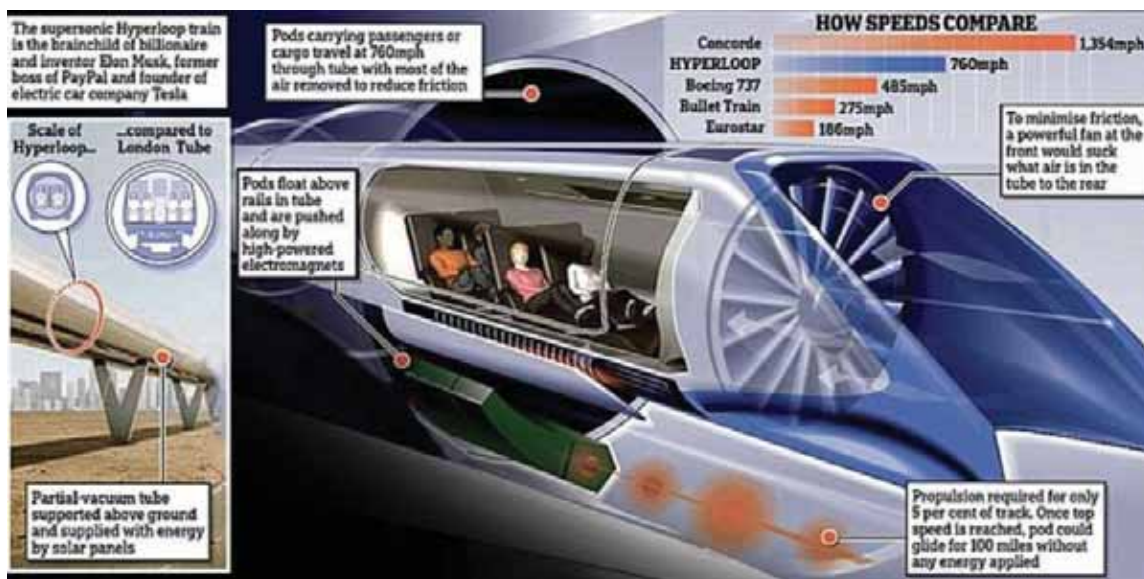
Although various startups and corporations are working to build a Hyperloop system, Musk was one of the first people to publicize the concept, mentioning it in 2012. Musk's SpaceX made the Hyperloop concept 'open-source' so that anyone can develop their own prototype.

The Tesla chief said in 2013 that Hyperloop would be able to take passengers from LA to San Francisco — a distance of approximately 380 miles — in about 30 minutes. That's half the time it would take a plane to travel that distance. Aside from SpaceX, California-based research company Hyperloop Transportation Technologies, Richard Branson's Virgin Hyperloop One and Canadian

firm TransPod are among many others exploring the radical transportation technology.

Many firms are now competing to achieve the first full-scale design. Hyperloop's propulsion system is integrated into the tube and can only accelerate the capsule to speeds that are safe in each section, Musk explained on SpaceX's website. The passenger capsules also have emergency brakes. 'In the unlikely event of a large scale capsule depressurization, other capsules in the tube would automatically begin emergency braking whilst the Hyperloop tube would undergo rapid depressurization along its entire length,' he continued.

Once the capsules slow down, they're able to drive themselves to safety using 'small onboard electric motors,' Musk added. The capsules are also equipped with a reserve air supply to protect passengers inside.



How Elon Musk's Tesla Could Contaminate Mars With Earth Bacteria

(News Agencies) Elon Musk's Tesla flying across space right now is carrying bacteria that could ultimately do harm to Mars, according to Purdue University scientists.

Earlier this month, Elon Musk's SpaceX successfully launched its Falcon Heavy rocket into space. The payload included Musk's red Tesla Roadster carrying a mannequin the company called Starman. The Tesla is well into space now and is headed towards an orbit that will put it in close proximity to Mars.

At first blush, that might not seem to be a problem. But Purdue professor Jay Melosh said Earth-bound bacteria could wreak havoc on Mars. 'If there is an indigenous Mars biota, it's at risk of being contaminated by terrestrial life,' Melosh said in a statement. He added that NASA's Office of Planetary Protection sterilizes spacecraft that will land on other planets to

ensure our native bacteria doesn't interact with the organisms elsewhere. He claimed in his statement that Tesla didn't sterilize Musk's car, 'bring with it what may be the largest load of earthly bacteria to ever enter space.' It's unclear what exactly that bacteria could do on Mars. But Melosh questioned whether it might 'take over Mars and contaminate it.' Purdue pointed to H.G. Wells' 'War of the Worlds,' in which a Martian invasion was thwarted by bacteria. Still, there's a chance the concerns might be moot. Space's extreme conditions could kill most, if not all, of the car's bacteria. And if it never crashes into Mars, that would limit its exposure on the Red planet. But what if the bacteria does more than just wipe out bacteria on Mars?

Another Purdue professor, Alina Alexeenko, works in a lab at the university that focuses on preserving bacteria and biologics.

Moon to get 4G mobile network next year to stream HD videos to earth

The companies are working with Berlin-based PTScientists, whose privately funded Mission to the Moon is due to launch in 2019 from Cape Canaveral on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

(News Agencies) The moon will get its first 4G mobile network next year, enabling high-definition video to be streamed from the lunar landscape to the earth, part of a project to back the first privately funded moon mission.

Vodafone Germany, network equipment maker Nokia and carmaker Audi are working together to support the

mission, 50 years after the first American astronauts walked on the moon.

The companies are working with Berlin-based PTScientists, whose privately funded Mission to the Moon is due to launch in 2019 from Cape Canaveral on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.



Amazon's Alexa takes open-source route to beat Google into cars

Amazon's goal is to keep people connected seamlessly to Alexa between their homes and cars as it goes head-to-head with Google Assistant

(News Agencies) Tokyo/Seattle: Amazon.com Inc. is embracing open-source software in the race to get its voice-based Alexa digital assistant into cars ahead of Google.

Amazon engineers are working with Nuance Communications Inc. and Voicebox Technologies Corp. to write code that makes in-vehicle apps compatible with several speech-recognition technologies, eliminating the need for developers to make multiple versions. A working group was set up about a month ago and is meeting once a week, with the aim of having the software ready by June.

The catch is that the cars must use Automotive Grade Linux, an open-source platform being developed by Toyota Motor Corp. and other auto manufacturers and suppliers to underpin all software

running in the vehicle. The only cars currently on the system are Toyota's new Camry and Sienna and the Japanese version of the plug-in Prius, though the carmaker plans to expand that list. AGL has been growing too, reaching 114 members currently, up from around 90 a year earlier. Amazon signed on last month.

"With Alexa integrated into AGL, the process of building voice experiences is dramatically simplified for developers," John Scumniotales, director of products at Amazon Alexa Automotive, said by email. "This would ultimately speed the rollout of voice services into cars. AGL has an opportunity to scale voice experiences across the automotive industry."

Amazon's goal is to keep people connected seamlessly to Alexa between their homes and cars

as it goes head-to-head with Google Assistant. The battle was on display at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas last month, when the Alphabet Inc. unit plastered billboards with "Hey Google" ads and announced its assistant will be available for all cars that run its Android Auto software. Amazon countered with an agreement to put Alexa in Toyota cars, adding to similar deals with Ford Motor Co. and BMW AG. People spend a lot of time in their cars, so becoming the dominant system in vehicles is important in the race to become the leading voice-assistant provider, said Jitendra Waral, a San Francisco-based technology analyst at Bloomberg Intelligence. "Both Google and Amazon have announced partnerships, but it's very early to tell." Bloomberg

Fresh CBI complaint against Chirag computers maker for Rs 515 crore fraud

A separate statement issued by Canara Bank late on Wednesday said the original complaint on the Rs 515 crore fraud was filed in December 2015 by the lead lender of RP Info Systems .

(News Agencies) The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday registered a complaint against Kolkata-based RP Info Systems Pvt. Ltd, maker of the Chirag brand of computers, for defrauding a group of lenders of at least Rs 515 crore.

This isn't the first complaint filed against RP Info Systems. In December 2013, IDBI Bank had filed a complaint with CBI, seeking a probe into fraudulent diversion of funds using fake documents, but the central agency restricted its probe to the

extent of IDBI Bank's exposure to the company, Canara Bank said in its complaint filed on Monday.

A separate statement issued by Canara Bank late on Wednesday said the original complaint on the Rs 515 crore fraud was filed in December 2015 by the lead lender of RP Info Systems (Canara Bank did not name the lender). It said after the lead lender withdrew as the consortium leader, it was authorised by the remaining banks, on the direction of CBI,

to file a revised complaint, which it filed on Wednesday.

Canara Bank said it had financed a Rs 40 crore working capital limit to the company, and had reported it as a fraud to the Reserve Bank of India in 2015 itself.

The petition alleged that R P Info Systems obtained credit facilities from at least 10 state-run banks—including State Bank of India and two of its erstwhile associate banks — by submitting "fabricated" documents.



The company had overstated its inventory and submitted falsified invoices to obtain credit facilities, the bank said. In fiscal year 2013-14, the company wrote off inventory worth Rs 397.62 crore and receivables worth Rs 499.30 crore, Canara Bank has said in its complaint.

R P Info Systems had claimed companies such as GAIL (India) Ltd and tyre maker Ceat Ltd owed it money, but the two companies had later informed State Bank of India that they had nothing to do with the computer maker, CBI has noted in its first information report (FIR).

Malaysian tycoon's firm may lose \$7 billion as Aircel files for bankruptcy

T Ananda Krishnan-backed mobile carrier Aircel Ltd has filed to start insolvency proceedings in India.

(News Agencies) Malaysian tycoon T Ananda Krishnan's company is poised to lose a total of about \$7 billion from a failed 12-year foray in the Indian wireless market, marking his biggest-ever hit on a soured investment, people with knowledge of the matter said.

Krishnan-backed mobile carrier Aircel Ltd filed to start insolvency proceedings in India, the company said Wednesday, confirming an earlier Bloomberg News report the move was imminent. Maxis Communications Bhd., a holding company for some of Krishnan's telecom ventures, has made about \$3.4 billion of shareholder advances to Aircel that it now won't be able to recoup, according to one of the people. Over the years, Maxis

Communications also injected around \$1.2 billion into Aircel in return for common stock and subscribed to \$1.6 billion of redeemable preference shares, the person said, asking not to be identified because the information is private. Both classes of securities are expected to be wiped out in the insolvency proceedings, according to the people. The estimated losses also include about \$800 million that Krishnan spent when he first bought the business in 2006. Krishnan has no bank borrowings related to the Aircel investments, one of the people said. While Maxis Communications currently doesn't expect to recoup funds from any potential selloff of Aircel's assets, the

insolvency process is at an early stage and the situation could change, the people said. Maxis Communications is 45% controlled by Krishnan through his private investment vehicle Usaha Tegas Sdn. Saudi Telecom Co. owns a 25% interest, while 30% is held by so-called bumiputera, or ethnic Malay investors. A representative for Maxis Communications declined to comment, while Aircel chief executive officer Kaizad Heerjee didn't answer calls to his mobile phone seeking comment. A representative for Saudi Telecom said he couldn't immediately comment. Krishnan, 79, is Malaysia's third-richest man with an estimated net worth of \$6.1 billion, according to the Bloomberg



Billionaires Index. He controls stakes in Maxis Bhd., the Southeast Asian nation's biggest mobile carrier by subscribers, as well as pay-TV operator Astro Malaysia Holdings Bhd. and oil services provider Bumi Armada Bhd. The tycoon also has interests in properties in the UK and Switzerland.

You've been drinking alcohol all wrong!

Expert busts the most common booze myths - from serving white wine with fish to drinking clear spirits to avoid a hangover

(News Agencies) From serving white wine with fish to sticking a spoon in an opened bottle of bubbly to preserve the fizz, there are certain habits we're all accustomed to sticking to.

But it turns out some of the most ways to serve and drink alcohol are in fact myths that could be ruining your enjoyment of your favourite glass of red or refreshing gin and tonic.

Drinks expert Matthew Lovane, Director of premium sake brand HEAVENSAKE, has revealed the habits we're all guilty of, such as pairing red wine with cheese, and focus on choosing the best match for the weight, flavour and texture of the dish.

These days, most people would agree that pairing wine with food depends on the specific flavours, weights and textures of the dishes.

'The best option to pair red

wine with fish is to select wines with very little or no tannins, particularly if a drizzle of lemon has been added to the fish as it clashes with these wine elements, leaving a bitter, metallic and searing aftertaste. In general, light oaky reds perfectly pair with grilled fish, because of the charcoal smokiness - examples include a fresh Pinot Noir and a Beaujolais.

Mature reds, for instance, should be paired with fish dishes that include a few earthy ingredients like root vegetables and squash. White wine is surprisingly a great match with cheese. White wines have a higher level of acidity which helps it slice through the heavy taste of some cheeses.

Avoid serving very dry white wines with cheese, and aim for varieties with a little residual sugar - while acidity cleanses the

palate, offsetting that greasy feeling.

In addition, soft and rich cheeses, such as Camembert and Brie, often pair nicely with white wines made from Chardonnay grape varieties.

Examples of great pairings include Port and Blue Cheese, Cabernet Sauvignon and aged Gouda, Riesling and Ricotta, and Malbec with a good aged Cheddar cheese.

Beers, wine and liqueurs have a long shelf life due to their high alcohol content and sugars. However, one rule doesn't fit all.

Whether it's a new bottle or you've had a couple of glasses, red wine should be re-corked and stored in a cool environment (12 - 190° C), sparkling white wines will need to be stored on the cooler side (5 - 8° C), and a full-bodied wine on the higher end of the scale. Both red and white



wines should be re-corked after opening and stored on their sides to prevent cork rehydration. Lastly, liquors such as vodka, rum or whiskey, can be stored at room temperature. A cool, dark place with a regular temperature, such as liquor cabinets are perfect for drink lovers. There is no evidence that storing vodka in the fridge helps the drink last longer. The

key is to keep the bottle chilled as cold temperature retains more carbon dioxide. Dangling a teaspoon has been proven to have little effect on preserving carbonation. Instead, and if you're looking to keep your fizz, look out for champagne stoppers or other wine tools, which allow you to pour a drink, without pulling the cork.

It's Not a Whiskey for Women. Johnnie Walker's Female VP Explains 'Jane Walker'



(News Agencies) Call her Jane Walker. For the first time in its nearly 200-year history, Scotch brand Johnnie Walker is introducing a female version of their famed Striding Man logo. Twitter users quickly linked the new icon to failed marketing attempts to women, including the Brawny paper towel woman, and the so-called "Lady Doritos"—a product that never launched but took heat on the Internet as a wrongheaded gender-specific ploy. (PepsiCo, maker of Doritos, discounted any rumors of "Lady Doritos.")

But Johnnie Walker vice president Stephanie Jacoby, who worked on the Jane Walker campaign, insists there has

been some misunderstanding.

The Jane Edition isn't a special blend for women, Jacoby says. It's just an updated look to the existing best-selling Black Label blend.

"This wasn't about making a whisky for women," Jacoby says. "We would never make anything that's 'for women's palates.' Taste buds have no gender." The bottle, a 250,000 limited-edition run of Black Label is timed to debut in March for Women's History Month. The move is aimed at spotlighting women's achievements, past and present, at Johnnie Walker and beyond.

For example, women have been crucial to the Walker brand

since its start, when Elizabeth Cumming, who owned the Cardhu distillery in Speyside, Scotland, sold her company to John Walker. "Now it's the most important malt at the heart of the Johnnie Walker blend," Jacoby says. She notes that John Walker's wife, Elizabeth, is considered "fundamental" in the creation of the brand's blended whisky.

More recently, five of the 12 members on Walker's current blending team are women. And in April, Diageo's board is close to achieving gender parity: 40% of the executive team will be female.

According to Diageo, which owns Johnnie Walker, the move is meant to draw attention to gender disparity. The press release announcing Jane's debut notes that only 2% of the National Park Service's 152 monuments feature historical female figures. In a bid to bring attention to more female icons, Johnnie Walker will be donating \$1 from bottle sales, up to \$250,000 to women's rights organizations. Additionally, the company is donating \$150,000 to the Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Statue

Fund, which is lobbying for a suffragette monument in Central Park.

Scotch is big business in the U.S. In 2017, Scotch sales generated over \$2.1 billion in revenues for distillers, according to the Distilled Spirits Council of America. In 2017, Scotch exports set a new record last year, selling over 1.2 billion bottles overseas, according to the Scotch Whisky Association.

Even so, the category has traditionally been viewed as masculine, although the rising numbers of female drinkers are changing that.

"Historically, [whisky] was a category built on old codes of status, but very masculine. Very exclusive," Jacoby says. "The thing that's exciting is that the new codes of status that are driving culture are all about inclusivity and gender parity and inviting people in."





Do you and your partner have a wide age gap? Then you could be facing these problems

Relationship experts Dr Anil Sethi and Dr Komal Chandiramani have tips for couples with a wide age gap, on how to stay happy together.

(News Agencies) What's common between celebrity couples Gautam Rode, 40, and Pankhuri Awasthy, 26; Shahid Kapoor, 36, and Mira Rajput, 23; and Saif Ali Khan, 47, and Kareena Kapoor, 37? Their wide age gap. Sure, this was common in times when our grandparents and parents got married, but can an age gap like this be a cause of concern in modern relationships? Relationship experts Dr Anil Sethi and Dr Komal Chandiramani shed light on the problems that such couples could encounter, and how one can deal with them.

1) Stay in the present One of the biggest and most common concerns is future planning, especially conversations about starting a family. The older partner can get insecure with time, fearing that their partner can leave them. Patience and maturity are

essential when having such conversations, that too, as early as possible. Instead of nagging your partner about not having the same thought process, discuss the expectations you have from each other, with an open mind, to meet halfway.

2) Bond over common interests Your partner likes '80s music, you like the latest hip-hop. And both of you seem to cringe at each other's musical choices. A generation gap like this is likely to exist in your relationship, but that makes it all the more important to find common interests, or explore new hobbies together. However, in doing so, don't force your choices upon the other. Learn to appreciate their likes and dislikes.

3) Being older doesn't mean you're wiser

Now, this one's tricky! Your experiences in life might have

taught you some valuable lessons, but expecting your younger partner to live by those learnings is not necessarily a good idea. Give them time to understand why you say something or act a certain way. Constantly telling them that they're immature or inexperienced will only make you come across as condescending.

The reverse can also be true — when the younger partner feels that older partner's knowledge is outdated. Experts advise to deal with such situations with maturity and sans ego. Try to be as objective as possible in presenting your argument. Focus on constructive criticism irrespective of one's age.

And most of all, remember that you love your partner for who they are and not their age, so don't let the latter bring trouble in your paradise.

Switch off :? Keep the phone away while dining with loved ones to enjoy your experience more



(News Agencies) Going out for dinner with loved ones? Keep your phone aside as you may enjoy less if you use your device while dining with your family and friends, a new study suggests. Researchers found that people who used their devices while out for dinner with friends and family enjoyed themselves less than those who did not.

"When we use our phones while we are spending time with people we care about -- apart from offending them -- we enjoy the experience less than we would if we put our devices away," said lead author Ryan Dwyer from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada.

For the study, published in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, the researchers asked more than 300 people to go to dinner with friends and family at a restaurant. Participants were

randomly assigned to either keep their phones on the table or to put their phones away during the meal. After the meal, they were asked a variety of questions. The researchers were careful to ensure participants were unaware they were being monitored for their smartphone use. When phones were present, participants felt more distracted, which reduced how much they enjoyed spending time with their friends and family, the researchers found.

In a second study involving more than 100 people, participants were sent a survey to their smartphones five times a day for a week that asked how they had been feeling and what they had been doing for the past 15 minutes. The researchers saw the same pattern, with participants reporting they enjoyed their in-person social interactions less if they had been using their phones.

Parents, beware of your teen's looming phone addiction, sexting more common than you think

Sexting, which is defined as the sharing of sexual text, video, and photographic content (nudes) using phones, apps, social networks and other technologies, among adolescents has increased in the past two decades, finds a study.



sexting among adolescents has upped in the past two decades, finds a study involving over a lakh participants.

Sexting is defined by the study's researchers as "the sharing of sexually explicit images, videos, or messages through electronic means." The study involved 110,380 participants. The findings, based on a meta-analysis of 39 studies from 1990 to 2016, established that an estimated one in seven teenagers send sexts and one in four receives them.

Media portrayals of sexting has

often implicated adolescent girls as the senders of naked photographs and adolescent boys as the requesters.

However, the study found no significant sex differences in the rate of sending or receiving sexts.

Moreover, the prevalences of forwarding a sext without consent and having a sext forwarded without consent were 12% and 8.4%, respectively, said researchers including Sheri Madigan, Assistant Professor at the University of Calgary in Canada. The nonconsensual

forwarding of sexts can lead to harassment by peers, cyberbullying, or blackmailing and in extreme cases lead to suicide.

Thus the study, published in the journal JAMA Pediatrics, stated that age-specific information on sexting and its potential consequences should regularly be provided as a component of sex education.

Efforts and resources to criminalise sexts should be redirected to educational programs on digital citizenship and healthy relationships, the researchers said.

(News Agencies) Sexting among teens is on the rise, according to new research published on Tuesday. Owing to an increase in smartphone ownership among teenagers, the prevalence of



Paris Fashion Week : Short hemlines ruled the ramp at Saint Laurent's Eiffel Tower display

On a freezing day, models took to a covered walkway under a lit-up Eiffel tower to show off some very short hemlines from Saint Laurent's collection.

(News Agencies)As temperatures plummeted in Paris, models took to a covered walkway under a lit-up Eiffel tower to show off some very short hemlines from Saint Laurent's collection for next autumn and winter. Spectators and models were shielded from the worst of the freezing weather at the Paris Fashion Week event on Tuesday.

But the styles, by house designer Anthony Vaccarello, featured plenty of bare legs, as mini black leather shorts were paired with sleek jackets and sheer tops for a chic, rock-and-roll look. High-grazing dresses in an array of flowery patterns, some with structured



shoulders and billowing necklines. Men donned capes and leather jackets; others wore close-cut suits, in black or deep blue velvet, and made an appearance, including some with spectacular curved sparkling jackets. The

French label — named after its founder Yves Saint Laurent and owned by luxury conglomerate Kering — unveiled its collection on the first full day of Paris Fashion Week, which runs until March 6. Other stalwarts of the French fashion calendar, including LVMH couture house Dior, are also showcasing their latest looks. Here are some more images from the collection:



Why did you kill Sridevi and leave me here ?



Ram Gopal Varma's furious letter to God

Sridevi's die-hard fan, filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma, is distraught at her death. He has penned down a letter expressing her shock.

(News Agencies) The sudden demise of Sridevi has left the country shocked, and filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma -- her die-hard fan -- is inconsolable. Varma expressed his shock and anger by posting a lengthy emotional note on Twitter. Sridevi, who was in Dubai for a family function, reportedly suffered a cardiac arrest on Saturday night. She was 54.

am still having a bad dream, but I know I am not. I hate Sridevi. I hate her for making me realise that she too is finally only just a human being. I hate that her heart too has to beat to live." The filmmaker earlier thought it was a nightmare or a hoax. "I thought that either it's a nightmare or a hoax and I went back to sleep. An hour later I woke up to check and there were around 50 messages informing me of the same."

same," he added. I have a habit of constantly dreaming and waking up every once in a while in the night to check out my cell phone and I suddenly saw a message that Sridevi is no more ..I thought that either it's a nightmare or a hoax and I went back to sleep ..An hour later I woke up to check and there were around 50 messages informing me of the same. Back in the times when I was in engineering college in Vijayawada, I happened to see her first telugu film "padaharella vayasu"..I was awestruck with her Beauty and I walked out of the theatre

in a daze thinking that she cannot be a real person and she has to be some fantasy form who somehow has taken a human shape. Then I saw her various other films, all of which constantly created a higher benchmark of both her talent and her beauty ..To me she looked like some being who has come from some other world in the outer space as a favour to bless us for a little while for all the good we might have done in this world.

She was like a creation of God which he does whenever he is in a very special mood as a very very special gift to

mankind. My journey to Sridevi started when I was preparing for my debut film 'Shiva'. I used to walk from Nagarjuna's office in Chennai to a neighbouring street where Sridevi used to live and I used to just stand and watch Sridevi's house from outside her gate. I just couldn't believe that the goddess of beauty lives in that stupid looking house. I say stupid because I believed that no man made house deserved to house that beauty called SRIDEVI. I used to so desperately hope to catch a glimpse of her as she went in or out of her house. But sadly no such thing ever happened. And then

after 'Shiva' released and became a big hit, a producer came to me and asked if I was interested in doing a film with Sridevi. I said "Are you mad or what? I will die to just see her, let alone make a film with her!" He arranged a meeting with her and took me to meet her at that very same house where I used to stand outside the gate and stare. At night we went and as luck would have it there was a power cut in her house. so I was sitting in her living room in candle light along with the producer waiting for the angel to appear and my heart was thumping like mad.

Insta-stylists are the next big thing in fashion. Here are 3 of the best in the business

Three of the new and coolest stylists on Instagram picked by Vogue magazine that you should know about.

(News Agencies) Gone are the days when runways and red carpets were the only places to look out for fashion trends and styles, and that too, only for the big events. Thanks to social media, we have insta-looks for our daily life, with very basic clothes and accessories. The most influential women in fashion, like Gigi Hadid, Kim Kardashian West, Selena Gomez, Sonam Kapoor and others, give us major fashion goals, even while going to

the gym, airport, a coffee run, and everything in between. Relating to this, Vogue, in an article, wrote, "Perhaps that micromanaged, not-quite-genuine feeling has something to do with our interest in the complete opposite: fashion that's less predictable, less deliberate, and maybe a little strange. The coolest stylists we're following aren't necessarily dressing top models or actresses; they're doing editorials for indie magazines, taking raw

selfies in their own vintage finds, and getting noticed for it via Instagram." The fashion magazine even picked up three new fashion stylists on Instagram — Anastasiia Gutnyk, Leah Abbott, Ewelina Gralak — who can actually be our everyday guide to rule the world in style. Anastasiia Gutnyk is based in the UK and grew up in Ukraine. Following her on Instagram shows that she majorly styles herself in a fun and quirky manner, with commonly



available clothes and accessories, rarely made by major brands. "With everything I do, I try to have fun with it. In my case, it's about the energy, which is backed up with lots of colour and kitsch," she said, as quoted by Vogue. Leah Abbott first got recognised for her offbeat style on the streets of London and worked with stylist Luci Ellis before striking out her own. "I got into styling during my final year at university, because I was constantly being asked where I sourced the pieces I wore on nights out," Abbott said. "Most of it was second-hand. As a curvy black stylist, I haven't always been able to fit in major 'markets', so I guess

and that made me stand out." Ewelina Gralak, who started styling in her native Poland and now lives in downtown Manhattan, is known for her singularly off-kilter vision — a mash-up of ugly-pretty shoes, lace tights, neon camouflage, and streetwear. "I just surround myself and wear the pieces that I like at the time," she said. "That could really be anything-I'm obsessed with — Japanese workwear, '90s hip-hop culture, military clothing, early [Nicolas] Ghesquiere, [Maison] Margiela, Raf [Simons], and Alaïa. Mix that all together, add my Polish [upbringing] and that's it."

Kim Kardashian shares a pic with her newest daughter, Chicago West



Kim Kardashian shares a pic with her newest daughter, Chicago West. Internet is losing its calm over a recent selfie shared by Kim Kardashian with her newest daughter, Chicago West. Kim K, as she is affectionately called, offered fans a closer look at baby Chicago and fans are already seeing a resemblance between the star and her youngest daughter. One user wrote, Chicago West is such a beauty! @KimKardashian twin literally!!! Thanks for sharing her with the world Kimmy! #KUWTK"

The barely-two-month-old baby looked flawless swaddled in her mother's arm, in the picture with an animal filter. West was born to the Kim K and rapper beau Kanye West on January 15, 2018, through surrogacy.



Sridevi used to call me 'laddoo': Rani Mukerji remembers her 'maa'

Rani Mukerji remembers her 'maa' Sridevi, who died suddenly on Saturday. Rani says that the Bollywood icon used to call her 'laddoo' affectionately and was looking forward to watching Rani's new film, Hichki.

(News Agencies) Rani Mukerji has not yet come to terms with Sridevi's death. The Bollywood icon died suddenly on Saturday in Dubai, where she was attending her nephew Mohit Marwah's wedding. The official cause of death was drowning. Just a few days before leaving for Dubai, Sridevi expressed her excitement for Rani's upcoming film, Hichki. "The day, the time I got to know that she's passed away, it was the most shocking and tragic thing for me to hear. I still can't believe that we are talking about her demise. It feels surreal to talk about her in the past tense because we never expected this," said Rani. "The love she had for me was so tremendous and intense that I feel somewhere I have lost a guiding light in my life. She has been my inspiration personally and professionally," she added.

Like many of her Bollywood contemporaries, Rani also considers Sridevi to be a massive influence. Sridevi redefined the role of women in Bollywood in the '80s and '90s. "Sriji has been my favourite since my childhood. She knew me as a kid because I used to go in my school uniform and bag and watch her shoot. She worked in one of the productions of my uncle, Shomu Mukherjee. She remembered me as that kid," said Rani.

She remembers how the screen icon used to call her 'laddoo' affectionately.



"She used to call me laddoo; she would say, 'Arre my laddoo' each time I met her and I am going to miss that," she said. "I was actually looking forward to show her my film. She called me after seeing the trailer and said, 'Laddoo, I have to see this movie'. I told her, 'Yes maa as soon as the movie is ready, I can show it you'," said Rani, adding, "It is a huge loss not only for the movie industry but also for us as a family who belong to the films. Anybody who departs we feel that sense of loss and for me especially because I had a personal connect with her."

Rani recently lost her father, the director Ram Mukherjee, who died in

October, 2017. She also became mother to a daughter, Adira, in 2015, and said that Sridevi was like a 'maasi' to her daughter. "Since I had a child, she's been very supportive these last two years. She has been so inspirational. The kind of love that she has given to me and Adira (daughter) has been phenomenal. She was literally like my elder sister, like an elder maasi (aunty) to Adira, she was a pillar of support to me in the last two years," Rani said.

Sridevi's last rites will be performed in Mumbai on Wednesday, with thousands of fans, family members and Bollywood personalities expected to attend.

Sridevi's dream was to watch daughter Janhvi's debut film: Jaya Prada mourns loss

Sridevi was highly invested in daughter Janhvi Kapoor's Bollywood debut, Dhadak, says Jaya Prada. She died months before the film's release in July.



(News Agencies) Prada was left shocked. Considered arch rivals at one time, Jaya Prada and Sridevi forged a friendship over the years. As the news of Sridevi's sudden death emerged, Jaya Prada was left shocked. Speaking to Mumbai Mirror, she spoke about how warm their relationship was and how it was Sridevi's dream to see daughter Janhvi Kapoor make her debut on the big screen. Janhvi was shooting for her film Dhadak, being produced by Karan Johar, when the news of Sridevi's death emerged. The film was the reason why Janhvi had

not even accompanied the rest of her family, including her mother, to Dubai for cousin Mohit Marwah's wedding. Sridevi, aged 54, passed away in Dubai late on Saturday night after suffering a cardiac arrest.

Talking about the actor, Jaya Prada said in the interview, "Srideviji was a great human being, a fabulous dancer, a tremendous actress and above all, a wonderful mother. In her long career, she has played so many varied and entertaining characters and will be remembered as a dream girl forever." Remembering their time together in Bollywood, she added, "We worked in a number of films together, including Aulad, Akhree Raasta and Tohfa, and would complement each other on the sets. She was an introvert, really shy but extremely disciplined and obeying the director's instructions to the T. But on screen, she reigned as the queen." Their friendship blossomed as both became mothers. "When my son Siddharth was getting married, I had personally gone to invite her and she had come with her entire family. She was always very warm whenever we met. She really wanted to see Janhvi in her first film but everything is God's will. I had never imagined that she would go away so soon. She would always have a smile on her face," Jaya Prada signed off.

(News Agencies) Summer is approaching and it is time to flaunt those chic, classy and breezy dresses. However, summer clothing comes with its own set of challenges like overcoming the hassles of see-through and translucent fashion pieces. Shruti Behal, Head of Product Design at PrettySecrets, and Soumya Kant, Vice President of Clovia, give inputs: * Do not wear a white bra under a white kurti. This is the worst mistake ever and is only going to make your lingerie all the more visible. Opt for nude bras instead. Nude-coloured lingerie blends well with your skin, providing a no-show underneath your sparkling whites, offers the best cover, and is your safest bet to wear under those sheer kurtas.

* Opt for seamless nude underwear under white and light-coloured bottoms for no-show. It's

a good idea to wear a no-panty-lines brief under fitted bottoms to eliminate embarrassing panty lines for a smooth outer look.

* Pick a padded bra over a non-padded one. Opt for nude-coloured camisoles for a more classy and sophisticated look. You can also opt for a contrasting camisole in order to pop that colour and create a vibrant effect for that outfit.

* Wear a sparkly bra underneath your fancy party dress to create a sexy-yet-classy effect. Team it up with some funky jewellery and a pair of swanky heels.

* If you are looking for a more stylish look or have party on your mind, then opt for a bra with lace detailing. This will add to your look and you will not have to shy away from showing it off. You can also go for a bra with lace detailing in the back or a lace bralette.

Dress for the season: 5 fashion tips to avoid a faux pas in summer

It will soon be time to bring out those breezy dresses for summer. Here are the dos and don'ts to keep in mind.



Salman Khan is returning to TV with Dus Ka Dum? His video comes with when, where and why

(News Agencies) If you have been missing Salman Khan from the TV screen after the end of Bigg Boss Season 11, fret no more. Salman may be coming back to our TV screens. Sony TV released a short video promo in which Salman can be seen saying that he will soon be back soon.

In the 10-second video, he says with a smile, "Main kab wapas aa rahaa hoon, kahaan wapas rahaa hoon, kyun wapas aa raha hoon... anumaan lagaatey rahiye." While the Bollywood actor doesn't name the programme, our guess is he is talking of his successful stint as the host of Dus

Sony Television has released a short 10-second video of Salman Khan, where he declares that he is coming back on TV. Watch video here.

Ka Dum, Sony Television's popular game show. Salman, who has been among the most successful TV host from among the Bollywood celebs who have tried their hand, made his small screen debut with Dus Ka Dum in 2008. The show was aired for two seasons (2008 and 2009).

As per a DNA report, Sony has been planning to come out with a

third season of the game show with Salman as host. The TV channel decided to bring him and Dus Ka Dum back, after a decision was taken to pull out Kapil Sharma's popular TV programme The Kapil Sharma Show, which saw a major dip in TRPs.

Kapil was embroiled in a controversy over an alleged fight

with colleague Sunil Grover while on a flight from Australia last year. The ongoing mud-slinging led to a sharp decline in viewership.



Ram Gopal Varma, Nagarjuna film titled Officer; has a release date Ram Gopal Varma and Akkineni Nagarjuna are working together after nearly 25 years.

(News Agencies) Maverick filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma's upcoming Telugu actioner with Akkineni Nagarjuna has been officially titled Officer. Teaming up after two decades, the project features Nagarjuna in the role of a hot-headed cop. On Tuesday, the title along with the first look poster was released, and it was also confirmed that the project will hit the screens worldwide on May 25. Not long ago, two titles that were under consideration were Gun and System - the most popular words in Varma's filmography. However, the title Officer took many by surprise as it's pretty straightforward.



During the launch of the project last November, Varma said in a statement: "I am extremely excited that I am doing a film with Nagarjuna after nearly 25 years but contrary to some uninformed media speculations, this new film is nothing to do with 'Shiva', neither in character nor in story content,"

Varma had posted on his Facebook page. He further added: "It's a very different but an extremely realistic action film set against a story such as neither me nor Nagarjuna has ever done before." Varma said he hopes he lives up to the expectations because Nagarjuna gave him his first directorial break with Shiva." Predominantly shot in Mumbai, the film also stars Myra Sareen (she is making her Telugu debut with this film) in a crucial role. The first look poster features an angry looking Nagarjuna flashing a gun. According to the industry grapevine, the film might have a simultaneous release in Hindi.

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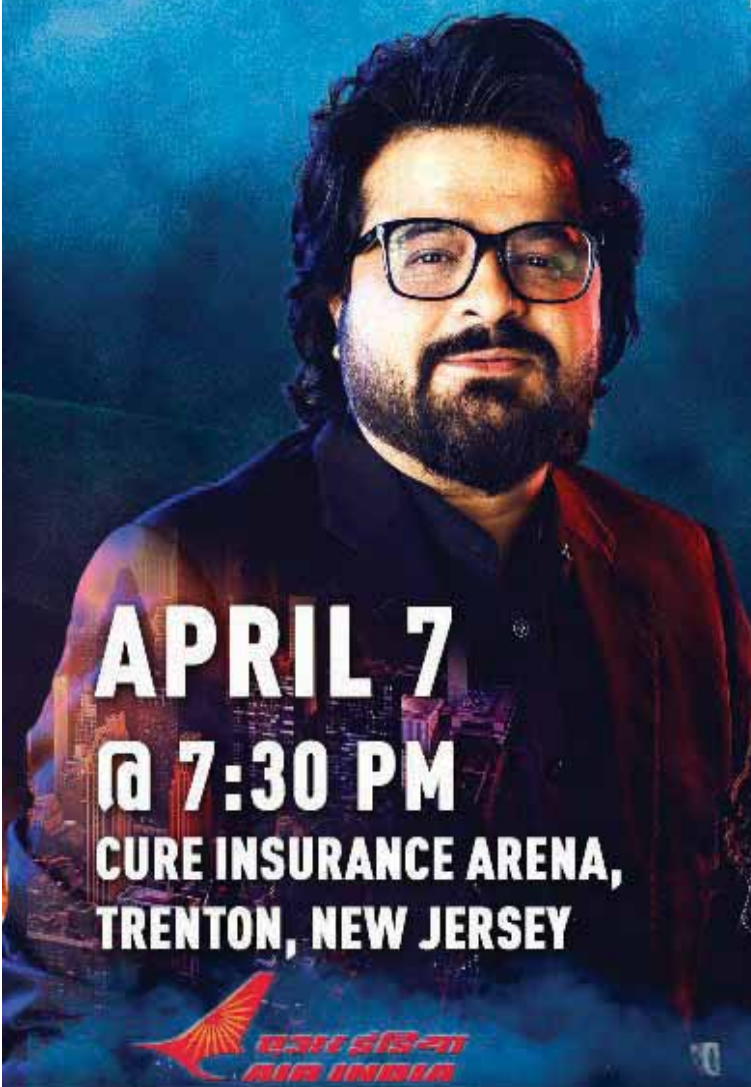
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