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How serious is India's economic slowdown?

India is trying to stave off an economic crisis. But it needs to do a lot more

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Telemarketer Sentenced to Prison in Connection with \$10 Million International Fraudulent Sweepstakes Scheme



(News Agencies) A prison followed by three telemarketer was sentenced to 63 months in today for his role in a \$10

million telemarketing scheme that defrauded primarily elderly victims in the United States from call centers in Costa Rica. Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U. S. Attorney R. Andrew Murray of the Western District of North Carolina, Inspector in

Charge David M. McGinnis of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's (USPIS) Charlotte Divison, Special Agent in Charge Matthew D. Line of IRS Criminal Investigations (IRS-CI) and Special Agent in Charge John A. Strong of the FBI's Charlotte Field Office made the announcement. Carlin Woods, 35, of Merrillville,

Indiana, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Max Cogburn Jr. of the Western District of North Carolina. Woods pleaded guilty on May 15, 2017, to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, one count of wire fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering. According to admissions made as part of his plea agreement,

Woods worked in a call center in Costa Rica in which co-conspirators, who falsely posed as employees of U.S. government agencies such as the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the IRS, contacted victims in the United States to tell them that they had won a substantial "sweepstakes" prize. After convincing victims, many of whom were elderly and vulnerable, that they stood to receive a significant financial reward, Woods and his co-conspirators fraudulently told victims that they needed to make up-front payments for a "refundable insurance fee" before collecting their supposed prize. The members of the conspiracy used a variety of means to conceal their true identities, such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology, which made it appear that they were calling from Washington, D.C., and other places in the United States.

Individual Who Planned Attack in Queens Charged with Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIS

Awais Chudhary Recorded Videos and Took Photos of the Flushing Bay Promenade And the World's Fair Marina in Preparation for an Attack

(News Agencies) A criminal complaint filed today in federal court in Brooklyn charged Awais Chudhary, 19, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Pakistan, with attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization. Chudhary was arrested yesterday, and made his initial appearance this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge James Orenstein. Chudhary was ordered held without bail. "The

defendant allegedly planned to conduct a deadly attack in New York on behalf of ISIS," stated Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers. "The National Security Division, working with our partners, will remain vigilant in our efforts to identify, disrupt, and hold accountable those who would conduct a terrorist attack on our soil. I want to thank the agents, analysts, and prosecutors who are responsible for this case and prevented this defendant from carrying out his

deadly plans." "As alleged, Awais Chudhary planned to kill innocent civilians on behalf of ISIS and record the bloodshed in the hope of inspiring others to commit attacks," stated United States Attorney Donoghue. "This Office, together with the FBI, the NYPD and all members of the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force will continue working tirelessly to identify ISIS sympathizers like the defendant and prevent them from carrying out their murderous intentions." "There's no

doubt Chudhary allegedly wanted to make headlines by attacking innocent people going about their daily lives. Thanks to the diligent work of the agents, analysts, and detectives on the FBI New York JTTF, the only thing to report today is his arrest, and the only photos Chudhary will be featured in are the ones taken in our prisoner processing room prior to his arrival in federal prison," stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Sweeney.

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Houston-Area Man Who Posed as Physician Found Guilty of Conspiring to Unlawfully Prescribe Hundreds of Thousands of Doses of Opioids

(News Agencies) A Houston-area man who posed as a physician at an unregistered pain clinic was found guilty today for his role at a “pill mill” at which he and his co-conspirators illegally prescribed hundreds of thousands of doses of opioids and other controlled substances. Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Ryan Patrick of the Southern District of Texas and Special Agent in Charge Will R. Glaspy of the Drug Enforcement

Administration’s (DEA) Houston Division made the announcement. After a five-day day jury trial, Muhammad Arif, 61, of Katy, Texas, was found guilty of one count of conspiracy to unlawfully distribute and dispense controlled substances and three counts of unlawfully distributing and dispensing controlled substances. Arif is expected to be sentenced on a date not yet determined by U.S. District Judge Alfred H. Bennett of the Southern District of Texas, who presided over the trial.

According to the evidence presented at trial, from September 2015 through February 2016, Arif conspired with a doctor and with the owner of Aster Medical Clinic of Rosenberg, Texas, which operated as an illegal pill mill, to unlawfully prescribe controlled substances to patients. The evidence showed that Arif was not licensed to practice medicine in the United States, but posed as a physician at Aster Medical Clinic, saw patients as if he were a physician and wrote prescriptions for patients

on prescription pads that had been pre-signed by the doctor, Arif’s co-conspirator. Through this scheme, Aster Medical Clinic dispensed prescriptions for over 200,000 dosage units of hydrocodone, a Schedule II controlled substance, and over 145,000 dosage units of carisoprodol, a Schedule IV controlled substance. The combination of hydrocodone and carisoprodol is a dangerous drug cocktail with no known medical benefit, the evidence showed.

Trial evidence showed that Aster Medical Clinic issued unlawful prescriptions for controlled substances to over 40 people on its busiest days. “Crew leaders” brought numerous people to pose as patients at Aster Medical Clinic and paid for their visits in order to obtain prescriptions for controlled substances that the crew leaders would then sell on the street. Aster Medical Clinic charged approximately \$250 for each patient visit, and required payment in cash, the evidence showed.

Bangladeshi National Arrested in Texas to Face Charges for a Conspiracy to Bring Aliens into the United States

(News Agencies) A Bangladeshi national residing in Tapachula, Mexico, was arrested Aug. 31 on arrival at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, Texas, to face a superseding criminal indictment for his role in a scheme to smuggle aliens into the United States. The unsealed superseding indictment alleges that from March 2017 to August 2018, Milon Miah conspired to bring and brought 15 Bangladeshi nationals to the

United States at the Texas border in exchange for payment. Miah allegedly maintained a hotel in Tapachula, Mexico, where he housed and fed aliens and provided them with plane tickets to locations in northern Mexico where the aliens were met by other smugglers who transported them to the U.S. border. One of Miah’s co-conspirators in the smuggling operation, Moktar Hossain, pleaded guilty last week to conspiracy to bring an alien to

the United States as well as several related smuggling charges. “Human smuggling rings endanger the security of the United States,” said Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division. “This arrest sends a strong message that the Department is dedicated to holding accountable those who conspire to subvert our nation’s immigration laws for their own profit.” “Securing our borders is a national security and law enforcement priority,” said U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Patrick for the Southern District of Texas. “Often, disparate organizations cooperate in an effort to exploit our border. The great investigative work by multiple agencies stopped this group and is able to bring foreign based defendants to justice.” “The arrest of Milon Miah represents a significant joint effort in ensuring national security and public safety,”

said Special Agent in Charge Shane Falden of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) San Antonio. “HSI remains steadfast in vigorously investigating and dismantling transnational criminal networks that pose a threat to our nation. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to maintain the integrity of our border and ensure the safety of our communities.”

New York Ambulette Company Owners Plead Guilty in More than \$8.6 Million Health Care Kickback Scheme

Two New York ambulette company owners pleaded guilty today for their roles in a more than \$8.6 million health care kickback scheme.



(News Agencies) Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Richard P. Donoghue of the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Director in Charge William F. Sweeney Jr. of the FBI’s New York Field Office, Special Agent in Charge Scott J. Lampert of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General’s (HHS-OIG) Office of Investigations and Acting Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Larsen

of IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) New York made the announcement. Igor Radinovskiy, 60, and Aleksandr Radinovskiy, 37, father and son, both of Brooklyn, New York, each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to offer and pay health care kickbacks and one count of conspiracy to defraud the lawful functions of the IRS before U.S. Magistrate Judge Steven M. Gold of the Eastern District of New York. Sentencing has not yet been scheduled. The defendants were

the co-owners and officers of the ambulette company Sabe Ambulette Services Inc., which did business as Mobility Transportation. According to court filings and admissions, Igor Radinovskiy and Aleksandr Radinovskiy participated in a conspiracy in which they paid more than \$8.6 million in kickbacks to co-conspirator companies not enrolled in the Medicaid program, for the referral of beneficiaries recruited by those co-conspirators, so that Sabe Ambulette could falsely bill Medicaid as if Sabe had transported those beneficiaries to various clinics in Brooklyn and Queens. The defendants then falsely reported to the IRS that the illegal kickback payments were legitimate business expenses, which caused relevant tax forms to falsely under-report business income and claim deductions.

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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

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High-profile Wall Streeters hit by 'Ponzi-like' wine scam: lawsuit

(Press Release) A New York business consultant known for throwing lavish wine parties at five-star eateries like Daniel has bilked a cadre of Wall Street bigwigs out of millions, according to a shocking new lawsuit.

Omar Khan, who runs the Sensei International consulting firm on Park Avenue, used his fancy Rolodex to stage wine-fueled shindigs that lured more than a dozen captains of industry into a "Ponzi-like scheme," according to the lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court on Wednesday.

The suit claims Khan met many of his alleged vic-

tims at his own parties, which "centered around vintage wines and expensive cuisine." Khan then used his well-heeled connections — as well as claimed ties to famous names like Philippe Rothschild of the Mouton winery — to convince his alleged victims to invest in his growing events business, the suit said.

In addition to Robert Van Brugge, CEO and chairman of Sanford C. Bernstein, victims include Kresimir Penavic, a former senior research scientist at Renaissance Capital, the \$110 billion hedge fund founded by James Simons; Robert Gelfond, director at the Cato Institute; Peter

Slagowitz, CEO of Spurs Capital; and Lorine Schaefer, a vice president at Morgan Stanley, court documents say.

They are suing for \$8.3 million, plus interest, although the bulk of the losses allegedly belong to Penavic, who invested close to \$5 million with Khan through 27 events from 2015 to 2018. "He was larger than life," Penavic said of Khan, who scored glowing write-ups about his "elite supper club" in Forbes and Bloomberg. "Not only by his volume, by his voice, the way he talked," Penavic said in an interview with The Post. "He liked to position himself as in the know and

bask in the limelight." Penavic's suit is the latest in a string of civil suits making similar claims filed against Khan since 2015.

According to a lawsuit filed in December by Jean-Claude Bernard, the owner of a hotel in Beaune, France, Khan allegedly failed to pay out the profits at an exclusive dinner where sommeliers uncorked 36 different bottles of wine during an evening for a group of guests at the Four Seasons Hotel George V in Paris. Those included rarities like a Mandive Vigo from 1814 and a \$5,000 Domaine de la Romanee Conti Montrachet from 1973.



"Those are exactly the same wines that were supposed to be served at a dinner in Paris that I was supposed to attend — that he canceled!" Penavic fumed. Khan has denied Bernard's allegations and is seeking to dismiss the case. Bernard didn't return a request

for comment. In January, Napa Valley winery owner David Sinegal sued Khan over a \$75,000 investment for 23 bottles of Chateau Petrus bottled from 1923 to 2005 — a series of extremely rare and expensive vintages, according to San Francisco federal court papers.

Bangladeshi National Arrested in Texas to Face Charges for a Conspiracy to Bring Aliens into the United States

(Press Release) A Bangladeshi national residing in Tapachula, Mexico, was arrested Aug. 31 on arrival at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, Texas, to face a superseding criminal indictment for his role in a scheme to smuggle aliens into the United States.

The unsealed superseding indictment alleges that from March 2017 to August 2018, Milon Miah conspired to bring and brought 15 Bangladeshi nationals to the United States at the Texas border in exchange for payment. Miah allegedly maintained a hotel in Tapachula, Mexico, where he housed and fed aliens and pro-

vided them with plane tickets to locations in northern Mexico where the aliens were met by other smugglers who transported them to the U.S. border. One of Miah's co-conspirators in the smuggling operation, Moktar Hossain, pleaded guilty last week to conspiracy to bring an alien to the United States as well as several related smuggling charges.

"Human smuggling rings endanger the security of the United States," said Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division. "This arrest sends a strong message that the Department is dedicated to holding

accountable those who conspire to subvert our nation's immigration laws for their own profit."

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"The arrest of Milon Miah represents a significant joint effort in ensuring national security and public safety," said Special Agent in Charge Shane Folden of U.S.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) San Antonio. "HSI remains steadfast in vigorously investigating and dismantling transnational criminal networks that pose a threat to our nation. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to maintain the integrity of our border and ensure the safety of our communities." Miah was presented yesterday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Dena H. Palmero in the Southern District of Texas for his initial appearance. At the hearing, Judge Palmero ordered that Miah be held pending transfer to Laredo

for further criminal proceedings.

HSI Laredo is conducting the investigation with assistance from HSI Mexico City, HSI Monterrey, HSI Houston, HSI Calexico, Customs and Border Protection, Border Patrol and the U.S. Marshals Service. The investigation is being conducted under the Extraterritorial Criminal Travel Strike Force (ECT) program, a joint partnership between the Justice Department's Criminal Division and HSI. The ECT program focuses on human smuggling networks that may present particular national security or public safety risks or present grave humanitarian concerns.

Four Peruvians Sentenced for Overseeing Spanish-Speaking Call Centers That Threatened and Extorted U.S. Consumers

(Press Release) Four residents of Lima, Peru, charged with overseeing a series of call centers that threatened and extorted Spanish-speaking victims in the United States, have been sentenced to prison, the Department of Justice and U.S. Postal Inspection Service announced.

Jesus Gutierrez Rojas, 37, Alexandra Podesta Bengoa, 38, Virgilio Polo Davila, 43, and Omar Portocarrero Caceres, 39, were extradited from Peru in April. Each pleaded guilty to extortion and has now been sentenced to prison by U.S. District Court Judge Roy K. Altman in Fort Lauderdale. As part of his guilty plea, Gutierrez admitted that he oversaw a series of affiliated call centers in Peru that falsely told Spanish-speaking victims across the United States that they had incurred debts and would suffer various consequences for failure to pay off the debts that they did not, in fact, owe. As part of their

guilty pleas, Podesta, Polo, and Portocarrero admitted that they managed and supervised three of these affiliated call centers that used extortion to obtain money from vulnerable U.S. consumers.

Yesterday, Judge Altman sentenced Gutierrez to 51 months in federal prison for his role overseeing the affiliated call centers and sentenced Podesta and Polo to 46 months imprisonment. Judge Altman sentenced Portocarrero to 46 months in federal prison on July 24. Each defendant was also ordered to serve three years' supervised release following their terms of incarceration and to make restitution payments to the victims of their scheme.

"The Department of Justice is committed to identifying and prosecuting foreign-based fraud schemes that target and extort U.S. consumers," said Assistant Attorney General Jody Hunt of the Department of Justice's Civil Di-

vision. "Today's prison sentences reflect that those who unlawfully take advantage of U.S. consumers by phone cannot escape justice by placing their calls from abroad. The Department of Justice's Consumer Protection Branch will continue to work hand-in-hand with our Transnational Elder Fraud Strike Force partners to bring to justice international fraudsters who prey on vulnerable U.S. consumers."

As part of their guilty pleas, Podesta, Polo, and Portocarrero each admitted that their Peruvian call centers contacted U.S. consumers, many of whom were elderly and vulnerable, using Internet-based calls. Falsely claiming to be attorneys and government representatives, Podesta, Polo, Portocarrero, and their employees falsely told victims that they failed to pay for or receive a delivery of products and threatened them into paying fraudulent settlements for nonex-

istent debts. The callers falsely threatened victims with lawsuits, negative marks on their credit reports, imprisonment, or immigration consequences if they did not immediately pay for the purportedly delivered products and "settlement fees." Many victims made monetary payments based on these baseless extortionate threats.

Gutierrez was the general manager of a larger company where he worked in partnership with Podesta, Polo, Portocarrero, and others to facilitate their extortion scheme. The defendants' associates in Miami collected the payments from thousands of victims across the U.S.

"The reach of our U.S. justice system is long," said U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida Ariana Fajardo Orshan. "The sentences imposed demonstrate that we are committed to prosecuting those individuals who threaten U.S. consumers no

matter where they are located."

"The U.S. Postal Inspection Service will continue to aggressively pursue and bring to justice international criminal enterprises that prey on our most vulnerable citizens by fraudulently using the U.S. Mail to further their schemes," said Acting Miami Division Postal Inspector in Charge Lesley Allison.

At Portocarrero's July 24 sentencing, Judge Altman said that the brazen, large-scale nature of the defendants' scheme was "shocking." Judge Altman noted that the defendants exploited "the most vulnerable people in our country" and said that their offense conduct was "terribly disgraceful."

With yesterday's three sentencings by Judge Altman, all five defendants who have been charged in connection with this large-scale extortion scheme have now been sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

India and Pakistan fail to finalise agreement on Kartarpur corridor

The understanding on the proposed movement of pilgrims was reached at the third round of talks between senior officials for finalising the modalities for operationalising the Kartarpur Corridor.



The Pakistani side also showed unwillingness to allow the presence of Indian consular or protocol officials at the gurdwara and was urged to reconsider its position, the person added.

The understanding on the proposed movement of pilgrims was reached at the third round of talks between senior officials for finalising the modalities for operationalising the Kartarpur Corridor. The meeting was held against the backdrop of heightened tensions between the two sides at Attari on the Indian side of the international border.

"There was agreement on visa-free travel of Indian pilgrims, without any restrictions based on their faith. Persons of Indian origin holding OCI cards can also visit Darbar Sahib gurdwara using the corridor," the person cited

above said.

A total of 5,000 pilgrims can visit the gurdwara in Pakistan using the corridor every day, and additional pilgrims, over and above this figure, can visit the shrine on special occasions provided there is capacity expansion by the Pakistani side, the people said.

Pakistan also conveyed its "solemn commitment to increase this number to the maximum possible", the people said without specifying the additional capacity.

The corridor will be operational throughout the year, seven days a week, and pilgrims will have the choice to visit as individuals or in groups, and on foot, the people said.

The two sides also agreed to build a bridge at Budhi Ravi Channel to facilitate the movement of people during the rainy season. Pending the construction of the bridge on the Pakistani side, both sides agreed on the crossing point coordinates of a temporary service road that is being built, the people said.

The two sides also agreed on emergency evacuation procedures, especially for medical emergencies. A direct line of communication between India's Border Security Force and the Pakistan Rangers will be used for such emergencies.

A decision made at a meeting of

technical experts on August 30 regarding sharing of details of pilgrims using the corridor was endorsed by both sides.

They also agreed on ensuring a "safe and secure environment" for the movement of pilgrims. "Pakistan has been requested, once again, to allow protocol officers from India to accompany pilgrims every day for facilitating their visit," the person cited above said.

The Pakistani side further agreed to make sufficient provision for preparing and distributing 'langar' and 'prasad' for pilgrims.

The people said significant progress has been made to build state-of-the-art infrastructure, including a passenger terminal on the Indian side that can handle more than 15,000 pilgrims a day. This infrastructure is expected to be completed by October.

Work on a four-lane highway up to the international border on the Indian side is on schedule and will be completed by the end of September. All facilities on Indian side will be ready for the pilgrimage through Kartarpur Corridor by the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, in November. Darbar Sahib gurdwara is built at the site where Guru Nanak spent the last years of his life.

(Press Release) Indian and Pakistani officials on Wednesday reached an understanding on the visa-free travel of 5,000 Indian pilgrims every day to Darbar Sahib gurdwara via the Kartarpur Corridor but were unable to finalise a draft agreement, people familiar with developments said.

The agreement could not be

finalised because of "certain differences on a few key issues", said a person who declined to be named.

Pakistan insisted on charging a service fee for pilgrims visiting the gurdwara in Kartarpur, which was not "agreeable in the spirit of smooth and easy access through the corridor", the person said.

2 killed in third Taliban attack on Afghan provincial capital

This week's spike in violence, including two shattering Taliban car bombings in the capital, Kabul, comes after US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad said he and the insurgents had reached a deal "in principle" that would begin a US troop pullout in exchange for Taliban counterterror guarantees.



(Press Release) The Taliban attacked a third provincial capital in Afghanistan in less than a week, killing at least two civilians, an official said Friday as a US envoy was back in Qatar for unexpected talks on a US-Taliban deal he had described as complete just days earlier. Farah provincial governor Mohammad Shoaib Sabet told The Associated Press that another 15 people were wounded in the latest attack, citing local hospitals, and that airstrikes had been carried out against the militant group. Small clashes continued in the city, he said.

This week's spike in violence, including two shattering Taliban car bombings in the capital, Kabul, comes after U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad said he and the insurgents had reached a deal "in principle" that would begin a U.S. troop pullout in exchange for Taliban counterterror guarantees.

Khalilzad abruptly returned to Qatar, where the Taliban have a political office, from Kabul for more talks Thursday evening, even though earlier in the week he said the deal only needed President Donald Trump's approval to be final.

Objections to the agreement raised by the Afghan government and several former US ambassadors to Afghanistan, and the death of a U.S. service member in the latest Kabul bombing on Thursday, have increased pressure on Khalilzad in recent days. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel has demanded that the envoy testify before the House committee about the negotiations, saying that "I do not consider your testimony at this hearing optional." The Taliban have explained their surge in deadly attacks — including on the capitals of northern Kunduz and Baghlan provinces last weekend — as necessary to give them a stronger negotiating position in talks with the U.S., a stance that has appalled Afghans and others as scores of civilians are killed. One Farah resident, Shams Noorzai, said the Taliban on Friday had seized an army recruitment center close to the city's main police headquarters and set it on fire. All shops had closed, he said, and some people were trying to flee. It was at least the third time the Taliban have attacked the city, the capital of Farah province, in the past four years.

Pakistan most dangerous country to deal with, says former US defence secretary

Former US Defence Secretary James Mattis said Pakistan is "the most dangerous country" he had to deal with.



(Press Release) Former US Defence Secretary James Mattis has called Pakistan "the most dangerous country" he had to deal with. Mattis made these comments in his latest book titled -- 'Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead.' Mattis also said that the country views all geopolitics through the "prism of its hostility

toward India." The 68-year-old military veteran had served as United States Defense Secretary from January 2017 to December 2018. In December last year, Mattis had tendered his resignation to Trump, after he announced that he would withdraw all US troops stationed in Syria, claiming that the ISIS terror group was defeated.

Walmart CEO's decision on guns is the kind of corporate courage we need

Corporate courage is in short supply. CEOs generally avoid controversial public issues lest disgruntled groups strike back. That's why Walmart's actions to limit ammunition sales and advocate for new gun safety legislation mark a significant milestone. CEO Doug McMillon's leadership heralds a new era of CEO courage in which the private sector takes responsibility for issues that elected officials are ducking.

Exercising courage isn't taking random action in response to a momentary crisis. Effectiveness requires a clear mission and strategy. Courage involves sacrifice for a greater good (e.g. being willing to take a short-term sales hit from the absence of a profitable item) in an effort to support social responsibility over the long term. CVS Health CEO Larry Merlo led the company to remove tobacco sales from its retail stores and offer smoking cessation products and services as part of a long-term transformation into a health care company.

For Walmart, no one knows how phasing out ammunition will affect its bottom line. Walmart is playing a longer game, apparently betting on more growth online and in suburban and urban areas. Loss of short-term sales could be offset by additional attention from Millennials, who say that they want their purchases to reflect their values, including sustainability and safe communities. McMillon's actions bring Walmart into greater alignment with this population. And employees, too, increasingly want to work at a place that reflects their values, pays them a fair wage and is safe. Leaders can't undertake significant change impulsively, addressing contentious issues with guns blazing (so to speak). Even when courageously addressing a big issue, they must keep the temperature down and the situation contained. Walmart's tone from the top has been respectful. McMillon stressed that he is a gun owner, implying that he understands the needs of gun rights advocates. He implied that Walmart is not "anti" anything; the company is "for" safety and preventing misunderstandings that produce tragedies. No ideology — just pragmatism

about safety. Something that is legal and loved can still require caution: It's like parents who love football signing up their kids for soccer instead to reduce risk of concussions. Courage is not foolhardiness; it is a matter of deliberation and judgment. Courageous leaders want to see all the nuances in a situation so that they can keep risks in perspective before taking them. Walmart wisely took a month after the mass shooting in its El Paso store before announcing changes. Companies must know the limits of what they can do without jeopardizing other activities and people. It's often one small but well-chosen step at a time.

Walmart's goal is to solve the wider national gun violence problem, not just protect its own territory. It takes courage to be among the first, but going first doesn't mean going it alone. Allies are critical to creating lasting change. Walmart's decision to ask customers in open carry states to not carry weapons openly in Walmart stores gave Kroger and CVS the impetus to do the same. McMillon also indicated willingness to work with the White House and Congress on legislation. Regardless of how powerful a giant corporation might be, it takes a cross-sector, multi-stakeholder coalition to tackle messy, recalcitrant problems.

Some will say McMillon is not very courageous and not doing enough. After all, Walmart was already on this path by refusing to sell assault weapons, and the company will still sell hunting rifles. Others with an opposing view will call the actions cowardly — caving into temporary pressure from mass shootings.

But my experience with change on big issues shows that small steps can produce big impact. Now that the Business Roundtable has defined corporate purpose as encompassing social responsibility as well as shareholder value, Walmart's courage serves as an example for other CEOs, whether their concerns are guns, health or sustainability.

The Vladivostok meet helps old friends adjust to new realities

In attending the Eastern Economic Forum, Narendra Modi will become the first Indian prime minister to visit Vladivostok, capital of Russia's Far East. More importantly this visit to the Pacific coast will signal a reset of India's relationship with Russia. Despite continuing photo ops of bonhomie, New Delhi and Moscow need to find a new foundation for their relationship. The previous pillars are increasingly irrelevant to India's new requirements and changing interests. Russia remains India's number one supplier of defence equipment, but its provision of similar equipment to China and its weakness in network-centric technologies has meant India's cutting edge weaponry comes largely from elsewhere.

The two countries have points of divergence on geopolitical issues like the Taliban negotiations in Afghanistan and, more crucially, how they perceive the rise of China and their overall attitudes towards the United States. For example, Moscow has expressed concerns about the strategic underpinnings of the "Indo-Pacific" and opposes any construct that seeks to contain China. Mr Modi will seek to allay such concerns when he meets President Vladimir Putin. Nonetheless, there is a residue of goodwill that it would be criminal for India to waste. Russia remains a great power, even if much reduced, and recently showed its utility in the diplomatic tussle with Pakistan over

Kashmir.

The focus of the 21st century Indo-Russian relationship will increasingly be energy. The Russian purchase of Essar Oil has given it a \$13 billion footprint in the Indian energy sector. The greater opportunity is Russia's need for an external investor in its oil, gas and coal assets at a time of Western sanctions and concerns about Chinese dominance. Indian petrochemical firms have already invested \$7 billion in Russia. Mr Modi's visit will launch a "Far East Energy Corridor" in which India will invest in a new cluster of Siberian oil and gas fields. This will help diversify Indian energy sources away from the unstable Persian Gulf. Indian firms will for the first time be allowed to invest in coking coal assets. Coking coal, a finer version of coal used in steel production, has become a major import of India as its manufacturing sector expands. New Delhi should eventually expand its new Russia relationship to include other mineral resources given the continuing difficulty of opening new mines at home.

Relations with Russia can never be comparable to what India had with the Soviet Union. The latter was a superpower and the former is not. But Vladivostok will help rebalance a relationship that needed to adjust to new realities even while drawing on old friendships.



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Why Pakistan's war rhetoric matters

Soviet writer Leon Trotsky had said: "You may not be interested in war but war is interested in you". All dictums may not necessarily be true, but the lessons contained in them are always useful. I recalled this dialogue because Pakistan's fascination with war has once again become more visible and high decibel. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan even went on to threaten nuclear war the first time being in parliament. The next episode was when United States President Donald Trump, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said that Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan. Khan, once again, lost his cool. In his address to the nation, he once again mentioned the threat of a nuclear war, and warned that the world will have to suffer its consequences. On Monday, Khan reportedly said that Pakistan will not use nuclear weapons first, but the earlier rhetoric

cannot be wished away. Last week, he berated the United Nations for remaining quiet on the issue of atrocities against Muslims. His motivation is clear. He did not get any support from the Muslim countries on the Kashmir issue, and this is his way of challenging them and questioning their pride. No matter how much bravado Khan engages in, the reality is that he is a weak PM. He did not get a majority in the elections. Rawalpindi's military establishment used every possible trick in the book to get the parliamentary math in favour of Khan. And he, in turn, showed his gratitude by extending the tenure of army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa for three more years. Such coordination between the army and administration was seen after a long time in Pakistan. The bitter-sweet relationship between the previous PM Nawaz Sharif and the army is well known. MA Jinnah might have

succeeded in creating a country on religious grounds, but this nation was not been able to keep itself united for 25 years. With the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971, Jinnah's dream was rendered meaningless. While the leaders, journalists and so-called scholars continue to vouch for Muslim fraternity, the truth is that the Inter-Services Intelligence has been responsible for separatist activities in Iran and Afghanistan.

The Pakistani military has trained mercenary fighters with the purpose of creating unrest and fomenting violence in neighbouring countries. But this has harmed Pakistan itself. Such elements have fuelled religious frenzy, stifled progressive and liberal ideas, and became so powerful that at times they have even challenged the military establishment in Rawalpindi.

When General Pervez Musharraf tried to curb them, a conspiracy was

hatched to blow him up. He had a narrow escape in the attack near Rawalpindi.

These double standards, which characterise Pakistan's democracy, has made it hollow from within. In the early 1980s, the nation's per capita income was higher than that of India. But its economy began sliding down, thanks to its attempts to fight proxy wars with its neighbours. Like India, Pakistan also has a young population. But about one-third of the children don't get any kind of formal education, and about 25% of the people live below the poverty line. This is the main reason why people are turning to the business of terror there, and the State finds willing recruits for terror activities. The circumstances in India are quite the opposite. India has not only progressed internally, but has also proved its worth on the global stage. Research con-



ducted in the US in 2014-2015 revealed that people of Indian-origin constituted only 1% of the population there. But while 28% of American youth were graduates, 67% of youth of Indian origin were able to graduate or get higher educational qualifications. It also had a positive impact on the individual's income. According to the findings, the average income of an American was \$50,000, while people of Indian origin were earning \$90,000 on an average. Former diplomat Strobe Talbot did not say without reason that India is not just a regional, but a world power.

Ideally, Pakistan should have taken a lesson or two from India and Indians, but the India-obsessed generals there opted for quite the opposite.

This month, 74 four years have passed since World War II. People right from the time of World War I were not interested in war but the war was absolutely interested in them. Long before the first shot is fired on the battle ground, the war starts in the minds of the political rulers. We must be watchful of the fulminations of our neighbour. It has already imposed four wars on us.

Shashi Shekhar

Bank Mergers No Silver Bullet, Gains May Take Years To Show

The announcement Friday of 5% GDP growth in the June quarter showed the economy growing at its weakest pace in six years. On Sunday, the top six carmakers reported a 29% drop in August sales, stoking fears that the slowdown could get still worse. The Rs. 98,200 crore (\$13.7 billion) collected in August via the goods and services tax, the main tax on consumption, was the smallest in six months.

This adds pressure on the central bank — both to cut its policy rate and to ensure that commercial lenders pass them on to borrowers. To the extent that the more inefficient state-run banks are a drag on credit, New Delhi said Friday that as many as 10 of them will be merged into four. Whether folding one weak bank into another will make the combined entity any stronger remains to be seen. What's clearer is that these lenders will spend the next six months on integration. Putting their bal-

ance sheets to work may take a backseat. Pending consolidation, the lenders might also be hesitant to issue new bank guarantees, especially to private-sector bidders for road projects. Thus, one of the few areas where there's new investment may be affected, especially with a sharp rise in debt levels of the government agency that gives out the contracts.

A hefty injection of Rs. 55,250 crore of taxpayers' money into the merged banks will only help them provide for the bad loans that will get lumped together. Capital for growth remains elusive. State Bank of India, the largest lender, will require Rs. 15,000 crore in the current fiscal year, according to ICRA Ltd., an affiliate of Moody's Investors Service.

The benefits will only be evident in a few years. The new round of consolidation will bring down the number of state-run banks to 12 from 27 just a few years ago. These lenders

will have no choice but to become more competitive because they'll have to price consumer loans by linking them to the central bank's policy rate. Since they aren't very good at lending against cash flows, the government wants them to originate loans together with non-bank financiers. Currently, even the shadow banks are stressed. Over time, though, this should help boost the underwriting standards of state-controlled lenders. Credit flows to smaller firms, which supply goods and services to larger companies, will improve.

Making the most of vendor finance will require plugging India into global supply chains first. By offering the likes of Apple Inc. and Ikea less restrictive access to its billion-plus population, New Delhi is hoping for long-term sourcing wins from the rapidly deteriorating trade relations between Washington and Beijing.

But while taking much-neglected steps to posi-

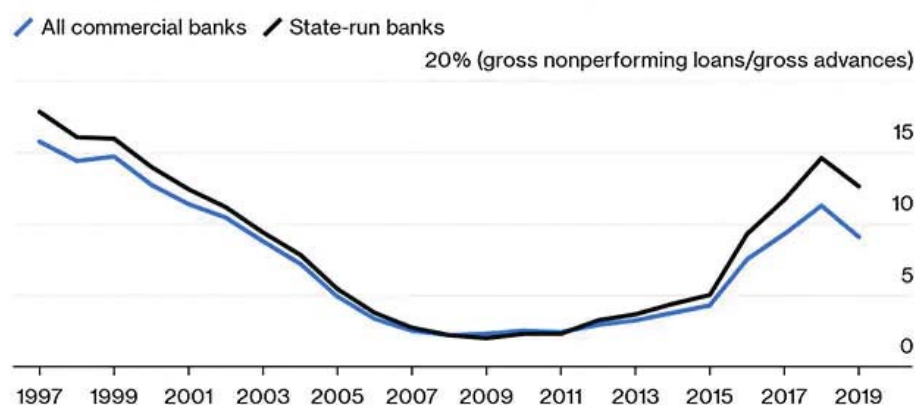
tion India as an alternative to China is a welcome move, the gains won't be immediate. Before committing to a new factory in India to both sell locally and to export, investors will want to see steadier final demand in the domestic economy. Maruti Suzuki Ltd., the nation's biggest carmaker, is struggling to push out 100,000 cars in a month to dealers ahead of the festival season. That isn't exactly a great advertisement to dangle before new entrants.

Good things will come from all the tinkering — just a not now. Weakening global growth means India that was used by tax authorities to harass them to export its way out with impunity, is a good of trouble. This isn't the move.

Admitting that there are design flaws in the next China. A hawkish Washington won't want to see mercantile strategies being deployed by yet another large labor-surplus nation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's best hope will be to use the crisis to mend his government's evident, even as the pain gets visibly worse.

Cycle Turning?

The biggest buildup in India's bad loans since the 1997 Asian crisis may get worse as lenders restructure their exposure to shadow banks



Source: Reserve Bank of India

BloombergOpinion

Kashmir - Heaven on Earth

Only If You Remember Louisiana and Alaska

Once upon a time, far, far away was a magical Kingdom lovingly ruled by a great Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh, with happy Muslim-Majority citizens. The Kingdom was deemed by many as heaven on earth; and it was vast, as it encompassed Jammu & Kashmir, Ladkha, and Northern Areas. Then Mahatma Gandhi won his battle to free "India," a collection of princely states that had not been aggregated for several hundred years before the British Raj; days of the Hindu King or Emperor controlling vast amount of land spanning a continent or more, was many, many centuries ago.

It is often said, be careful what you wish for. 1947 came and none were ready. Nation building requires special care; not malpractice by having way too many obstetricians delivering twins at-the-same-time. Long sought out and yearned-for Freedom, as a result, became a chapter of Human Suffering entitled, The Partition. Ouch. Estimates say that as many as ten to twenty (10-20) million people died, were killed, butchered or fried-to-death. Records were not kept for an accurate number. A colossal number of Refugees were created, unlike anything seen before; bigger in number than when Moses took the Israelites out of Egypt. The soil was soaked in blood. And, worse of all, previously citizens of every faith - Jewish, Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Sikhs - who had lived happily together, unless Divide & Rule was practiced, were fearful and angry. Both emotions stoked and stroked by miscreants who sought to enslave them by both fear, and worse, anger. That was then.



The great Ali Jinnah insisted upon creating a secular state of Pakistan, and "Pak" means pure. The great Pandit Nehru, whose family was from the Kashmir Pandits, promised India to have a tryst with destiny to reach American Exceptionalism-type success. Today, Pakistan has abandoned Jinnah's secularism, and India's Freedoms - which find their roots in the Indian experience several thousand years old - before Thomas Jefferson - but relied upon the American Constitution and Bill of Rights to craft India's Constitution.

10 weeks after the flames of 1947 Independence burnt and shook the human soul, Maharaja Hari Singh signed his deed of Accession in favor of India - essentially a Lot-Merger instrument (between nations), which real estate developer use when developing multiple lots as one. We - thanks to POTUS Thomas Jefferson - for \$15 million bought Louisiana in 1803 from Napoleon. Folks living in Louisiana had the choice of staying or leaving, but couldn't revoke the American purchase and inclusion into

our sovereignty. In 1867 we bought Alaska from the Czar of Russia for 7.2 Million. and again, the citizens of Alaska had the same choice to accept or leave, but couldn't revoke American Sovereignty to include Alaska.

In violation of clear law, opportunists who didn't own J&K, Ladakh and Northern Areas got involved to make trouble, or wanted it to become part of Pakistan merely because it was Muslim-majority in Jinnah's secular nation. Lord Louis Mountbatten played a "Kissinger," but not well. Ali Jinnah - a good and decent man - in clear legal error, but to quell his local politics, wanted India to hold a vote/plebiscite. Mountbatten, incredulously, charmed Pandit Nehru to put it into UNSC's lap, which Nehru did on January 1, 1948. Nobody said - hey, why should I? The very idea that a community would only vote for their own is not a merit-based idea, but promotes racism with the the chains of identity - be it racial or religious. Both, a damnation, and undemocratic to the core.

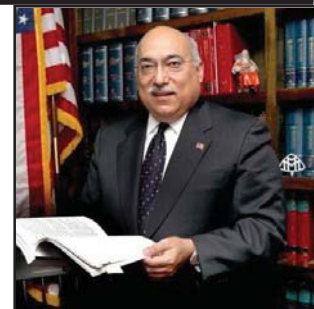
Land was grabbed by Pakistan in a free-for-all

rioting, albeit, Gilgit-Baltistan was maneuvered to Pakistan, in a breach-of-Colonial-fiduciary duty by Major Brown (unless, it was with Mountbatten's knowledge and approval). Pakistan, in turn gave a large chunk - Gilgit-Baltistan (aka GB) - to China via the secret Kashmir Agreement, purportedly signed in 1949, but disclosed in court for the first time in 1990. That GB is a critical part of China's today OBOR. Question: Can you sell or transfer something you merely took possession of, but never acquired legal title to? Well, such legal requirements, binding upon all nations seem to be suspended, given the steady diet of hate.

Wars have been fought between India & Pakistan, and China warring with India took a bunch of her land; and still has it. A de facto border exists - known as the Line of Control - between India and Pakistan. A state of suspended animation existed on the Indian side of the LOC. Along came Modi, who understood that Sardar Patel was a better lawyer and nation-builder

than he is credited. On August 5, 2019, 73 years late, Narendra Modi, in compliance with India's Constitution, as lawfully amended, removed the semi-autonomous status from J&K, and split the area into Union Territories, including, by freeing Ladakh. That Modi did this lawfully is beyond question. What ails us all is the issue of Human Rights.

Why Modi did this in the first place, is rooted in the clear need and desire to rid the Sub-Continent of Terror; cross-border Terror, and domestically Fermented Terror. As a New Yorker, who has tasted the 9/11 WTC "dust," I know that eradicating Terror globally is our - American - Job #1. That includes, not allowing a deranged "mental patient" to commit a sacrilegious act of a "Mosque Massacre" in Christchurch (New Zealand) ever again. And, it surely means not permitting Billionaires, who made loads of money within democratic and freedom-of-religion societies, as in Sri Lanka, to start a Holy War on Easter Sunday! The first act was horrible and deranged;



Ravi Batra

the Holy War was calculated by brilliantly successful and well-loved Muslims in Buddhist-Majority Sri Lanka.

To address the burning need of Liberal-Lunatics - who fight for Human Rights of Terrorists: that's okay for the courts, whose job it is to fashion justice one person at a time. Nations' leaders have to provide Public Safety for all. None other than Abraham Lincoln suspended the Courts during our great Civil War - fought to cure our Original sin of fractional-humans, in a land that cherishes Equality, and Freedoms. So, Prime Minister Modi is spot on - and deserves a lot of credit as he put sufficient troops on the ground to prevent Terrorists from doing their worst, and he imposed Public Safety first, and will restore Law & Order. Once, that is done anyone who claims a Human Rights violation will have the courts ready to remedy and punish. That, is the proper sequence of rights and freedoms. We, in America, know that to be a "self-evident" Truth. What Pandit Nehru wished with his "Tryst with Destiny" on the Midnight hour on August 15, 1947 at the banks of the River Ravi, Narendra Modi has delivered with his pledge of being "Indivisible Allies" to the Joint Address to Congress, and restoring the benefits of legal liberty and freedoms, in "full measure" as Abarham Lincoln acknowledged at Gettysburg. Its time for Terror to die and disappear, and leave us all alone to face the fruits of our labor, under law. God bless America, and every nation that dares to follow us to be that "Shining City on the Hill." Kashmir is well positioned.

(Author is a noted New York Attorney and Chair, National Advisory Council for South Asian Affairs)



By Yamini Aiyar

The controversy unfolding in Assam over the National Register of Citizens (NRC), published on August 31, has brought to the fore important fault lines in the construction of citizenship in contemporary India.

In particular, it places the spotlight on the role of key institutional actors – the bureaucracy and judiciary – in adjudicating citizenship. Crucially, the implementation of the NRC is illustrative of the ways in which the politics of religion has increasingly begun to intersect with institutional processes to shape understandings of who is a “legal” citizen. Against the backdrop of growing calls for a nationwide NRC, and the pending amendments to the citizenship law, Assam’s present quagmire could extend to many parts of the country. Its consequences on the making and remaking of citizenship in India are significant, and thus need careful interrogation.

Writing in these pages, when the draft NRC was published last August, I pointed to the central role played by bureaucratic procedures and documents in determining citizenship through the NRC. To be included in the NRC, the onus lay on Assamese residents to furnish official documents in their possession as proof of citizenship on or before 1971, leaving it to the powers of the State to certify their authenticity. But a combination of bureaucratic failure and vulnerability to corruption, typical of how bureaucracy operates in India, has made this an arbitrary and disempowering process.

Reportage from Assam on the NRC process brought out the many quality gaps in the government’s own documents – misspelt

names, differences in dates and names recorded across documents belonging to the same individual, and data entry errors were all too frequent. This poor quality documentation, coupled with rampant corruption, which makes the purchase of fake documents easy, resulted in the government viewing its own documents with deep suspicion and forcing it to search for means to verify and authenticate its own paperwork. The bureaucracy’s suspicion (and resultant mishandling) of its own documents paved the way for arbitrary judicial intervention. Throughout the process of the NRC, the Supreme Court intervened regularly on what ought to have been routine decisions made by those with

a ground-level understanding of bureaucratic procedures. Instead, the courts busied themselves often passing conflicting orders on details, including the types and numbers of documents that could be furnished by applicants to prove their citizenship claims, creating chaos on the ground.

The human costs of this suspicion have been significant. Applicants have had to go through multiple forms of verification, being asked to submit new documents – including claims, objections and corrections – and have also had to appear for hearings at the very last minute. The irony is that, under the NRC, the government simply converted its own documentary failures into an instrument

Kulbhushan Jadhav’s quest for justice

India’s challenge now is in getting Pakistan to review his conviction and sentence.

Kulbhushan Jadhav is part of an unfortunate group of people whose fate is tied to the overall India-Pakistan relationship, currently passing through one of its worst phases. More than three years after he was arrested on unsubstantiated charges of involvement in espionage and subversive activities, Pakistan provided consular access to Mr Jadhav on Monday. This was not due to some largesse on the part of Pakistani authorities, but more because of a verdict in July from the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The ICJ upheld India’s argument that Pakistan had violated Mr Jadhav’s rights under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations; continued its stay of the death sentence given to the former Indian Navy officer by a Pakistani military court; and called for a review of his conviction. However, the consular access came with con-

ditions – Pakistani officials were present during an Indian diplomat’s meeting with Mr Jadhav and the discussions were re-



corded.

That the consular access was granted is a reflection of some diplomatic channels remaining open for essential contacts between India and Pakistan. Islamabad has gone into overdrive to internationalise the Kashmir issue, after the Indian government scrapped Jammu and Kashmir’s

special status last month, and has repeatedly talked about the move even triggering a war. The two sides have acted in fits and spurts

to address the problems of prisoners in each other’s jails but those accused of spying by Pakistan have never had it easy. The case of Sarabjit Singh, who died after being brutally assaulted in a Lahore jail in 2013, is testament to this. The Indian government has already made it clear that Mr Jadhav, during the meeting with the

Remaking the idea of an Indian citizen

The Constitution promises religion-neutral citizenship. NRC and its fallout could upend that

of coercion. The very fact that the number of applicants excluded from the NRC dropped from four million in August 2018 to 1.96 million one year later, after a new round of verification, is evidence of how poor the quality of government documentation is in the first place, and how arbitrary and disempowering the process of authentication can be.

But beyond bureaucratic failure, the communal overtones, visible throughout the NRC process and that are now shaping political responses to the final list, have made explicit the role of religious identity in mediating citizenship. As is well known, the roots of the NRC lie in anxieties over Assamese ethnic identity and culture. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) overlaid on to this its own construction of religious identity, on the assumption that the majority of those excluded from the NRC would be Bengali-Muslims. This was the sentiment behind much of the 2019 election campaign rhetoric and the repeated

references to “infiltrators” and “termites”. Once it became clear, however, that many on the list, by some estimates more than half, may be Bengali Hindus, the BJP got caught in a bind. And in this debate, the documentary failures of the bureaucracy have proved to be an unexpectedly powerful political tool. “Suspicious” documents formed the basis of the political demand to review the NRC. Assam’s finance minister, Himanta Biswas Sarma, has gone on record with the claim that legacy papers have been “managed”, rendering the process of updating the NRC ineffective.

The lesson from the NRC is this: Where bureaucratic failure is rife, citizenship mediated through documents can serve as a powerful instrument of State coercion and legitimised exclusion. For the moment, even those whose names featured on the NRC remain vulnerable, if the demand for re-verification finds acceptance.

Finally, the flawed NRC process has provided the political fuel to accelerate

the demand for enacting the citizenship amendment bill. The consequences of this on the constitutional idea of citizenship are significant, indeed definitive. As professor Niraja Jayal has shown in her work on the idea of Indian citizenship, the constitutional promise of a religion-neutral, inclusive citizenship has long sat in tension with the politics of religion, which has tended to frame the construction and experience of citizenship in its everyday sense through laws, rules and governmental action. However, the constitutional aspiration has remained fundamental to the idea of citizenship, and served as a check against the majoritarian instincts of the politics of religion. The Citizenship Amendment Bill will permanently upend this promise, and in doing so, fundamentally remake citizenship in India, with dangerous consequences. With the publication of the NRC, over 1.9 million Assamese residents face an uncertain future. So too does the constitutional idea of who is Indian.

Indian diplomat on Monday, was “under extreme pressure to parrot a false narrative to bolster Pakistan’s untenable claims”. In other words, questions remain about the conditions of Mr Jadhav’s captivity.

India must now take the next step of asking Pakistan to deliver on the ICJ’s order for an effective review and reconsideration of Mr Jadhav’s conviction and sentence. Pakistan’s military courts are not known for their transparency, and questions abound about Mr Jadhav’s secret trial and the status of his mercy petition sent to the Pakistan army chief. It is also unclear whether the review of Mr Jadhav’s case, in line with the ICJ’s order, will be done by a military or a civilian court, but New Delhi clearly has a tough task on its hands if it is to deliver on its pledge to continue working to see that Mr Jadhav receives justice and returns home safely.

India has adopted a coloniser's approach to tribal populations

The proper implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights Act) of 2006 is an opportunity for India to demonstrate a model of conservation where historic missteps are addressed while being strategic about our commitment to climate and biodiversity action.

By **Smitha Rao**

The Supreme Court of India's ruling in February ordering the eviction of forest dwellers and tribes from India's forests was based on petitions that deem these communities encroachers. They blame the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights Act) of 2006 for the denudation of forests. The charge largely paints entire communities with the same brush, hardly paying any nuanced attention. Backed by some Indian conservationists, these petitions ignore historic injustices and remove the agency of forest-dwelling and tribal communities over their traditional lands and forest management practices. They also miss a crucial opportunity of indigenising the conservation movement in India.

The idea of conservation as we know it is a Euro-American conception of the ideal "natural". It lays down rules on the forms of interaction with nature that are acceptable, even noble. Anything outside that for-

mulation harms the idea of the pristine wild. Pitted against this is usually the paradigm of runaway development.

In this scramble, the ones that often get dismissed are indigenous groups and forest dwellers who have lived in and around forests and have helped maintain these resources for centuries. The counter from the development lobby is typically about this being a step towards the betterment of these communities. The conservationist argument is usually about harmful ecological practices among these communities that lead to deforestation and loss of biodiversity. Both views believe that the forest is the "other", something to be used or preserved.

While it is true that human activity has resulted in unprecedented environmental destruction as well as the extinction of species, there is also evidence of alternative paradigms where community-led forest conservation initiatives have been successful in preventing the over-exploitation of natural

resources.

A 2019 study in the journal *Environmental Science and Policy* by Richard Schuster at the University of British Columbia and colleagues investigated habitat loss owing to environmental degradation and the resultant losses in biodiversity across three countries - Canada, Brazil, and Australia.

They found that land managed by indigenous populations and existing protected areas had similar levels of vertebrate biodiversity across the study areas. The study suggested that there were complementary benefits that both protected lands as well as indigenous lands provided. Synergistic and collaborative spaces can be created to co-manage these lands with the explicit purpose of addressing historic wrongs as well as meeting conservation goals.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority's nod to securing local and indigenous participation in the goal of tiger conservation is a case in point.

The 2007 UN declaration on the rights of indigenous people lay down the need for pre-consent of indigenous tribes and communities on what takes place in their territories. India was a signatory to this declaration. However, we signed with the caveat that "the right to self-determination applied only to peoples under foreign domination". India has after all, adopted a coloniser's approach to our tribal and rural populations. The removal of these groups is usually the first step in removing roadblocks from the state's goal of ad-hoc development that rarely benefits the affected communities.

Often conservationists precipitate action against these communities. Their ideal of the pristine, protected area free of human incursions is but a product of the same colonial mindset, one that author Dina Gilio Whitaker calls to attention in her book *As Long As Grass Grows*, where she documents the fight for indigenous environmental justice in North America. The early conser-



vationists in the US, swung between fetishisation of the Native Americans' "oneness with nature" to the inability of these communities to manage their lands effectively; a version of that exists in India.

Securing the rights of the indigenous and forest dwelling communities, particularly women in these groups, is critical to conserving biodiversity, as well as initiating scalable climate solutions. The response from the Indigenous peoples and local communities collective to the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report on climate change and land was a little tongue and cheek, but pertinent: "Finally, the world's top scientists recognise what we have al-

ways known." Protected natural areas sans human communities is based on a western, Euro-American worldview of what constitutes the natural and has had negative impacts on indigenous communities around the world. This is an opportunity for India to demonstrate a model of conservation where historic missteps are addressed while being strategic about our commitment to climate and biodiversity action. Successful stewardship programmes have seen State and non-State collaborations with traditional forest dwellers in different parts of the world, including in India. This is yet another chance to re-imagine a collective, inclusive environmental future.



Since parliamentary sovereignty is one of the four foundational principles of the United Kingdom's constitution, the Boris Johnson government's decision to prorogue parliament earlier than scheduled against the deeply divisive Brexit backdrop has understandably caused many to reach for superlatives. 'Constitutional outrage', 'affront' and 'as-

sault' are the charitable ones deployed by the prime minister's own party MPs and rivals to describe it. This is a crucial week and time has never been more of the essence, since the Brexit deadline of October 31 is barely eight weeks away. Held up as the 'mother of all parliaments', many capitals are watching how Westminster deals with the legally correct but po-

litically expedient measure. Not that there were no warnings of such tidings to come when Mr Johnson entered Downing Street in July, given his colourful past, politically and otherwise. Like his friend across the pond and elsewhere, Mr Johnson also symbolises the rise of nationalist forces and its implications in various areas of life. But at least for now, Brexit supporters'

Boris Johnson's high stakes Brexit gamble

Instead of sticking to the October 31 Brexit deadline, UK should go for a mid-term poll

encomiums have been drowned by millions making their views against the prorogation known through petitions, protests and the opposition's plans in parliament. As a ballast, the British constitution established over centuries of struggle against the monarchy has managed various crises, but rarely has the country been so divided and the discourse so toxic as on Brexit. The constitution will again be put to the test, but the situation now is more political than legal to be thrashed out in courts.

There are strong arguments on both sides of the Brexit divide, but the key issue now is whether Mr

Johnson presides over the UK leaving the EU with or without an agreement with Brussels. A no-deal Brexit is widely recognised as an act of grave self-harm, since it will abruptly cut ties, rules, regulations, trade and exports forged over decades of EU membership and which govern every aspect of life. By making leaving the EU the be-all and end-all, with or without an agreement, Mr Johnson has raised the stakes very high. Despite Mr Johnson's claims, the EU has consistently ruled out renegotiating the agreement reached with the Theresa May government: all of which makes for a classic log-

jam that only another mid-term election can resolve. Mr Johnson himself hinted on Monday that it may well be on the cards. It will also allow the British public another say on EU membership, now that they are more aware of untruths mentioned during the 2016 referendum and of the debilitating economic impact of a no-deal Brexit. If asking Brussels to extend Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty and holding another mid-term election (after the one in 2017) is the price of rejuvenating democracy in the world's oldest democracy, so be it. The maxim that a week is a long time in politics may well unfold again in London.

India's nuclear policy not in for a change. Rajnath's comment a ploy to rattle debt-ridden Pakistan

Speaking at an event organised at Pokhran, Rajasthan, on August 16, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh hinted at a change in India's stated policy of 'No First Use' (NFU) on nuclear weapons. "Pokhran is the area which witnessed Atal [Bihari Vajpayee] Ji's firm resolve to make India a nuclear power and yet remain firmly committed to the doctrine of 'No First Use'. India has strictly adhered to this doctrine. What happens in future depends on the circumstances," he tweeted after the event.

Retaliation only

The Indian government's stated position since 1999 till now has been that nuclear weapons are solely for deterrence and India will pursue a policy of "retaliation only".

It also states that India will not be the first to initiate a nuclear strike, but will respond with pu-

nitiv retaliation should deterrence fail. In recent years, there have been several hints of a change in India's policy not to use nuclear weapons unless first attacked by a nuclear-armed adversary.

In 2016, the then-defence minister, Manohar Parrikar, while releasing Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal's book *The New Arthashastra*, commented that the NFU Policy needs rethinking. He later clarified that the statement was a personal one. In 2018, then-Defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in reply to a question in Parliament, said that the government was aware of the growing nuclear capability of Pakistan and is "committed to take all necessary steps to safeguard national security and respond to any threat suitably."

Rajnath Singh's statement should be seen in the context

of recent events in the sub-continent, particularly nuclear sabre-rattling by Pakistan. Our neighbour follows the US Cold War-era nuclear doctrine of the first strike in a deteriorating situation. It has, in recent years, fielded tactical nuclear weapons to blunt an Indian conventional offensive.

"If you want peace, prepare for war" goes the old adage. An ability to fight and go on an offensive dissuades an attack that weakness invites. In the context of nuclear deterrence, it translates into the ability to use nuclear weapons to defend oneself.

Proof of execution

If the defence minister's statements are an indicator of change in intent from 'no first use' to an ability to use weapons what does India stand to gain?

Making a credible threat de-

mands proof of execution. Operation Parakram in 2001 saw a year-long mobilisation by the Indian armed forces fizzle away without significant gain. In sharp contrast, the cross-border airstrikes at Balakot on February 26 this year indicated that India will cross red lines that were previously considered inviolable. So, this statement on NFU is an indication that pre-emptive nuclear punitive action is a possibility in terms of deterrence to any misadventure — the likelihood of an inadvertent trigger to war is high given the circumstances and hype generated.

By saying that one may change the policy, India is not saying that it will use nuclear weapons. It says India 'may or may not', the final decision depends on circumstance, which implies that the power of a decision does not hinge on the

first-use by Pakistan.

Message to Pakistan

The initiative to use nuclear weapons is with India and could be pre-emptive — not necessarily as retaliation or revenge, to making it painfully costly and crippling to even think of a misadventure.

India, through its recent statements, wishes to correct misapprehensions that Pakistan may have about our red lines. India aims to convey a threat that may be carried to restrain irrational or impetuous actions. It is calculated to stall momentum before the Pakistani establishment loses control of its own agents to trigger an inadvertent war. We, therefore, pay a lesser price by announcing a change in policy to reduce the risk of war which, otherwise, a weak establishment in Pakistan may be emboldened to take.

Beyond Article 370: A road map for Kashmir's economic development

Accelerate public spending, encourage private investment, and persuade Kashmiris to welcome it



Although the method chosen by the Indian government of removing Article 370 has been unfortunate, seven decades of reality suggest that it did not work, and if anything, was regressive from a development standpoint. Democratic methods, including all-party delegations, interlocutors, and negotiations with Pakistan to stem the tide of militancy in Kashmir, have not worked either. India had two choices: To try something new or let the situation fester indefinitely.

Kashmiris now have an opportunity to turn this moment to their advantage and build a solid economy and infrastructure, but to do so will require a significant change in mindset. This will be challenging. There is, however,

no reason why a place of such natural beauty and rich heritage should continue to be left behind in a connected digital world, where trade and investment are the keys to development.

As someone who grew up in Kashmir, I know firsthand that Kashmiris care about their quality of life and the future of their children. Every year, a family ritual, started by an ancestor in 1836 and now in its 183rd unbroken iteration, takes me back to Kashmir. While there, I typically address hundreds of high school students in Srinagar about how they should think about their future in a world of digital platforms and globalisation. The dialogue is invariably about how they can pursue dreams they are unable

to realise in Kashmir. That is a shame. It needs to change.

Kashmir's special status has created perverse incentives and an impossible climate for business. The protections afforded to Kashmiris under Article 370 have turned out to be regressive, exploited by local politicians for their own ends, and they have inhibited investment and progress. Every Kashmiri has come to know and expect rampant corruption. Courts are inefficient. Officials are often planted in posts by their friends. Local leaders have no creative solutions or initiatives, but play a delicate double game between the terrorists and the central government. What is clear after 70 years is that Kashmir's instabil-

ity and social climate do not benefit anyone except those served by the status quo.

To understand the region's economic shortfall, let us look at Kashmir's GDP of roughly \$18 billion more closely. In comparison, Himachal Pradesh, a similarly agrarian state but with half the population, has a GDP of \$22 billion. Goa has half of Kashmir's GDP with a tenth of the population. According to Pratham, one of the largest NGOs in India devoted to promoting education to underprivileged children in India, Kashmir ranks close to the bottom in India on standard reading and math tests conducted across the country. Addressing the Kashmir question requires two major changes. Kashmiris must be willing to look ahead instead of the rear-view mirror, where they have been played by actors with questionable agendas, and perhaps have made some unfortunate choices themselves. It also requires the central government to convince a people angered by military presence and the current clampdown that a solid economic plan is underway, which will be in their long-term interest. With the lockdown now in its fourth week, this must happen quickly.

What might such a plan look like? Typically, 5% of investment can kick-start an economy if there is a decent "multiplier," meaning that roads and bridges are built properly, actually lead somewhere, and spur other eco-

nomics activity. That is a \$1 billion a year. The government's plan is to allocate roughly \$20 billion per year on infrastructure projects over the next few years. So, 5% of that total on Kashmir would be significant but within the realm of reality. Without public investment and an accompanying reduction of tension, private money is unlikely to follow. How should this money be invested? Broadly speaking, it could be split between infrastructure and services. The former includes roads, bridges, schools, health facilities and municipal services. The latter constitutes courts, systems, banking and government services. Without such essential services, there will be no private investment following public spending.

The biggest unknown at the moment is how Kashmiris will respond to private investment. Some have argued that investment in Kashmir has been limited due to its status as a disputed territory and the security situation. But Kashmiris need to be persuaded that a business approach is in their best interest, even though the manner in which Article 370 has been dismantled is deeply problematic and regrettable. This will not be easy, but if Kashmiris choose, there is no reason Kashmir cannot turn into what the Mughal emperor Jehangir said: "If there is a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here."

Blast at fireworks unit kills 23 in Punjab town

The blast which took place in the afternoon was so powerful that it completely destroyed the firecracker factory and damaged nearby houses as well.



(News Agencies) An explosion ripped through a firecracker factory in a residential neighbourhood in Punjab's Batala town on Wednesday afternoon, killing 23 people and injuring another 27. The blast, which occurred around 3.45pm, also damaged nearby buildings and shattered the windows of residences and commercial establishments in a 200 metre radius. The exact cause of the blast was not immediately known. Local residents said the explosion could be heard across the town, roughly 200 km from state capital Chandigarh. Inspector general Surinderpal Singh Parmar, who confirmed the death toll said the legal status of the factory was under probe. "In initial investigation, it was learnt that a large quantity of explosives lying in the factory," sub-divisional magistrate Balbir Raj Singh said, confirming the timing of the blast. An elderly woman and her grandchild, who were passing close to the disaster spot, were among the dead. This is not the first time an accident has taken place at

the factory. On January 21, 2017, a similar blast had rocked the factory, killing one person and injuring three others. At that time, the administration had ordered the cancellation of the factory's licence.

"It (the blast) was so powerful that I fell unconscious for a long time," said Sahib Singh, who had gone to the factory to buy firecrackers for the 532nd marriage anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev, the

founder of the Sikh faith, popularly known as "Babe Da Viah" which falls on September 5. Punjab minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa reached the accident spot and announced a compensation

of ~2 lakh to the next of kin of the dead and 150,000 for the injured. "Deeply anguished to learn of the loss of lives due to the blast in the firecracker factory in Batala," chief minister Amarinder Singh tweeted.

In Delhi, teen wakes up to find father sitting on bed with throat slit

The victim, Lalit Aggarwal, lived with his wife and two teenage sons on the first floor of their building and ran a jewellery shop from the ground floor.

(News Agencies) A 14-year-old boy woke up to find his father, a jeweller, sitting on his bed with his throat slit at their home in west Delhi's Madhu Vihar near Dwarka in the early hours of Wednesday. The man died before his son could fetch help. Police could not find any clue in the case till late in the day as there were no entry marks of an intruder, said Anto Alphonse, deputy commissioner of police (Dwarka). Alphonse



said the police were yet to speak to the five members of the family who were inside the house at the time of the murder. The victim, Lalit Aggarwal, lived with his wife and two teenage

sons on the first floor of their building and ran a jewellery shop from the ground floor. For the past few days, Aggarwal was joined at home by his mother-in-law and sister-

in-law. Alphonse said prima facie it didn't seem like a robbery case. "Nothing has been missing from the house or the jewellery shop," said the DCP. Aggarwal's 14-year-old son, who studies in class 9 at a private school, told the police in his statement that his father had returned home from work around 11pm on Tuesday. "He told me that he was to leave for Punjab around 4am on Wednesday with his two friends for the registration of a plot of land," said the boy.

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Shivakumar tried to misguide probe, ED to Delhi court; gets 9-day custody

The Karnataka politician, seen as the Congress' lead trouble-shooter in the state, was arrested last evening after four rounds of questioning over the last 10 days.



(News Agencies) A court in New Delhi on Wednesday sent Congress leader DK Shivakumar in Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody until September 13, saying the allegations against him were very serious in nature and required his custodial interrogation. The ED arrested Shivakumar, a former Karnataka minister, on Tuesday citing enough evidence of alleged money laundering arrest him. The ED earlier on Wednesday informed the court that it found "some loose sheets" from Shivakumar's residence mentioning "cash payments of ~44 crore to different persons between 2014 and 2016". While seeking his custody, the agency said Shivakumar has not been truthful and needs to be confronted with voluminous documents to establish alleged money laundering. The ED claimed that Shivakumar was evasive and non-cooperative and there was "phenomenal growth" in his income while he held an important position. Additional solicitor general K M Nataraj and special public prosecutors N K Matta and Nitesh Rana appeared for the ED and argued that Shivakumar's custody was imperative to "unearth the

source of proceeds of crime and modus operandi". The ED argued that Shivakumar is accused of "great economic offence" and has not explained the cash allegedly seized in the case. The agency claimed details of financial transactions and could not named his auditors and refused to acknowledge the recovery of documents from his house mentioning cash transactions. It said that he was also evasive on details of financial transactions and could not furnish the details of his income from agricultural activities. Shivakumar's lawyer, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, argued that his client is not a flight risk. He added that Shivakumar has joined the investigation multiple times and has been interrogated for 33 hours. Singhvi said that the agency ignored this and has straightaway asked for 14-day custody.

Nagaland tightens security to prevent influx of illegal immigrants

The Nagaland government had earlier ordered patrolling to be scaled up at all entry points to the state following the release of the National Register of Citizens in neighbouring Assam. The NRC excluded 1.9 million people from the list.

(News Agencies) Four days after the National Register of Citizens was released in Assam, Nagaland Police is on an alert to prevent "possible influx" of illegal immigrants, a top official said on Wednesday. The government had earlier ordered patrolling to be scaled up at all entry points to the state. Earlier, other states like Meghalaya and Mizoram also tightened security on their borders with Assam after the updated NRC was



released on August 31. Nagaland. On September 2, Abhijit Sinha, Principal Secretary, Home and Political Department, ordered tightening police checks at entry points and check gates "to prevent any possible influx of illegal

immigrants" and said non-locals should not be allowed without any entry pass. Sinha also ordered strict implementation of the inner line permit, which is needed to enter most areas of Nagaland barring its commercial capital Dimapur. "It is a preventive measure post the publication of the NRC. More than 1.9 million people have been left out and we don't want these people to come to Dimapur which is not covered under ILP and other Assam bordering areas," Sinha explained.

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Putin by his side, PM Narendra Modi targets 'outside influence' in internal matters

PM Narendra Modi said India-Russia friendship has benefited the people of both the nations, President Putin agreed that India is one of the key partners of Russia.



(News Agencies) Amid tensions with Pakistan after the repeal of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said India and Russia are both against "outside influence" in internal matters of a nation. PM Modi, in a joint statement with Russian president Vladimir Putin, said that both the countries realise the importance of a multipolar world. "We are working together on many global forums like BRICS and SCO," the Prime Minister said. Moscow has backed India over its move on Article 370 and said the changes are

within the framework of the India's Constitution. Modi and Putin discussed ways to strengthen relations between New Delhi and Moscow in various areas such as trade, defence, space, oil and gas and connectivity. The two sides signed 15 agreements. Russia, PM Modi announced, will help train astronauts for the India's first manned space mission: Gaganyaan. The PM said India-Russia friendship has benefited the people of both the nations. "The India-Russia friendship is not restricted to their respective capital cities. We have put people at the core of this relationship," Modi

added. President Putin agreed that India is one of the key partners of Russia and the relationship between the two states is of "strategic and special privileged nature".

The Russian leader highlighted the energy cooperation between the two nations with a special mention of the Kudankulam nuclear power plant in Tamil Nadu. "We shipped 3.3 million tonnes of oil to India

last year," he said. Kudankulam, Putin said, is the flagship joint project in the India-Russia energy cooperation. "The first two units of Kudankulam are already operational. The work for the third and fourth

unit are going as per schedule," he said. Earlier, Modi had thanked Putin for deciding to award him Russia's highest civilian award and said it was a matter of honour for 1.3 billion Indians.

Jaish chief Masood Azhar, Lashkar's Hafiz Saeed and Dawood Ibrahim designated as terrorists under anti-terror law

(News Agencies) A month after Parliament amended an anti-terror law to enable individuals (as opposed to organisations) to be designated as terrorists, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government on Wednesday declared four of the most wanted men in India as terrorists, arming investigating agencies with additional powers to act against them. The four individuals are Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Maulana Masood Azhar, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) founder Hafiz Muhammed Saeed, LeT commander Zaki-ur-



Rehman Lakhvi, the co-mastermind of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks; and fugitive underworld don Dawood Ibrahim. JeM claimed responsibility for the February 14 Pulwama suicide car bombing that killed 40

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) troopers and brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war. LeT masterminded the 2008 Mumbai attacks that left 166 people dead. Dawood Ibrahim is wanted in connection with the 1993

Mumbai serial blasts that left 257 people dead. The four men are the first to be declared individual terrorists under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019, approved by Parliament. Designating them as individual terrorists gives additional powers to the investigation agencies, particularly the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which can seize properties linked to a terror probe without taking permission from state police. The four have already been designated as global terrorists by the United Nations.

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How serious is India's economic slowdown ?

At the end of last year, India was still the world's fastest growing major economy. It has since surrendered that title back to China, and its slump only appears to be getting worse.

Gross domestic product growth fell to a five-year low of 5.8% in the first quarter of 2019, and economists surveyed by Reuters predict data due Friday will show another drop in the second quarter. India's automotive industry has already shed hundreds of thousands of jobs, and consumer goods companies like Unilever (UL) are reportedly slashing prices because of slowing demand. "It is definitely a slowdown," said Anuradha Saha, a professor of economics at Ashoka University, describing the situation as "grave."

Quick fixes

The government has scrambled to boost the economy. Last week, India unveiled tax breaks for startups, cheaper home and car loans, and an injection of 700 billion rupees (\$9.8 billion) into state-run banks, among other measures.

A few days later, it followed with an announcement that rules on foreign investment would be eased, opening up India's huge coal industry. It also said it would relax local sourcing regulations that have blocked companies like Apple (AAPL) and other global retailers from opening stores.

But those short term solutions may not do enough to address deeper concerns about India's economic health.

"These are what I would call slightly quicker fixes for boosting growth," said Shilan Shah, senior India economist at Capital Economics. Without other changes, they risk a spike in inflation if demand outpaces supply, he added.

One of India's most urgent needs is to reform its labor market, according to Saha of Ashoka University. Changes in labor rules that would make it easier to hire and fire workers — touted since Prime Minister Narendra Modi was first elected in 2014 — have not happened.

Meanwhile, unemployment is at its highest level in decades.

Possibly the government is looking for quick fixes, and [foreign investment] seems like a very quick fix but it's not going to solve the long-term problem," Saha said.

Raiding the reserves: The government this week also got a bit more firepower from India's central bank to fight its economic battle. The Reserve Bank of India, which has cut interest rates four times this year, announced Monday that it would transfer excess reserves of 1.76 trillion rupees (\$24.5 billion) to the government. The decision comes months after the bank's former governor, Urjit Patel, abruptly quit after reportedly pushing back against the government over

using central bank reserves to boost growth. The government replaced Patel within barely 24 hours with Shaktikanta Das, a former finance ministry official, prompting questions about the central bank's autonomy.

Saha, the Ashoka University professor, says more coordination between the central bank and the government is essential to a "well-functioning economy," but all eyes will now be on how the money is used.

"If the slowdown is as serious as we see, asking for the RBI's help is a prudent measure," she said. But the central bank's intervention reignites questions about its independence and whether it could be forced to focus on boosting the government's growth credentials rather than the long term health of India's economy.

"It's a fairly worrying sign, on top of everything else that's been happening," said Shah, the Capital Economics analyst. "It's quite clear that the government has strong-armed the [central bank] into handing over money." While the transfer to the government still leaves the central bank with plenty of capital, it could set a dangerous precedent.

"Once the precedent is set, there's nothing to stop the government from raiding the RBI again and again and again," Shah said.

Top Indian government officials are engaged in a vociferous public debate over the state of the country's economy. Rajiv Kumar, the head of the government's think tank Niti Aayog, recently claimed that the current slowdown was unprecedented in 70 years of independent India and called for immediate policy interventions in specific industries. The Chief Economic Adviser, K Subramanian, disagreed with the idea of industry-specific incentives and argued for structural reforms in land and labour markets. Members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's economic advisory council sound inchoate, resorting to social media and opinion editorials to counter one another.

In essence, the quibble among the members of the economic team of Mr Modi and his government is not about whether India is facing an economic slowdown or not, but about how grave the current economic crisis is.

This is a remarkable reversal in stance of the same group of economists who, until a few months ago, waxed eloquent about how India was the fastest growing economy in the world, generating seven million jobs a year.

To put all this in context, it was less than just two years ago, in November 2017, that the global ratings agency Moody's upgraded India's sovereign ratings - an independent assessment of the creditworthiness of a country - for the first time in 14 years.

Justifying the upgrade, Moody's had then argued that the economy was undergoing dramatic "structural" reforms under Mr Modi. In the two years since, Moody's has downgraded its 2019 GDP growth forecast for India thrice - from 7.5% to 7.4% to 6.8% to 6.2%.

The immediate questions that arise now are: is India's economic condition really that grim and, if yes, how did it deteriorate so rapidly? One of India's most celebrated entrepreneurs, the founder of the largest coffee store chain, Café Coffee Day, recently killed himself, ostensibly due to unmanageable debt, slowing growth and alleged harassment by tax authorities.

The auto industry is expected to shed close to a million direct and indirect jobs due to a decline in vehicle sales. Sales growth of men's inner wear clothing, a key barometer of consumption popularised by former Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan, is negative. Consumption demand that accounts for two-thirds of India's GDP is fast losing steam. To make matters worse, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her first budget recently with some ominous tax proposals that threatened foreign capital flows and dented investor confidence. It sparked criticism and Ms Sitharaman was forced to roll back many of her proposals.

So, it is indeed true that India is facing a sharp economic downturn and severe loss of business confidence.

The alarm over the economic condition is not merely a reflection of a slowdown in GDP growth but also the poor quality of growth. Private sector investment, the mainstay of sustainable growth in any economy, is at a 15-year low. In other words, there is almost no investment in new projects by the private sector. The situation is so bad that many Indian industrialists have complained loudly about the state of the economy, the distrust of the government towards businesses and harassment by tax authorities.

But India's economic slowdown is neither sudden nor a surprise.

Behind the fawning headlines in the press over the past five years about the robustness of India's growth was a vulnerable economy, straddled with massive bad loans in the financial sector, disguised further by a macroeconomic bonanza from low global oil prices. India's largest import is oil and the fortuitous decline in oil prices between 2014 and 2016 added a full percentage point to headline GDP growth, masking the real problems. Confusing luck with skill, the government was callous about fixing the choked financial system. To make matters worse, Mr Modi embarked on a quixotic move in 2016 to withdraw all high-value banknotes from circulation overnight. This effectively removed 85% of all currency notes from the economy.

This move destroyed supply chains

and impacted agriculture, construction and manufacturing that together account for three-quarters of all employment in the country.

Before the economy could recover from the currency ban shock, the government enacted a transition to a new indirect taxation system of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017. The GST rollout wasn't smooth and many small businesses initially struggled to understand it.

Such massive external shocks to the economy, coupled with a reversal in low oil prices, dealt the final blow to the economy. Millions of Indians started to lose their jobs and rural wages remained stagnant. This, in turn, impacted consumption, slowing down the economy sharply.

Not easy. The wobbly state of the economy has also thrown government finances in disarray: tax revenues are much below expectations.

On Monday, the government got a much-needed breather when India's central bank announced a \$24bn (£19bn) one-time payout for the cash-starved government. (This amount is more than the dividend paid by the central bank to the government in all five years of the Congress rule between 2009 and 2014.)

The solutions to the economic crisis are not easy.

Indian industry, fed and fattened with government protection through decades, is once again clamoring for tax cuts and financial incentives. But it is not clear that such benefits will revive private sector investment and domestic consumption immediately.

For all the hype about the Make in India programme, hailed as the harbinger of the country's emergence as a manufacturing power, India's dependence on China for goods has only doubled in the past five years.

India today imports from China the equivalent of 6,000 rupees (\$83; £68) worth of goods for every Indian, which has doubled from 3,000 rupees in 2014.

India's exports have remained stuck at 2011 levels and not grown. So, India is neither making goods for itself nor for the world.

Ornamental tax and other fiscal incentives to specific industries are not suddenly going to make Indian manufacturers competitive and stop India's addiction for affordable Chinese goods. If any, the trade spat between China and the United States only saw countries such as Vietnam and Bangladesh benefit and not India.

More currency or trade tariffs are not the solutions either. The central bank has lowered interest rates and there is some push to lowering the cost of capital for industry. But again, Indian industry will invest more only when demand for goods and services increases. And demand will increase only when wages increase, or there is money

in the hands of people.

So, the only immediate solution for India seems to be to boost consumption through a stimulus given directly to people, in the classical Keynesian mould.

Of course, such a stimulus should be combined with reforms to boost business morale and confidence. In sum, India's economic picture is not pretty.

It is important for India's political leadership to see this not-so-pretty picture and not hide behind rose tinted glasses. Prime Minister Modi has a unique electoral mandate to embark on bold moves to truly transform the economy and pull India out of the woods.

How will Modi handle India's economy ?

Narendra Modi has secured a historic second election victory. Indian stocks and the rupee rose to welcome the news: another parliamentary majority for the BJP party could grant Mr Modi the opportunity to make promised reforms a reality.

But once the euphoria around his emphatic win at the polls has faded, there will remain some tough economic challenges in his in-tray.

What did he do in his first term?

The economic record for Mr Modi's first term in office is mixed.

He initiated some bold reforms, such as a new bankruptcy law, to help tackle a rise bad debts that was putting pressure on the banking sector.

His government reduced red tape, helping move India to 77th in the World Bank's 2019 Doing Business ranking, an improvement from 134th place when he first took office in 2014.

India also became the world's fastest growing economy during that first term.

But his biggest gamble, banning more than three quarters of the rupee notes in circulation in order to battle corruption, misfired and delivered a significant blow to economic growth. Without replacement notes ready in time, India's gigantic informal economy was temporarily crippled - leading to job losses.

The roll out of a new national sales tax didn't go smoothly either. In the long run the new tax is expected to boost economic growth by streamlining a multitude of complicated taxes into a single tax. But in the short term glitches around its introduction had a severe impact on millions of small and medium-sized businesses.

What should we expect in his second term?

As Mr Modi gets his feet back under the desk for his second term, economists like Surjit Bhalla believe that his increased majority will give Mr Modi more freedom to take tough decisions.

"Given the size of the mandate, we can expect bolder reforms during the next five years," says Mr Bhalla, who served on the prime minister's

economic advisory council during Mr Modi's first term.

But the scale of India's problems matches that mandate.

Economic growth slowed to 6.6% in the three months to December 2018, the slowest rate for six quarters.

According to a leaked government report, unemployment touched a 45-year high between 2016 and 2017.

What will he do about jobs?

Experts say that Mr Modi needs to spur flagging private sector investment in order to boost job creation. His flagship Make in India programme, aimed at giving manufacturing a big boost, has yielded mixed results so far.

Ajit Ranade, chief economist of Mumbai-based, Aditya Birla Group, believes that focusing on overseas markets is the key to creating more employment opportunities.

"Exports and manufacturing are intertwined. Unless exports grow the manufacturing sector won't expand," he says.

The new government should focus on labour-intensive sectors like construction, tourism, textiles and agricultural products, he adds.

Can Modi boost growth?

Unlike China, India's economic growth has been driven by domestic consumption over the last fifteen years. But data released over the last few months suggests that consumer spending is slowing.

Sales of cars and SUVs have slumped to a seven-year low. Tractor, motorbike and scooter sales are down. Demand for bank credit has sputtered. Hindustan Unilever has reported slower revenue growth in the most recent quarter. All of these are important benchmarks for measuring consumer appetite.

Mr Modi's party promised in its manifesto that it would cut income tax to ensure more cash and greater purchasing power stayed in the hands of middle-income families.

However, given the current state of government finances, that may not be possible immediately. India's 3.4% budget deficit - the gap between government expenditure and revenue - may restrict Mr Modi's options.

"The widening fiscal deficit is a slow-acting poison," says Mr Ranade. He believes this will hold back medium and long-term growth.

Will he help farmers?

The agrarian crisis was a constant challenge for Mr Modi during his first term. Farmers across the country protested on the streets, demanding higher prices for their crops.

Small-scale farmers have been promised more support, but structural changes to the way the market works might be preferable to measures that will put additional pressure on the government's already stretched budget, argues Ila Patnaik, a former economic advisor to the government of India.

She would like to see the end of the system whereby farmers are required to sell their products to state-owned agencies at a fixed price.

"We need to free up the farmers so that they can sell products to whoever they want. This will also encourage them to move to high value products," she says.

Will Modi push privatization?

One of his headline election pledges was a promise to spend \$1.44 trillion to build roads, railways and other infrastructure. But such an eye-watering sum will have to come from somewhere. Many observers expect privatisation to play a key role.

Mr Modi made slow progress on his pledges to sell off government enterprises in his first term. The government did initiate the process of selling a majority stake in national carrier Air India, but with a tepid response from investors, the plan failed to take off.

Mr Bhalla expects Mr Modi to pursue privatization more aggressively in his second term.

"The next two years is a good time for the government to [speed up] the process of privatization," he argues.

And he believes a willingness to embrace bolder policies could entice more foreign investors to put their money in India.

"During his first term, Mr Modi has shown the appetite to take up tough reforms and he will definitely try to take even bigger risks during his second term," he says.

Now Crisil lowers India's GDP growth forecast to 6.3%, says slowdown deeper than suspected Rating agency Crisil has also downgraded its GDP forecast for India for the 2020 fiscal year from 6.9% to 6.3%.

Crisil has lowered India's growth forecast from 6.9% to 6.3%

At 5%, India reported its slowest GDP growth in 6 years

Crisil said slowdown is deeper and more broad-based than suspected

Domestic rating agency Crisil on Wednesday cut India's GDP growth forecast to 6.3 per cent for fiscal year 2020 from its earlier forecast of 6.9 per cent. This comes after the GDP growth was at its slowest in almost 6 years and grew only at 5 per cent in the first quarter.

The agency has said that lower GDP growth forecast corroborates that India's economic slowdown is deeper and more broad-based than suspected.

In its statement, Crisil has said, "We expect growth to get some lift from the low base effect of 6.3 per cent in the second half of the FY19."

Earlier, Moody's too had revised India's GDP growth forecast for the current year to 6.2 per cent, saying the economy remains sluggish due to a combination of factors such as weak hiring, distress among rural households and tighter financial conditions.

The GDP growth forecast for

2019 calendar year was revised downwards from its previous estimation of 6.8 per cent. The same for 2020 was also lowered by a similar 0.6 percentage points to 6.7 per cent, Moody's said in a statement, a few weeks ago.

GDP growth rate had hit a five-year low of 5.8 per cent in the January-March quarter and the government is slated to announce the first quarter (April-June) growth number on August 30.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) too had earlier this month lowered GDP growth estimate for the current fiscal that began on April 1 to 6.9 per cent from previous estimate of 7 per cent citing demand and investment slowdown.

On the other hand at a press conference on Sunday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman refused to answer questions to acknowledge the economic slowdown facing the country.

The Modi government has come under severe criticism by the Opposition over the low growth rate. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh issued a statement on Sunday saying the current slowdown is a result of the "man-made disasters" caused by the government.

India's stock market hit by slowdown woes

India's stock market performance turned negative in all popular time frame. Either you take five days, a month, three months or a year, the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) delivered a negative return, thanks to deepening slowdown, especially the plunge in the first-quarter Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to 5 per cent.

In contrast, markets such as China and United States have delivered healthy returns. In the last one year, trading data shows that China's Shanghai Composite Index and USA's Dow Jones Industrial Average have delivered 9.36 per cent and 0.59 per cent return respectively.

In August, the market was not so bad, but last Tuesday's blues wiped out all gains of investors. However, after losing 770 points or two per cent on Tuesday, S&P BSE Sensex gained 0.44 per cent to settle at 36,725 on Wednesday.

Indian exchanges have reflected weak investor sentiments in recent days. One of the most significant factors of this is the official GDP data, which indicates that India's economic growth has slowed down to 5 per cent, the weakest in the last 25 quarters or six years.

Market experts said that the big blow to the stock market was weak domestic data. According to the official data, the growth of eight core industries dropped to 2.1 per cent in July due to contraction in coal, crude oil, natural gas and refinery products.

Dr Ravi Singh, research head of Karvy Stock Broking, told India Today, The weakening of rupee added more fuel to the sentiments. Lack of clarity, over-taxation of foreign portfolio investors, continuous foreign institutional investor selling and poor corporate earnings have also contributed to the weak market sentiment.

Despite the recent stimulus, foreign portfolio investments (FPIs) continue in selling mode. Headwinds to FPI flows into India will continue over the near-to-medium term despite the accommodative global monetary policy stance and the central government's efforts to alleviate uncertainty regarding the higher surcharge, Arindam Som, an analyst with India Ratings and Research, said.

As the biggest movers of the stock market, FPIs already have withdrawal of more than Rs 30,000 crore from the stock market between July and August.

Why RBI's surplus corpus transfer raises more questions than it answers



The Reserve Bank of India has decided to transfer Rs 1.76 lakh crore to the government. This will be counted as the government's earning for 2018-19. According to the Revised Estimates in the budget, the total earning of the government was Rs 17.3 lakh crore

for 2018-19 While the Economic Survey -- presented just a day before -- estimated the earning of the government at Rs 15.6 lakh crore There was a mismatch between the two estimates of the government's earning for 2018-19 which was Rs 1.7 lakh crore

Three days after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her maiden Budget on July 5, Rathin Roy, a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC), pointed to an anomaly. There was a mismatch in government's earning for 2018-19 in the two financial documents -- Union budget and the Economic Survey. Writing for the Business Standard, Rathin Roy pointed out that according to the Revised Estimates in the budget, the total earning of the government was Rs 17.3 lakh crore for 2018-19 while the Economic Survey -- presented just a day before -- estimated the earning of the government at Rs 15.6 lakh crore. There was a mismatch

between the two estimates of the government's earning for 2018-19 which was Rs 1.7 lakh crore. The mismatch remained largely unexplained. Experts tended to support the Economic Survey figures as more accurate saying that the Revised Estimates are a projection of how much the government is expected to earn while the survey uses provisional actuals (PA), which are updated figures. In a coincidence, the Reserve Bank of India has decided to transfer an equal amount of surplus corpus to the government. The RBI, based on the Bimal Jalan Committee's recommendation, will transfer a total of Rs 1.76 lakh crore to the government. Of this Rs 28,000 crore has already been paid and the rest Rs 1.48

lakh crore will be transferred to the government coffer by the RBI. A six-member committee headed by former RBI governor Bimal Jalan was formed by the central bank in December last year. The committee was formed to review the Economic Capital Framework of the RBI. The committee's recommendations favored the government's stand on a surplus corpus with the RBI, which had till now resisted the demand for transfer of additional fund. However, the coincidental match of the amount to be transferred by the RBI to the government and anomaly in the government's earning as projected in the budget and the Economic Survey has led to a question: Is this coincidental match only a coincidence?

Intermediaries must be accountable

However, the same frameworks do not seem to apply to these intermediaries operating as media companies. This is all the more so, given the unique operation of the Indian cyberlaw under the Indian Information Technology Act, 2000.

Section 2(1)(w) of the Indian Information Technology Act, 2000 defines an intermediary in broad terms to mean any person who on behalf of another person, receives, stores or transmits that record or provides any service with respect to that record.

This has been defined to include telecom service providers, network service providers, Internet service providers, web hosting service providers, search engines, online payment sites, online auction sites, online market places and cyber cafes. Section 79 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 provides that subject to the intermediary complying with certain requirements, it shall not be liable for any third party data or information made available by it. The conditions to be fulfilled by an intermediary include the following:

- a) It needs to exercise due diligence while discharging obligations under the law;
- b) It needs to comply with the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and rules and regulations made thereunder;
- c) It must not need to conspire or abet in the commission of any offence;
- d) Once called upon to remove or disable access to any content, it must expeditiously do so without vitiating the original electronic evidence.

If these conditions are fulfilled, the intermediary cannot be made liable for third party data. A majority of intermediaries are today hiding behind the judgement of the Supreme Court of India in the case of *Shreya Singhal v/ s Union of India*.

This held that an intermediary will not remove or disable access to any third party data on its network, unless it gets either an order from a court of competent jurisdiction or an order from a governmental agency to that effect. Ever since the *Shreya Singhal* judgment, a majority of intermediaries have chosen to hide behind this pronouncement.

The spread of fake news in the electronic ecosystem is an immense concern for India as a nation. The recent Indian elections saw massive dissemination of fake news. Given the fact that India does not have a fake news law,

Checkmate, Pakistan How India has successfully changed the strategic dynamics over Kashmir

It is indeed ironic that Pakistan's insistence on international intervention in Jammu and Kashmir led to an overwhelming Indian diplomatic victory and an acquiescence, if not a de facto endorsement, of India's change in Articles 370 and 35A — significantly diminishing Pakistan's claim that Jammu and Kashmir is disputed territory.

With nowhere to go diplomatically, Pakistan is stoking terrorism and "using terminology of jihad against and promoting violence in India", said Syed Akbaruddin, India's ambassador at the United Nations.

Pakistan's heated rhetoric was evident in Prime Minister Imran Khan's Independence Day speech to the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir Assembly, describing India's action on Article 35A and Article 370 as "inspired by the ideology of Hitler's Nazi Party" and, in a clear reference to the Holocaust, a "Nazi-like final solution for Kashmiris."

a majority of the intermediaries and media service providers have failed to take effective steps to prevent fake news disseminating on their networks. Clearly, existing legal frameworks on the subject under hand are not adequate.

It needs to be also noted that the government has been given powers under Section 87 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 to come up with rules to regulate the conduct of intermediaries. The government had notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules in 2011 but these rules provided very limited elements of due diligence. Given the fact that today large numbers of intermediaries are emerging as strong media companies, it is time to regulate their legal activities by means of appropriate strong legal frameworks. There is also a need for revisiting Section 79 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 in such a manner that the rights, duties and responsibilities of the intermediaries as media companies need to be well defined.

Further, the kind of requirements that service providers and intermediaries need to perform in the context of protecting and preserving cyber security is another area where appropriate legal frameworks need to be beefed up. The government has been in the process of coming up with some draft guidelines for intermediaries. However, these have not yet been specified. It is time for a fresh look at the issue of intermediary liability.

It is clear that these intermediaries will play a very important role in the electronic ecosystem. The need to transform intermediaries from being mute spectators into legal entities, complying with the applicable law prevailing for the time being is an urgent necessity. Since a number of these intermediaries are often not located in India, many are complying with the Indian cyber law more in breach rather than in observance. Intermediaries located outside India must be compelled to comply with applicable Indian cyber laws, so long as their services are made available on computers, computers systems and networks located in India. All eyes will now be on the government as to how it deals with the issue of intermediary liability and how it strengthens the rights of users and provides a substantial harmonious balance, in the context of media and electronic ecosystem stakeholders at large.

The Nazi analogies, along with Imran Khan's false assertions of an imminent Indian attack on Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, are meant to instigate violence and provide justification for future attacks on India by Pakistan-based terrorists.

Like its failed diplomatic initiatives, Pakistan has few military or paramilitary options — most of which will backfire. There are numerous reports of Pakistani terrorists massing along the Line of Control (LoC) and concomitant infiltration attempts, with Pakistani troops providing support and covering fire. Again, ironically, Pakistan's recent attempts to focus international attention on Kashmir will have the whole world watching if there are any terrorist attacks on India — including observation by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which will decide on Pakistan's blacklisting in October. It appears that India has strategically checkmated Pakistan.

Mob lynching Who's the villain? Social media or trust deficit

Are we becoming an intolerant society? Or is it a trust deficit with the administration that compels people to take the law into their own hands, deliver their verdict and decide on what punishment to mete out on the spot.

After all, rumour-mongering is not a new phenomenon in the country nor is mass hysteria. Even when social media, often perceived as the villain in spreading rumours, was absent, rumours did spread. But lynching incidents were few, if not totally absent.

I remember how in 2002 people used to stay awake whole nights fearing that "Muhnochwa" (face scratcher) would attack them in the dark. Rumours of a Muhnochwa had started from the east of Uttar Pradesh and spread across the state like wildfire, though there was no video clip that had gone viral. Such was the fear psychosis that the people had even formed night patrolling groups.

I had then decided to park myself, along with my team, in the most-affected area in Allahabad, near the Yamuna river, to catch the Muhnochwa red-handed. The clock kept ticking and we kept sipping tea while people narrated stories of "an unidentified flying object that scratched faces at midnight." Time just flew past. After sun-up, we left the place dejected as we had failed to meet the imaginary Muhnochwa. The crowds refused to see any reasoning and kept telling us to come the next day for an encounter with the faceless Muhnochwa. They even promised to call some of the Muhnochwa's victims for us to take pictures.

After some years we heard women complaining about their chopped braids. I met so many of them, who had the same story to narrate, "I started feeling giddy, fell unconscious and when I woke I found my tresses cut." And there were pictures of cut hair. Reports of violence trickled in, but they were few.

But today anybody accompanying a child — may be father or mother — is suspected to be a child-lifter. A woman is suspected to be a child-lifter because of her complexion. She was dark and the child fair. The babas are suspects because they carry jholas, a mentally challenged man because he can't defend himself.

Recently in Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh, a young mother woke up to find her nine-year-old child missing. She panicked and started knocking on doors while the fact was that the child's uncle had taken him to the doctor for a check-up. While she was hunting for her child, her neighbours thought she had come to lift their child and started beating her. Someone in the neighbourhood, who recognised her, saved her life.

Who is the culprit? Is it the social media alone? After all, most of the incidents are being reported from smaller towns where social media could be one of the culprits. The other could be trust deficit in an inefficient administration.

Social media expert Rakshit Tandon describes fake news as a huge challenge. "The content creators are on it and they make it viral within seconds. In a particular case, police arrested the mischief maker within three days, but by then the provocative clip had reached 15 lakh people."

Generally by the time police acts, the damage has already been done. The response time is too long.

Of late, we have been hearing about digital volunteers. UP police claimed they deployed about two lakh digital volunteers to counter wrong information circulating on social media.

These digital volunteers are meant to be local public figures like teachers, doctors, village heads, lawyers, traders et al. They have been formed at the police station-level and are called S-10. It is not clear how the police have drawn up the list. There are many influential people in the state capital who say they have neither been approached by the police nor spotted any real effort by these 'volunteers' to counter fake news. Perhaps, society will have to wake up as majority of people are vulnerable. If one way to promptly counter fake news is to make quick appeals, posting positive stories or corrected versions by both the cops and credible people, the other could be the time-tested public announcement systems which are still not obsolete. Munadi (announcements by loudspeakers) have proven effective in some districts. It is time to act. After all, no one is safe in today's environment of suspicion, frustration and mistrust.

The rise and rise in fortunes of DK Shivakumar, the man being probed by ED

The arrest of Shivakumar, known as the Congress' troubleshooter, on Tuesday by the Enforcement Directorate in a case of alleged money laundering has brought to focus this rise as it held within it the elements that would also lead him to his present juncture.

Promoted in the Youth Congress around 1979 after a split in the local party, DK Shivakumar would go on to win his first election to the Karnataka assembly in 1989 and become a fixture for the Congress party in the state, earning him admirers and detractors in equal measure.

The arrest of Shivakumar, known as the Congress' troubleshooter, on Tuesday by the Enforcement Directorate in a case of alleged money laundering has brought to focus this rise as it held within it the elements that would also lead him to his present juncture.

DK or DKShi as he is referred to locally, amassed enormous wealth in the 30 years since his entry into the state assembly. His assets grew from around Rs 7 crore in 2004, since when his elections affidavits are available, to Rs 840 crore, including those of his wife and children, in 2018. And it wasn't just him. His brother DK Suresh, the member of Parliament from the Bengaluru Rural seat, also saw his assets grow manifold from Rs 85 crore declared in 2014 to Rs 338 crore in 2019.

This rise began in 1979 when Shivakumar benefited from a schism in the Congress party after former chief minister Devaraj Urs broke away over dis-

agreements with former prime minister Indira Gandhi. A majority of the cadre in the Young Congress joined Urs. It was at that time that a young Shivakumar was promoted in the ranks as the party sought to build from scratch, a Congress leader said.

From there, Shivakumar's political career blossomed because of his daring, first witnessed in 1985, when a then-unknown 23-year-old took on the former prime minister HD Deve Gowda in the Sathanur constituency. Though he lost to the Gowda patriarch by around 15,000 votes, it endeared him to party leaders, another senior Congress leader confirmed.

This contestation with the Deve Gowda family would define his career over the next decade as the Congress attempted to project a younger leader from the Vokkaliga community in addition to former chief minister SM Krishna to take on the former prime minister.

In 1999, Shivakumar defeated Deve Gowda's son HD Kumaraswamy before pulling off his biggest victory in the 2004 Lok Sabha election when he helped Congress' Tejaswini defeat Deve Gowda in the Kanakapura constituency.

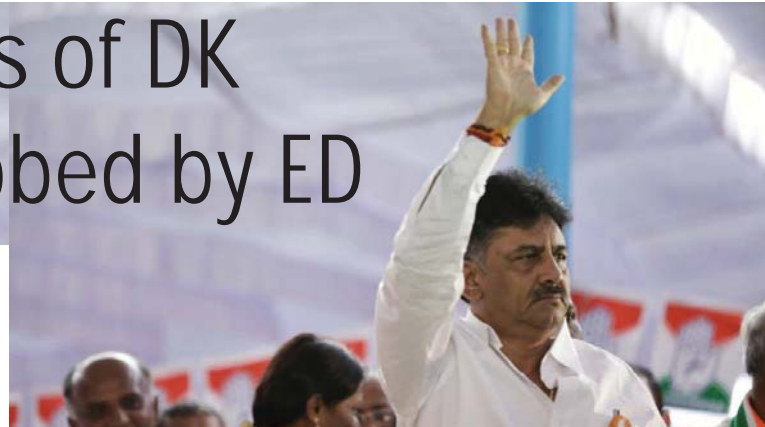
That victory cemented his credentials as a force in the

Bengaluru Rural region, from where he hails, and set him up for a decade-long conflict with Kumaraswamy, who would also contest assembly polls from the same region. From then on, his admirers would call DK Shivakumar 'Kanakapura Bande' or the Rock of Kanakapura - a reference to his constituency as well as his alleged involvement in illegal quarrying of granite found amply in that region.

These victories did not go unnoticed and SM Krishna inducted Shivakumar in his cabinet, making him minister for urban development. Shivakumar's image as a tainted politician dates from this period.

A close associate of Shivakumar said that between 2006 and 2013, the Vokkaliga leader faced his toughest time. Out of power and unable to challenge the ascendancy of the JD(S), which was in power for four years, it appeared as though the Deve Gowda family had overcome his threat.

At this time, an investigation into illegal quarrying named two companies associated with him and one associated with his brother and lawmaker DK Suresh. That case further cemented his image of a tainted leader, which was only heightened in subsequent years.



The taint would come back to haunt DK Shivakumar after the 2013 assembly elections when despite his ties with Krishna Siddaramaiah, who was then elected the chief minister, refused to include him in the state cabinet, only doing so six months later under pressure from the party.

The crucial turning point for Shivakumar came in 2017, when the party decided to bypass chief minister Siddaramaiah and Congress' state unit president G Parameshwara and asked Shivakumar to play host to MLAs from Gujarat. This was done to safeguard them ahead of a Rajya Sabha by-election, where Congress president Sonia Gandhi's close aide Ahmed Patel's seat was on the line. To be sure, this wasn't the first time he was entrusted with the job. However, it came at a juncture when it was believed that doing so would attract the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's) ire.

Shivakumar came through for the party and ensured that Patel was elected, though it came at the cost of an income tax department raid on properties owned by him, his family members and his business associates.

In the 2018 assembly elections, Shivakumar decided to bury the hatchet with Kumaraswamy as they faced a

common enemy in CP Yogeshwar, a serial party hopper on whom the BJP bet to make inroads into the Old Mysuru region. This bonhomie continued when the Congress and JD(S) came to power in a coalition, against the wishes of many in the state unit. In fact, one senior leader had said that the arrangement benefited only four people—Kumaraswamy and his brother HD Revanna in the JD(S) and Shivakumar and former deputy chief minister G Parameshwara.

Shivakumar's last throw of the dice to bring back rebel MLAs, who would eventually bring down the government, by sitting outside a five-star hotel in Mumbai was seen as further evidence of this.

As the heat was piling up, Shivakumar even stood up to address some of the allegations made against him in the assembly during the floor test of the coalition government. "I am from a very simple middle-class family, I am not going to claim that I came from poverty," he said. "Yes, I have grown... I have broken stones [quarrying]..."

In the month since the BJP government was formed in Karnataka, many leaders in that party openly claimed that Shivakumar might soon be put behind bars, which came true on Tuesday.

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The Road to 'Naya Kashmir'

The Modi government radically resets the political status quo in Kashmir. Can it pull it off?



The sprawling Dal Lake, surrounded by emerald green mountains, is both the heart and the soul of Kashmir. Every August, the lake is full of life, with tourists thronging its banks, taking selfies; dozens of shikaras, weighed down with sightseers, gliding on its waters; and vendors selling roasted bhutta (corn on the cob) and mutton tikkas doing brisk business. Not this August though.

It's a bright Saturday morning, and 19 days since the Modi government's momentous decision on August 5 to overturn Article 370 of the Constitution, ending the special status that Jammu and Kashmir enjoyed for 70 years. The lake and its surroundings are deserted. Empty shikaras float tethered together near the pier with no boatmen in sight. A couple of anglers sit at the edge of the lake, casting their lines in the hope of catching some fish. A Kashmiri couple on a shikara

does the same, the woman paddling and the man lowering a net into the water. Stray joggers pound the paved pathway girding the lake as gun-toting guards keep watch on the lakefront from behind sandbag bunkers.

The calm is deceptive. With a total shutdown of telecommunications (except for government officials handling the situation) and restrictions on movement for ordinary citizens, it is difficult to gauge the mood of the Valley's 6.9 million citizens from anecdotal accounts. Behind shuttered shopfronts, owners conduct businesses furtively. Like the bakery doing brisk business through the side door where customers are lined up to buy freshly baked bread and cakes. Residents in private cars stop by stray vegetable sellers, who have set up temporary shops, to stock up on groceries.

By the end of the evening, Rohit Kansal, principal secretary and spokesperson of the J&K government, seems relieved that

there have been no incidents of violence during the day. In fact, he adds significantly, there has been no report of major injuries or deaths because of the central government's decision to revoke J&K's special status. He acknowledges there have been 131 incidents of street protests of various kinds, but specifies that a hundred of these were in Srinagar-whose population of 1.18 million accounts for only 17 per cent of the Valley's inhabitants-and that much of rural Kashmir has been free of incident.

Meanwhile, more than half the police stations in the Valley have relaxed curbs on day-time movement. People have withdrawn over Rs 800 crore from ATMs over the past fortnight, indicating that "the wheels of the economy continue to grind" for the common man, as Kansal puts it. He and other key officials in the state regard all these factors as clear indicators that the Modi government's epochal

decision to end J&K special status is proceeding according to plan.

Yet the big questions remain. What is the Modi government's gameplan for Kashmir's future? Why did it decide to go ahead with it at this juncture? What will be the impact in the Valley once the curbs are lifted? What are the big challenges ahead? India today spoke to key decision-makers in the Valley and in Delhi as well as independent experts. Their assessments are revealing.

The Kashmir Gameplan

The Modi government's audacious decision to rescind Article 370 radically alters the status quo and begins an entirely new narrative on how to deal with an issue that has bedevilled India's relations with Pakistan since Partition. It is, undoubtedly, the most important act by any central government on Jammu and Kashmir since the one headed by Jawaharlal Nehru gave the state its special status through a presidential order in 1949. Simply put, Article 370 permitted J&K to have its own constitution, its own flag and full autonomy in its internal administration, except for defence, foreign policy and communications, which were left for the Union government to control.

By overturning Article 370 early in his second term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has fulfilled a key demand of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ideological flagship, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), to have "one nation, one Constitution". By getting Parliament's stamp of approval after ensuring the

passage of the bill in the Rajya Sabha, where the BJP does not have a majority, Modi could claim to have achieved a political consensus of sorts and effectively shut the door on all those fighting for the Valley to merge with Pakistan or demanding azadi, particularly a section of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders. For mainstream parties such as the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) which hoped they could squeeze out more autonomy from the Indian state, the Modi government has reduced J&K's status to that of a Union territory directly controlled by the central government. Once these leaders emerge from the silence of arrest, they may be reduced to pleading for the restoration of statehood at the earliest, which the central government has said it will consider. Meanwhile, the Centre will use this opportunity to conduct a delimitation exercise as well, correcting the imbalance that gave the Valley the dominant representation in the assembly. And, by making it a Union territory it eliminates any chance of state legislative action against it. Significantly, Modi has signalled that he will render the current lot of political leaders irrelevant in the state by handing over the reins of the new Union territory to a new crop of grassroots leaders to build a 'Naya Kashmir'. The Modi government has also shrunk the size of the erstwhile state by pulling out Ladakh and making it a separate Union territory-a move that was widely welcomed by the people in Leh, if not in Kargil. To Pakistan, which has waged



three wars with India over Kashmir, Modi has made it clear that the unfinished business of Partition is no more about Jammu and Kashmir but Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), as the Union minister for defence Rajnath Singh recently emphasised. India has also specified that any future attempt by Pakistan to engage with India on the status of Jammu & Kashmir (which Islamabad has maintained remains a core issue) would be rebuffed as the state's integration with the Indian Union was irrevocable. International leaders, including US President Donald Trump, were told firmly by Modi that Kashmir's status is India's internal matter, that its relations with Pakistan on the subject were a bilateral issue and that it would not entertain any international mediation. So, did Modi make sufficient preparation to ensure that his government would be able to see through its Kashmir gameplan, successfully overcoming all possible hurdles, including internal strife in the state and terror strikes engineered from across the border, apart from withstanding legal scrutiny in the Supreme Court? The answer to this question has as much to do with how the plan

evolved and the groundwork that was laid as with what the Modi government will do in the days and months ahead. **The Making of the Plan** The BJP and the RSS have for decades made their intention clear on the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A (according to which non-permanent residents of J&K could not purchase or own land in the state). But the gameplan to achieve this was set in motion only in the final year of the first term of the Modi government. To his credit, Modi did initially make a sincere effort to follow in the footsteps of Atal Bihari Vajpayee by working with political parties in J&K and engaging with Pakistan. He gave his consent for the BJP to ally with the PDP, perceived as a soft separatist party, and form a coalition government in the state when the assembly election in December 2014 threw up a fractured mandate. The two parties drew up an agenda for alliance and PDP's Mufti Mohammed Sayeed was sworn in as chief minister in March 2015. On his visit to Srinagar later that year, Modi announced a special package of Rs 80,000 crore for the development of the state. In a public address, the prime

minister said that he was guided by Vajpayee's vision of Kashmiriyat, Jamhooriyat aur Insaniyat (Kashmiri culture, democracy and humanity) for the state and added, "Kashmiriyat ke bina Hindustan adhoora hai (India is incomplete without Kashmiriyat)." Modi had also extended a hand of friendship to the then Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif by inviting him for his swearing-in ceremony in May 2014 and then making an impromptu visit to Lahore in December 2015 to attend Sharif's grand-daughter's wedding. As it happened, both these initiatives, much to Modi's frustration and disappointment, came to naught. Midway through the state government's tenure, the differences between the PDP and BJP became irreconcilable over several key issues, including the holding of panchayat elections and the leniency with which the PDP dealt with militants and separatists. The PDP also dragged its feet over a solution to the problem of West Pakistan refugees. Close to 55,000 families, mostly Hindus, had not been granted citizenship despite settling down in the state after Partition and were unable to

own land or apply for government jobs. Worse, when Burhan Wani, a poster boy of militancy, was killed by security forces in July 2016, the government failed to control the protests that broke out. The ensuing violence resulted in the deaths of more than 96 people, with thousands being injured and the state remaining paralysed for months. The BJP was inclined to pull out then but didn't want Mehbooba to appear as a martyr. Meanwhile, relations with Pakistan broke down after a terrorist attack in Uri in September 2016 saw 19 Indian soldiers killed. Modi stunned the Pakistan establishment by sanctioning a surgical strike by the Indian army against terror camps located on the Pakistani side of the Line of Control. A month before the 2019 general election, Modi indicated that his efforts in Kashmir had reached a dead end and that he was planning a radical change for it if he were to be re-elected as prime minister. In an interview to a television channel, he said, "The alliance with the PDP was an experiment. It was working well during Mufti sahab's time. When Mehboobaji came (after Mufti's death in January 2016),

we gave her the same support. But when it came to the panchayat election, she kept wanting to delay it, saying it would spark violence in the region. She did not step forward for two-three months, which led to governor's rule in the state." Modi went on to add, "The problem in Kashmir is largely due to 50-odd political families there. They have been milking the issue. They don't want any benefit to be given to ordinary Kashmiris. People want freedom from such political families who have been preying on their emotions for 50 years. The situation in Kashmir is such that people want change, whether it is about Article 35A or 370."

The first step in this direction was taken much before, in June 2018, when the BJP decided to finally end its coalition government with the PDP and impose governor's rule. That laid the groundwork for what was to come on August 5, 2019.

The Groundwork

In August 2018, Satya Pal Malik, an affable Uttar Pradesh politician, was appointed governor of J&K after N.N. Vohra completed his second term. To assist him, B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, known to be a tough, no-nonsense officer, was transferred as chief secretary from Chhattisgarh where he was serving in a similar capacity. K. Vijay Kumar, the retired IPS officer famed for eliminating Veerappan and vastly experienced in handling extremists, was made advisor to the governor on security issues. The task set for Malik and his team was to ensure good governance, crack down on militancy and maintain law and order. Subsequently, four more advisors-K.K. Sharma, Khurshid Ganai, Skandan Krishnan and Farooq Khan-were appointed and assigned different responsibilities.

The new administration was appalled by the deteriorating condition of the state. As an expert, who didn't want to be identified, put it, "It was a corrupt edifice built on patronage-there were scams in recruitment for government posts, separatists were being bankrolled by many of those who had earlier run the government and there were only a few institutions where the rule of law prevailed. It was a sham democracy and the state was on the verge of collapse." There was also deep concern over the growing radicalisation of the Kashmiri youth, especially after mosques and madrassas funded by more extreme sects had doubled in the past 15 years.

October 26, 1947
Hari Singh, the Maharaja of Kashmir, signs the Instrument of Accession (IoA) with India. The first Indo-Pak war breaks out

1948-1949
The UN Security Council calls for a plebiscite, but Pakistan refuses to withdraw its troops. Kashmir is effectively partitioned

1953-1954
Sheikh Abdullah arrested after he dithers over accession to India. A new regime under Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad ratifies the IoA

1965
Pakistan attempts to foment an insurgency by sneaking in armed infiltrators, in an operation codenamed 'Gibraltar', sparking off full-scale hostilities. Both sides agree to revert to pre-1965 positions at Tashkent the following January

1967
Massive rigging of assembly polls facilitates Farooq Abdullah's rise to power. It instigates an armed insurgency led by the J&K Liberation Front, backed by Pakistan-based terrorists

1989
Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan frees up a huge cache of weapons and mercenaries, who find their way into Kashmir. A long cycle of bloodshed begins, leading to the exodus of 150,000 Kashmiri Pandits

1990
Farooq Abdullah resigns as CM and governor's rule is imposed under Jagmohan. India imposes the Armed Forces Special Powers Act

1999
The launch of a bus service between Delhi and Lahore rekindles hopes for India-Pakistan peace. Infiltration by Pakistani soldiers and militants into Kargil puts paid to that hope

2008
Protests erupt in the Valley over transfer of 99 acres of land to the Amarnath Shrine Board. Violent counter-protests in Jammu when revoked

2010
Unrest in Valley after it is learned that three 'terrorists' killed in a 'foiled infiltration bid' were actually civilians murdered by armed forces personnel

2013
Afzal Guru is hanged in Delhi for his role in the 2001 Parliament attack

2014
India cancels talks with Pakistan after their high commissioner invites Kashmiri separatists for consultation. Assembly poll sees 65 per cent voter turnout

October 17, 1949
India adopts Article 370, which confers special status on J&K. The Indian Union's jurisdiction is restricted to defence, foreign affairs and communications

1951
Sheikh Abdullah-led National Conference wins a majority in the first election held after Independence. A UN resolution declares that elections cannot substitute plebiscite

1956-1957
J&K adopts a constitution defining it as a part of India. The UN says this cannot be the final disposition of Kashmir. Union home minister G.B. Pant declares J&K an 'integral' part of India during a visit to Srinagar

1971
India and Pakistan fight another war. It ends with the liberation of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) and the capture of around 81,000 Pakistani soldiers

1972
Pak premier Z.A. Bhutto and Indira Gandhi sign the Simla Agreement, under which the ceasefire line becomes the LoC, and Kashmir an issue to be settled bilaterally

1974
Sheikh Abdullah returns as chief minister in February and remains so till his death in 1982

2001
Peace efforts are marred by a Jaish suicide attack in October on the legislative assembly in Srinagar and on Indian Parliament on December 13

2015
PDP and BJP come together in an 'antithetical' alliance and Mufti Mohammed Sayeed becomes CM. Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif try to build bridges but NSA-level talks between India and Pakistan fall through again

2016
The Mufti dies in January. His daughter Mehbooba takes over after three months of indecision. On July 8, Hizbul commander Burhan Wani is gunned down in an encounter. Violent protests erupt across the Valley, indefinite curfew is imposed

2018
BJP withdraws support to the PDP. Mehbooba resigns as CM, governor's rule imposed

2019
The Modi government scraps J&K's special status under Article 370 and bifurcates the state into the Union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh

Didi Ke Bolo vs Dada Ke Bolo: Who is winning the battle for Bengal?

Trinamool's Mamata Banerjee and BJP's Dilip Ghosh are reaching out to people. But who exactly are the people listening to?

After Mamata Didi, Dilip Ghosh as 'Dada' is hitting the streets with his own 'Dada Ke Bolo' public interface programme.

Though both campaigns appear to be similar in form and name, a medium for airing grievances, they are as different in content as chalk and cheese. 'Didi Ke Bolo' is an exclusive helpline to record people's grievances against Didi's party and governance. But 'Dada Ke Bolo' is a direct interaction in an informal setting.

While Mamata's campaign largely depends on the internet and Didi's appointees handling it, Dilip

dada is a flesh-and-blood direct, physical listener.

He is reaching out to people and inviting them for discussion, debate and dialogue over endless cups of tea and may be some smoke in his 'chai pe charcha' just like Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the last two weeks he has been to Purba Medinipur, Bardhaman, North 24 Parganas and Kolkata districts. His experience has been bittersweet.

But Dilip, like an ace politician, is taking it in his stride. Confronted with "go back" slogans, black flags and heckling at Lake Town under Bidhannagar

municipality, Dilip was in no mood to turn back. He said he was very happy to find so many Trinamool Congress (TMC) supporters waiting for him in the morning. "I walk in the morning and visit these areas and interact with the locals. But today I could see so many Trinamool supporters waiting to greet me," he chuckled.

Later, however, he spoke to some people at a different location. Incidentally, that very morning TMC minister Sujit Bose, who's not known to interact outside the party office, visited the same areas and interacted with party men.

Similar protests were held in Bardhaman. BJP workers accompanying Dilip retaliated and chanted *Jai Shri Ram*. Both the groups came to blows when the police intervened and led Dilip away. Later Dilip told a party gathering that 'Dada Ke Bolo' has given some oxygen to the sinking TMC. According to him, the resistance is isolated. People in general are sharing their problems and even discussing how even after trying for a month to connect to 'Didi Ke Bolo', things have come to a naught. "We don't believe in virtual world. For us everything is real," said a



BJP leader. "Even people are getting to see how TMC is engineering the protest and demonstration, pulling down hoardings buntings and breaking chairs and tables. The more people get to see their aggression, the better for us," the leader added. The decimation of space for

Opposition politics, as seen in the 2018 panchayat polls, hurt the TMC in the Lok Sabha polls. "It will only prove that all this drama over Didi Ke Bolo and Didi's olive branch to the Opposition parties are fake," said BJP karyakarta of North Bengal, Diptiman Sengupta.

The Modi government must allow politics to return to Kashmir



One month after Jammu and Kashmir's special status was withdrawn, and restrictions were imposed in the Valley, it is time to ask: What is the government's blueprint for its future? In the initial aftermath of a decision as disruptive as the abrogation of Article 370, the administration and the security agencies had a legitimate focus on preventing the loss of lives. The arrests of mainstream politicians could have initially been explained as a strictly precautionary measure to maintain the writ of law and the semblance of order. Thirty days later, that rationalisation cannot hold.

There may be little sympathy for the Kashmiri mainstream in the Valley. But here is the conundrum for the Narendra Modi government. The more you disenfranchise the mainstream, the more you humiliate them, the more you push them to the margins, the stronger you make the separatists, and, in turn, the militants.

On my multiple trips to Srinagar in the past few weeks, that is the one thing that leapt out at me: the schadenfreude on the street about politicians like Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti being in detention. Other than the political workers of their parties, many of whom

have been targeted by terrorists for daring to take part in the electoral process, there is little or no sympathy for the humiliation of those whose home has been Centaur Hotel or Chashma Shahi and Hari Niwas for the past many days. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) could either treat this as an "aha-I-told-you-so" moment, or realise how dangerous this contempt could prove to be.

Through his tears, one man I met outside a government-run phone helpline (he had spent hours trying to reach his father in Saudi Arabia) told me that the detentions "were a slap on the mainstream. Unki aukad

pata lag gayee hain unko" ("They have been shown what they are worth").

Others in the city's downtown area, where for years every evening ends with ritualistic clashes between paramilitary personnel and protesters armed with stones, openly sniggered at the plight of the mainstream. Most of them have never voted in an election. Today, they say, their stand has been vindicated, now that even someone like Sajad Lone has been imprisoned. After Syed Salahuddin (the Hizbul Mujahideen militant who is now in Pakistan), Lone is the first significant Kashmiri separatist who experimented with elections in 2002. He called out the Pakistani deep State and the ISI for the assassination of his father, a pro-dialogue separatist. One of his brothers is still a secessionist. His party was backed by the BJP, and Lone likened the PM to an "elder brother". Lone is among the scores of politicians locked away by the administration, obviously under orders from the top. Srinagar's mayor, Junaid Mattu, was also a former separatist.

Last year, he won the elections with the BJP's backing. Mattu was allowed to travel to Delhi for medical treatment, and, while he was in the capital, I had a chance to interview him in what would be the first account of a mainstream leader who has undergone detention. He called it "suffocating and humiliating". Two days after that interview, he was arrested again. Watching these developments, those who never believed in the Indian Union only feel more emboldened to argue that they were right all along. The BJP promises a "Naya Kashmir" with the end of dynasty and family fiefdoms. But how is this possible with a curtailment of all political activity? What message are we sending to a potential generation of new representatives?

The mainstream politicians have done themselves no favours either. Only two of them filed habeas corpus petitions in court to fight for their release. Others have challenged the abrogation of Article 370 but let this one month lapse as if they were utterly paralysed. Perhaps

they are. Else, what explains, for instance, that not one among the scores of prominent politicians under arrest, have considered a hunger strike or a fast-unto-death? After all, the moral principle of Gandhian Satyagraha is all-powerful. Templates have been set by people as varied as Irom Sharmila, Medha Patkar and Anna Hazare. I am not suggesting that this would have altered any government decisions. But it would have at least sent out a larger message about functional politics and active dissent.

The situation is so piquant today that although there are no curfew orders in place, people in urban centres like Srinagar are refusing to open shops and establishments or come out on the streets. That explains the images of empty, desolate streets that you see in the media.

Without a next move — and one that must lift the curb and normalise politics — it is the secessionists who will end up stronger.

That will be most ironic for a move that stately set out to integrate Kashmir into the rest of India.

India's biggest lenders fail to meet even a shrunken funding demand

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) annual report shows that non-food credit fell by a massive 1.7 trillion in the April-June period

Struggling with low capital and a mountain of bad loans, banks have been unwilling to part with money even when the central bank has flushed them with liquidity

If the Indian economy were a fairground, the loneliest stall would be of credit. Indian banks and even non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) were hardly giving out loans in the first three months of FY20. With the two biggest sources of funds absent, it is no wonder that the flow of funds to the economy shrank by 74% during this period. The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) annual report shows that non-food credit fell by a massive ₹1.7 trillion in the April-June period. But before we attribute this to a seasonal slack in credit flow, the corresponding quarters in previous years haven't

shown such a marked plunge. This means that Indian companies found themselves turned away even though fewer came forward to borrow than before. Struggling with low capital and a mountain of bad loans, banks have been unwilling to part with money even when the central bank has flushed them with liquidity. Signs are that for the rest of FY20, a sharp pickup in credit growth from domestic lenders is unlikely. Demand for funds is less than before as most companies are unsure of the future. Public sector banks that account

for more than half of the credit flow would be busy with mergers. The country's largest lender State Bank of India doesn't expect loan growth to be more than 12-15%. That leaves non-banks and the recovery there is far from encouraging. NBFCs have been besieged by a liquidity crisis after the fiasco at Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Ltd for nearly a year now, with the recovery process slow. Even big NBFCs with balance-sheet muscle reported a slowdown in credit growth for the June quarter. Many lenders are still finding it expensive to get

funds.

According to RBI, housing finance companies witnessed a 65% drop in loan offtake in the June quarter.

Recall that NBFCs had picked up slack in credit when banks were unwilling to lend two years back. Banks returned in FY19, while NBFCs have ceded market share. Banks met more than half of the funding needs of the economy in FY19 with 57% share of total fund flow to real sector, far higher than 31% in FY17. Either way, the overall flow of financial resources to companies grew by a mere 4% in FY19.



So while the two biggest sources of funds couldn't measure up to the demand in Q1, where did companies find money, if at all they did? During the first three months of FY20, funding from foreign sources grew by a massive 77% from a year ago. Globally, interest rates have been ultra-low and bond yields have been falling, which makes it easier for Indian companies to borrow. Offshore borrowings can emerge as a big source of funding but for the economy's wheels to spin faster, the domestic lenders need to buck up.

IndiGo truce frays as Gangwal seeks Sebi's intervention again

New Delhi: The fragile truce between the two feuding co-founders of IndiGo, India's largest airline, appears to be all but broken, with Rakesh Gangwal, one of them, seeking intervention from the markets regulator on a number of contentious issues.

Days after InterGlobe Aviation Ltd's chief executive Ronojoy Dutta claimed that the dispute between Rahul Bhatia and Gangwal was resolved, Gangwal wrote to Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on 30 August, seeking directions on issues ranging from related-party transactions (RPTs) and chairman M. Damodaran's conduct to curbing Bhatia's InterGlobe

Enterprises Group's (IGE's) "unusual controlling rights". On Wednesday, IndiGo told stock exchanges that it will respond to a Sebi email seeking its comments on Gangwal's letter, without giving details. Mint has not seen a copy of the letter.

With Gangwal refusing to back down, the dispute may prove to be a costly distraction for the airline, which dominates Indian skies with nearly 50% share. In July, Gangwal first complained to Sebi that Bhatia's IGE group's outsized rights have helped it push through transactions and policy changes that violate corporate governance rules. Bhatia has denied the

allegations. "The consensus between promoters on 'related party transaction' policy and Board composition is a positive sentiment for investors. However, a further fallout could affect the sentiments, and stock price. It must be noted though that the performance of the airline was not affected due to the tussle between the promoters," said a Mumbai-based analyst who tracks the aviation sector closely, requesting anonymity.

"There are reasons to be positive about IndiGo as the airline is seeing strong volume growth, and has a cost advantage over its competitors," the person added.

Gangwal and his associates hold nearly 37% in InterGlobe Aviation, while IGE group owns around 38%. Although the two groups own similar stakes, an initial agreement gave special rights to Bhatia's company. As previously disclosed, at the recent

AGM (annual general meeting) of the company held on August 27, 2019, both the promoter groups have voted in favour of all the resolutions, including the resolutions to amend the Articles of Association (AoA) of the company to expand the size of the

board to 10 members and to appoint the chairman as an independent director of the company," IndiGo said. "Further, as on date, the company has in place a revised RPT policy as approved by the company's audit committee and the board."

Jet Airways' creditors to recover only \$300-\$400 million in liquidation scenario



Mumbai: Creditors of India's bankrupt Jet Airways are likely to recover less than 10% of the carrier's total outstanding dues in a liquidation scenario if no suitor succeeds in buying the airline, two sources told Reuters.

The airline's financial and operational creditors, who are owed nearly ₹30,000 crore (\$4.20 billion) are likely to recover only \$300-\$400 million from the sale of Jet's assets, the sources, who have direct knowledge of the matter, said.

"The expected recovery on owned planes and real estate is \$300-400 million after repaying debt tied specifically to those assets," said one of the sources.

The sources, who asked not to be named as they have not been cleared to discuss the matter with media, said Jet currently has some four to six Boeing and Airbus aircraft, and some real estate assets in India, on which there are some outstanding dues.

The airline, less than a year ago, was operating a fleet of more than 120 planes that

flew to dozens of domestic destinations and international hubs such as Singapore, London and Dubai. Once India's biggest private carrier, Jet stopped flying in April after running out of cash, leaving thousands without jobs and pushing up airfares across the country. It was admitted to bankruptcy court in June after its lenders, led by State Bank of India, failed to agree on a revival plan. The court-appointed resolution professional, Grant Thornton, now responsible for the company, declined to comment and said that the focus remains on resolution and not liquidation at this stage. The Indian bankruptcy process allows lenders to sell the company as a whole or in parts to maximise recovery for creditors. Apart from the lenders the airline has 2,400 creditors including suppliers, vendors and employees.

Split wide open

Gangwal's letter to Sebi comes days after CEO Ronojoy Dutta said disagreements between the founders had been resolved.



RAKESH GANGWAL,
IndiGo co-founder

WHAT GANGWAL WANTS:

Sebi direction on "non-independence" of chairman M. Damodaran. He has also raised concerns regarding amendments to the AoAs.

THE ISSUES RESOLVED SO FAR:

Both sides have agreed to increase IndiGo's board size to 10 and adopt a new policy on related-party transactions.

THE WAY AHEAD:

IndiGo has said that it will respond to Sebi. A Sebi official told Mint that the agency will look at IndiGo's response before taking the next step.

You're more likely to get help in crisis than in non-hazardous situation



(Agencies) Have you ever wondered why people readily help accident victims but hesitate to give loose change in exchange for Rs 500? Researchers have found the reason behind this strange human behaviour.

Turns out you are more likely to get help from others in a crisis situation rather than in a harmless everyday problem, say researchers, adding that extreme conditions bring out the best in people, especially those who are altruistic and pro-social. "Emergency situations seem to amplify people's natural tendency to cooperate," said one of the researchers Mehdi Moussaid from Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin, Germany.

In the study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, the researchers showed that readiness to help depends heavily on personality.

The experiments showed that pro-social and altruistic people in particular often helped others even more in an emergency situation than in a relaxed and non-threatening situation, whereas selfish participants became less cooperative.

The researchers invited 104 individuals to participate in a computer game that was developed specifically for the experiment. In this 'help-or-escape dilemma game,' participants under time and monetary pressure had to decide whether they were willing to risk taking time to help others before reaching their goal or saving themselves in two different situations one everyday and one emergency situation.



(Agencies) Next time you try to stifle a yawn, it might be worth discarding polite etiquette by letting your mouth gape for as long as you need because it could help to reveal how smart you are.

Biologists have discovered a surprising relationship between the length of time mammals yawn for and how big and complex their brains are.

They believe it may also be a sign of greater cognitive ability. Primates, including our own species, tend to have the longest yawns of all compared to other species – up to 50 per cent longer.

The findings help to suggest a possible role for why yawning evolved – it helps to cool the brain.

Writing in the journal *Biology Letters*, researchers at the State University of New York at Oneonta, said it appears yawning duration may be related to cognitive capacity too.

They found that animals like mice, rats, rabbits and foxes had the shortest yawns while gorillas, gibbons, walruses, camels, elephants and finally humans



had the longest yawns.

Although humans do not have the greatest brain weight – elephants have by far the largest brain by weight alone - our brains have more neurons in their cortex than any other species

Intriguingly African elephants also have more cortical neurons than other primates and the second longest yawn, perhaps hinting at their intelligence.

Dr Andrew Gallup, a psychologist at the State University of New York at Oneonta who led the work, and his colleagues, said: 'Neither the size of the body nor the anatomical structures specific to yawning - cranium and mandible - are driving



these effects, because gorillas, camels, horses, lions, walruses and African elephants all have shorter average yawns than humans. 'Instead, differences in yawn duration appear to be specifically linked to interspecies variation in brain size and complexity, with cortical neuron number being the most significant factor.'

The researchers examined videos of a dozen individuals from each species while they were yawning and timed how long they went on for. In total they looked at 205 full yawns from 177 individuals across 24 different species. Humans yawn on average for just under seven seconds while African elephants yawn for six seconds. Camels yawn for a little over five seconds on average while chimpanzees yawn for about five seconds. The researchers said their findings may help to answer the long-standing mystery of what purpose yawning serves. The reflex is commonly associated with tiredness, sleepiness and boredom while some studies have shown that they can be contagious in many species including chimpanzees and dogs.

Your yawn may reveal how smart you are *Mammals with bigger and more complex brains gape for longer*

Genes responsible for bigger brains are found

Discovery could be the key to tackling dementia

genomes of 28 mammals with differing sizes of neocortex.

This is the region of the brain that is involved in language and decision-making.

The size of this region differs hugely between species, and is the part of the brain that has grown the most in the human lineage over evolutionary time. The study, published in the *Royal Society journal Open Biology*, found a number of genes that have expanded in line with the size of the brain.

The research highlighted a

host of new genes that haven't previously been linked with brain development.

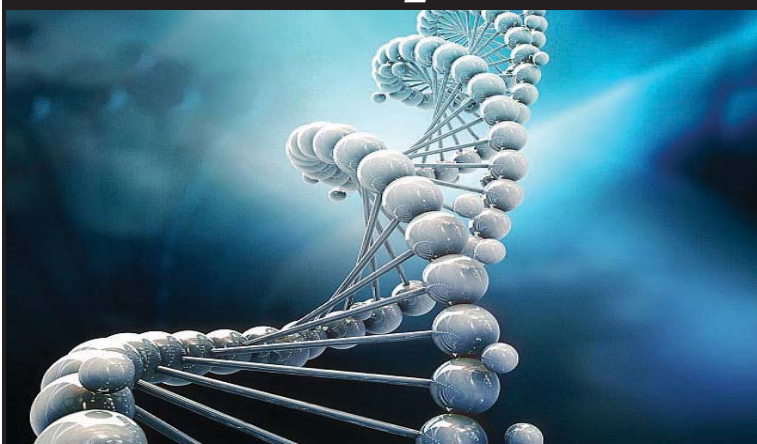
These include those known to be involved in cell signalling and immune response.

The researchers hope this discovery might give a better understanding as to which genes are key in human brain development. They say it could lead to new insights into what goes wrong in a variety of mental health disorders, including dementia.

Dr Araxi Urrutia, from the Milner Centre for Evolution at

the University of Bath's Department for Biology and Biochemistry and Dr Humberto Gutierrez from the School of Life Sciences at Lincoln University, led the research.

Dr Urrutia said: 'Most research on brain development uses mice as a model, but this approach could be missing some genes that are key for human brain development as our brains differ from those in mice in many aspects, most notably in the size of the neocortex.'



(Agencies) A group of genes can help build a bigger brain.

While this has long been known, a number of new links between genes and brain size have now been found by British scientists.

The discovery opens up a new avenue of research to better understand brain development and diseases like dementia, researchers claim. A team of scientists from the Universities of Bath and Lincoln compared the



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Men, take note: What you eat before sex can impact your baby's health

It's not just the mother's diet that matters. If the father eats a balanced diet, it can also contribute to the mother delivering a healthy baby. **Lifestyle**



(News Agencies) A diet high in carbohydrates and low in protein. "We play as important a role as nutrition of the expectant mother in delivering a healthy baby, new research suggests. The findings suggest that men should avoid having

an effect from maternal diet on offspring because of that strong link. But it was a real surprise to find a link between paternal diet and offspring," Polak said. For the study published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B, the researchers manipulated the nutrition of male fruit flies and observed a strong correlation between poor diet and poor survivorship among their offspring.

Scientists regularly study fruit flies because they share 60% of our genes and more than 75% of our

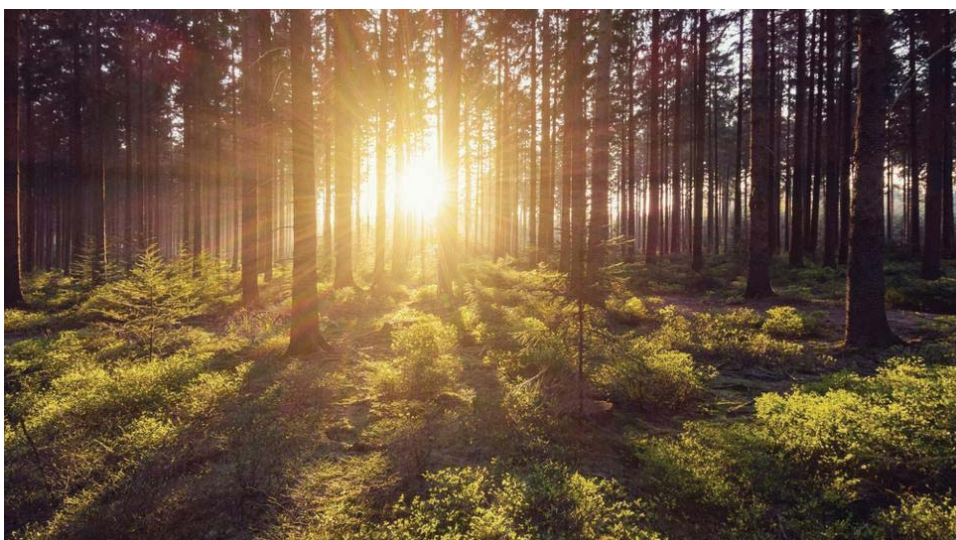
disease genes. Geneticists have mapped their entire genome. More than 150 years of study have made this unassuming little fly a good model system, Polak said. For the study, Polak isolated females and males of the fruit fly species *Drosophila melanogaster*, which is famous for its enormous red eyes and high reproductive capacity. A single fly can lay 50 eggs per day or as many as 2,000 eggs in her short two-month lifetime. The researchers fed

females the same diet. But they fed males 30 different diets of yeast and sugars. The flies could eat all they wanted from the agar mixture in the bottom of their glass beaker homes, but the quality of the food varied dramatically from low to high concentrations of high proteins, carbohydrates and calories. After 17 days on the strict diet, the males were mated individually and consecutively with two females, which all received the same diet of yeasted

cornmeal. The researchers found that embryos from the second mating were more likely to survive as their fathers' diets improved in nutrition. These effects were less apparent in the first mating. Likewise, embryo mortality was highest for offspring of males that fed on a high-carbohydrate, low-protein diet. The study also found a slightly higher incidence of embryo mortality associated with male flies in the first mating that were fed the highest-calorie diet.

Living near trees makes people less stressed by boosting their brain

Research showed that city dwellers are at a higher risk of psychiatric illnesses such as depression, anxiety disorders and schizophrenia.



(News Agencies) Living near an abundance of trees makes adults less stressed, according to new research. People who build their homes in the lap of mother nature may have a healthier brain and may be at lower risk of developing stress-related depression and anxiety disorders than those living near the urban green or wasteland, the research says.

The findings showed that city dwellers are at a higher risk of psychiatric illnesses such as depression, anxiety disorders and schizophrenia than countryside dwellers.

This is because life in a city is full of noise and

pollution, and many people scramble in a confined space, increasing the risk for chronic stress. In the study, appearing in the journal *Scientific Reports*, city dwellers' showed higher activity levels of amygdala — a central nucleus in the brain that plays an important role in stress processing and reactions to danger.

On the other hand, people living close to a forest showed indications of a physiologically healthy amygdala structure and were therefore presumably better able to cope with stress compared to those living the urban green,

water or wasteland, the researchers observed. "Research on brain plasticity supports the assumption that the environment can shape brain structure and function. "That is why we are interested in the environmental conditions that may



have positive effects on brain development," said lead author Simone Kuhn, psychologist at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE) Hospital in Germany.

"Studies of people in the countryside have already shown that living close to nature is good for their mental health and well-being. We therefore decided to examine city dwellers," Kuhn added.

By 2050, almost 70% of the world population is expected to be living in cities, the researchers said, adding that these results could therefore be very important for urban planning.

Beware, your 'bromance' can threaten your heterosexual relationship

A "bromance" can be more emotionally satisfying for men than romantic relationships with women, says a new study.



(News Agencies) For young men, their "bromance", or close friendships with other men, could be more emotionally satisfying than their romantic relationships with women, finds a study. The findings showed that the increasingly intimate, emotive and trusting nature of bromances offers young men a new social space for emotional disclosure, outside of traditional heterosexual relationships. Men also felt less judged by their close male friends than by their girlfriends. "A bromance offered men elevated emotional stability, enhanced emotional disclosure, social fulfilment, compared to the emotional lives they shared with their girlfriends," said Stefan Robinson from UK's University of Winchester.

Moreover, it was easier for them to overcome conflicts and express their emotions in their bromances than in their romances. However, "strong bromances could challenge traditional domestic living arrangements between men and women," Robinson added. The rise in bromances can be recognised as a progressive development in the relations between men, researchers noted while adding that this progress may negatively affect heterosexual relations. For the study, detailed in the journal *Men and Masculinities*, the team interviewed undergraduate straight men. Participants stated that the lack of boundaries and judgement in a bromance is expressed as emotionally rivalling the benefits of a heterosexual romance. The tensions of the bromance versus romance can be studied against a backdrop of declining homophobia, sexual liberalism and inclusive masculinity, the researchers said.

Plastic surgery addict who spent over \$500K to look like Kim Kardashian

Jennifer Pamplona, 27, from Los Angeles, says she will no longer have surgery. She has had more than 20 cosmetic procedures to look like Kim Kardashian. But a recent lip filler surgery has left her with 'fish lips', according to Jennifer

A plastic surgery addict who spent more than \$500,000 (£406,547) to look like Kim Kardashian has opened up about her recent 'botched fish lips' procedure.



Despite having more than 20 cosmetic procedures to look like the reality TV star, Jennifer Pamplona, 27, from Los Angeles, says she is now steering clear of going under the knife after claiming she became a victim of botched surgery. After having three millilitres of filler placed into her top and bottom lip last month, Jennifer claims she left the clinic feeling as though she was having a reaction to the procedure. When she examined her lips further, Jennifer claims they looked like 'fish lips', were very painful and wouldn't stop bleeding. Just two days later, Jennifer rushed back to the surgery to have the \$3000 (£2,439) filler removed and has now stated she will be avoiding surgery in future. 'After my surgery was done I felt as though I was having a reaction and later on that day they were bleeding a lot and felt very painful,' said Jennifer, who now lives between LA and Dubai. 'When I saw the result of them I couldn't believe it - I was completely botched and had been left with fish lips. 'I had paid \$3000 to be botched and was then told I had to wait two days to have the filler removed. I spent those days covering my face and staying inside, whenever I saw my face I would just start crying again. he added: 'Now, my lips look like an old persons - they're stretched but look withered like a deflated balloon.' As well as having six pints of fat injected into her bum, Jennifer has had two nose jobs, eight ribs removed, two breast enhancements and six ribs, achieving her goal of 39-inch hips and 21-inch waist. After having her fillers removed, Jennifer claims she has since learned a valuable lesson. 'I have almost destroyed my face and my health all because I am a plastic surgery addict,' she said. 'When I removed all of the filler I got a lesson - I will never undergo surgery to fix something that's already good.' 'I always want more and more and I almost destroyed my face and my health in the strive for perfection.



Priyanka Chopra looks sophisticated in a striped dress as she leaves her hotel to attend a New York Fashion Week event



Not a day goes by where Priyanka Chopra doesn't turn heads. The fashionista, 37, did so again on Friday as she was seen leaving her hotel in New York City wearing a stylish striped dress. Priyanka, who Vogue just called one of the best dressed people of 2019, looked stunning as she carried a tiny pink hand bag for her busy day at New York Fashion Week. For the day of fashion, Chopra rocked white kitten sandal heels with her dress. The white dress featured rows navy blue, and pastel pink and green stripes meeting in the center to create a triangular shape.

Her arms were covered by the silk material which also wrapped around the star's neck.

The Baywatch actress carried a small, square shaped pink purse in one hand and added some bling with gold jewelry.

Highlighting her perfect bone structure, the brunette pulled her hair back in a bun as she left the building.

Priyanka's outing follows news that she's thinking about having a baby and buying a house with her husband, Nick Jonas, 26. The Quantico star made the candid confession during a stunning photoshoot and interview for the cover of the September issue of Vogue India.

Priyanka tied the knot with her musician beau at the Umaid Bhawan palace in Jodhpur, sealing their union with both Christian and Hindu ceremonies in December 2018, they had three lavish wedding receptions.

Talking about what's next in their relationship, she told the magazine that she sees Los Angeles as a long-term option for herself and her husband.

Drawn by the idea of having a 'pool and

backyard' while the 'ocean and weather' remind her of Mumbai, she said: 'Buying a home and having a baby are on my to-do list.' Priyanka continued: 'I have homes in Mumbai and New York, which are very vertical cities. LA is more horizontal. For me home is wherever I'm happy, as long as I have the people I love around me.'

The star also reflected on her 30s, revealing that her 20s were 'more anxious', she admitted that she now wants to be 'more present'. Priyanka added: 'The space I'm in today is the most content I've been in a very long time, and I'm not scared to admit it. I don't want to be stuck running on a hamster wheel.' Coming up, the talent is set to appear in numerous new films including The Sky Is Pink, We Can Be Heroes, Gangubai, Gustakhiyan and Cowboy Ninja Viking.

Fan asks Ileana D'Cruz when did she lose her virginity, she answers it like a boss

Ileana D'Cruz interacted with her fans on Tuesday and was asked by a fan about her virginity.

Actor Ileana D'Cruz recently found herself in a tricky spot when a fan asked her about her personal life on Instagram. The actor held an 'Ask Me Anything' session on Instagram when she came across a question about her virginity.

A fan asked her during the interaction, "Man...When did you lose your virginity?" To this, the actor replied, "Wow. Nosy much?? What would your mother tsk tsk." The actor has reportedly split from her husband, Andrew Kneebone. The two unfollowed each other on social media and

Ileana deleted all their pics from her social media pages. While the couple had never spoken about their relationship publicly, she had referred to him as her 'husband' in some old social media posts and was often spotted with him on lunches and dinners in the city.

According to SpotboyE, the couple isn't on talking terms, and is currently not in the mood to patch things up. Ileana had earlier told Hindustan Times in an interview, "Initially, I was told to not speak about my relationship. And while I don't have an issue talking about it,

it's unfair that people are being unnecessarily harsh to him (Andrew). It is unfair to subject him to harsh comments just because I am a celebrity. He is entitled to his privacy and respect and he deserves both in equal measure. He is a great person, and it did affect me when people left harsh comments on my social media posts. But I do give it back to nasty trolls."

Ileana will now be seen in Anees Bazmee's Pagalpanti which also stars Anil Kapoor, John Abraham, Arshad Warsi and Kriti Kharbanda. It is slated to release on November 22.



Mumbai rains

Amitabh Bachchan's residence Prateeksha waterlogged, Karan Deol's music launch cancelled

As rains wreaked havoc in Mumbai, the water entered the gates of Amitabh Bachchan's bungalow, Prateeksha on Wednesday.



The incessant rains in Mumbai have thrown normal life out of gear and the Bollywood celebrities are among many facing the problem of water logging. As the roads near Amitabh Bachchan's bungalow Prateeksha were clogged with rainwater, a video of water entering its gates surfaced online. The video shows muddy water entering the gates of Prateeksha as a guard stands in a yellow raincoat, observing the chaos. The senior actor was spotted with wife Jaya Bachchan and son Abhishek Bachchan at Mukesh Ambani's Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations on Monday. All three were dressed in white ethnic ensembles for the

puja. During the day, Kajol had shared a picture of the rain with the caption, 'Its lets-stay-at-home-and-watch-the-scary-rain kind of day!' Malaika Arora, who returned from her Austrian vacation, also shared a few pictures of rain photos on her Instagram stories. She shared pictures of the flora and enjoying the rain under an umbrella. Meanwhile, the trailer launch of Karan Deol and Sahher Bambha starrer Pal Pal Dil Ke Paas was postponed on Thursday due to the rain. Actor Sunny Deol, who is directing his son's debut film, released a statement: "I do not want any of you to go through any inconvenience due to rains today.

Hence, we have decided to postpone the event. Will keep everyone posted." He also circulated a video of the leads sharing that the launch will now take place tomorrow. "Guys as you can see its raining heavily in Mumbai today," said Sahher in the clip. "Because of this torrential weather, our media friends weren't able to reach for the trailer launch," Karan clarified. He then added: "Whether it rains or not tomorrow, the trailer will be launched 12:30 pm." Earlier, the event was scheduled for Wednesday at 11:30 pm at PVR Juhu. Pal Pal Dil Ke Paas is a love story and has been shot across various exotic locales of Manali.

Mission Mangal is Akshay Kumar's highest grossing film ever, earns estimated Rs 189.55 cr

Akshay Kumar has scored a new record with Mission Mangal. The film with India's Mars Mission at its heart has become the actor's highest earner ever.



Actor Akshay Kumar must be on a high as his latest film, Mission Mangal has reportedly become the highest grossing film of his career. A Business Standard report claimed Mission Mangal has eclipsed the collections of Akshay's 2.0 that also starred Rajinikanth and hit theatres last year. Starring Rajinikanth and Akshay, the Hindi version of S Shankar's film 2.0 had earned Rs 189.55 crore at the box office. Mission Mangal has now earned Rs 188 crore in 19 days, the report said. Starring Vidya Balan, Taapsee Pannu, Sonakshi Sinha and Nithya Menon in lead roles, apart from Akshay, Mission Mangal tells the story of India's unmanned Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), Mangalyaan, and how it was sent

into space on a shoestring budget. When it crosses the Rs 200-crore mark, Mission Mangala will become the fifth film this year to enter the coveted club after Vicky Kaushal's Uri: The Surgical strike, Shahid Kapoor's Kabir Singh, Salman Khan's Bharat and Ajay Devgn's Total Dhamaal. Earlier this week, trade analyst Taran Adarsh revealed that Mission Mangal is now Akshay's highest grossing film in Australia. "Mission Mangal is now #AkshayKumar's highest grossing film in #Australia... Total till 1 Sept 2019: A\$ 601,561 [?2.91 cr; still running]... Has crossed *lifetime biz* of #Housefull series, #Kesari, #PadMan and all #Akshay starrers in #Australia. @comScore," he tweeted.

*Saaho movie review Telugu**Prabhas tries hard in a film that is too silly to realise its ambitions*

The Prabhas and Shraddha Kapoor starrer is mostly underwhelming, with the grandeur and a few solid action stretches its only redeeming features.

Film: Saaho

Director: Sujeeth

Cast: Prabhas, Shraddha Kapoor, Arun Vijay, Neil Nithin Mukesh, Chunky Pandey, Jackie Shroff, Lal, Murali Sharma and Mandira Bedi

Rating: 2/5

Prabhas's Saaho is so ambitious in its scale that it almost fools you into believing it's a great film. Unfortunately, it doesn't even come close to being great and just manages to emerge as a decent watch, provided you're not tired by its

stretched run-time. The film ends up as one of those big budget attempts that's highly ambitious and silly at the same time. While Prabhas tries to hold it together in whatever way possible, Saaho is mostly underwhelming if not for the grandeur and couple of solid action stretches.

Saaho, just like Pawan Kalyan's Agnyaathavaasi, borrows its basic plot from French thriller Largo Winch. The plot is centred on an adopted son who has to prove

his legitimacy to take over his father's empire after he's brutally murdered. The twist revolves around the identity of the adopted son. But Saaho is packed with so many twists that it spoils the broth by the time the original identity of the son (no brownie point for guessing) is revealed, and if you're smart, you can easily see the twist coming halfway into the film. The twists are so conveniently written that it dilutes the shock value it brings along with it. As more twists are unraveled, Saaho ends up becoming a tiring watch; one where all the money spent on lavish visuals and action is only letdown by sloppy writing.

The film features some great acting talents. From Jackie Shroff to Mandira Bedi and

Chunky Pandey, it is hard to get a more powerful cast.

Sadly, none of these actors get to play a character that's even remotely exciting. Chunky Pandey speaks in short stories. Every time he's on screen, we hear a short story that has no purpose at all. If only more time was spent on writing than making these characters look suave on screen, we'd have had better performances. Neil Nithin Mukesh is clueless in a role that gets overshadowed by Prabhas and even by Shraddha Kapoor at times. Arun Vijay looked like he was kidnapped from the sets of Mani Ratnam's Chekka Chivantha Vaanam, playing a similar character and even sounding like it when he strains in a crucial scene. Shraddha is decent and puts

on a show in the action sequences.

Prabhas tries to shoulder Saaho single-handedly, and he manages to keep it afloat as much as possible. But there are some portions – especially in the first half - that are so flat that even he can't save the film. The trailer of Saaho promised a high-octane, power-packed action film but all that's packed into one bloated segment towards the end. As much as the last 15 odd minutes features some breathtaking action, Saaho doesn't leave you with a high. In fact, it leaves you with the thought that it could've cut down on a lot of flab which include couple of songs. Saaho, in short, ends up as a film that never quite makes the intended impact in spite showing promise.

Alia Bhatt on working with Mahesh Bhatt for Sadak 2: 'He is so emotionally charged and high all the time'

Alia Bhatt says while there are some directors she is keen to work with, she largely trusts her gut feeling when it comes to choosing a role.

Alia Bhatt's repertoire tells a lot about her choices. Be it Highway (2014), Udta Punjab, Dear Zindagi (both 2016), Raazi (2018) or even Gully Boy, the 26-year-old has been a part of films that not just explored interesting narratives but also gave her a chance to play different characters.

Not to forget, that most of her films have also got the cash registers ringing. So how does she make these choices? "It's not about being sorted. It's just that I am honest about choosing films that I myself would watch. As an audience if I don't want to watch a particular kind of film more than once then I don't want to make it. The next thing is variety..." she says.

Further elaborating, the actor adds, "There is no process that I follow; my instinct drives me to whether I want to do a quick film, a big film, a thriller or a happy film... Mostly, it's my gut feeling that drives me... Also as an actor there is a certain kind of directors

that I want to work with..." And she mentions her excitement to have got the opportunity to collaborate with director SS Rajamouli for his next, RRR. "I look up to his work and have been a fan even before Baahubali released. In fact not many would know that when I met him at the airport I was like, 'Sir I want to work with you'. After Baahubali, the moment I heard that he is working on his next film, I knew I have to work with him. He was quite surprised and told me that he was also thinking of working with me and that I would have got a call from him anyway. It was little random at that time but then later we met and everything fell in place," Alia sounds quite keyed up narrating the incident. Extremely particular about giving her best to the project, she adds, "I am even learning all my lines in Telugu and trying to understand them well. I want every scene to be authentic ... Not every day you get to work

with people like him, I want to give my best." Apart from RRR, Alia also has first part of the trilogy Brahmastra and Sadak 2 coming up. While she has finished shooting for Brahmastra, the actor is right now busy with both RRR and Sadak 2. She is collaborating with her father and half-sister Pooja Bhatt for the

first time for Sadak 2. And Alia describes her state of mind being both "excited and nervous". "Working with family is amazing. The whole vibe is that of fun and excitement. The character I am playing is both different and difficult. A lot of effort is required. Also my

father is so emotionally charged and high all the time that it's another experience altogether. Initially, I was a little nervous but now I am in the flow, enjoying every bit of the journey and more excited to see this film release. Once the release date nears, I'll be nervous again," she laughs.



Calcutta HC tells Shah Rukh Khan to file affidavit in IIPM case

The petitioners' lawyer Debanjan Dutta told the high court on Thursday that the chief justice of Delhi High Court while hearing a public interest litigation in 2017 had declared IIPM a fake institution without any affiliation.

(News Agencies) Calcutta High Court on Thursday directed Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan to file an affidavit on the nature of his relationship with Indian Institute of Planning and Management (IIPM) and his role in spreading its business operations.

Justice Debangshu Basak of the high court was hearing a petition

by two students of IIPM's Salt Lake campus, which closed down along with other branches in the country. The students alleged that they lost more than Rs 20 lakh each they gave during their admission to IIPM.

The petitioners' lawyer Debanjan Dutta told the high court on Thursday that the chief justice of Delhi High Court while hearing a public interest

litigation in 2017 had declared IIPM a fake institution without any affiliation. Dutta also sought a probe by the Criminal Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against IIPM.

Dutta said the petitioners filed a complaint at the Salt Lake Electronic Complex police station in March 2018 but there was no proper investigation. Subsequently, they moved Calcutta High

Court in November 2018, charging Khan, IIPM promoter Arindam Choudhuri and their companies with fraud, criminal breach of trust and criminal conspiracy. Since Khan was IIPM's brand ambassador, they also sought a CBI investigation against him.

Justice Basak said Khan, the West Bengal government and IIPM's owner will also have to file



an affidavit stating why within two weeks of reopening of the court after puja recess, the order said.

Intermediaries must be accountable

They assume the role of media companies, but escape the legal obligations that come with it



(By our staff reporter) : Today is the world of intermediaries. We are surrounded by intermediaries, which provide all kinds of services to us, using data and information in electronic form. A number of these intermediaries provide multimedia and related media services. They often assume the role of media companies. Actual media companies are governed by specific legal frameworks.

(Contd on page 21)

Attorney Ravi Batra addressed "Countering terrorism through innovative approaches and the use of new and emerging technologies" Conference in Minsk, Belarus.



(By our staff reporter) : Recently, a high-level Conference, was jointly convened by Belarus' Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei and UN Office of Counter-Terrorism Under-Secretary General Vladimir Voronkov, "Countering terrorism through innovative approaches and the use of new and emerging technologies," Minsk, Belarus.

Jointly convened Panel by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Minsk Dialogue and Belarus' MFA "When the Past Meets the Future: Cooperative security in new geopolitical and technological realities," Ravi Batra, Chair, National Advisory Council for South Asian Affairs, USA gave a keynote address title "Freedom, Despite History?" to the conference.

Mob Lynching Who's the villain? Social media or trust deficit



(By our staff reporter) In an interactive session with the top brass of Uttar Pradesh's police force, I casually asked, "Will you feel safe in plain clothes or will your family be safe when they travel by public transport, instead of an escorted police vehicle?" There was a pin-drop silence, but later some of them privately admitted that even the police are not safe in plain clothes. It's the uniform that offers them protection. But, even the uniform is no more a guarantee of safety in this season of mob hysteria, violence and lynching. Policemen have been beaten up, police stations burnt and senior officials, minus their security guards, accosted by unruly mobs.

(Contd on page 21)

Checkmate, Pakistan How India has successfully changed the strategic dynamics over Kashmir

By Lawrence Sellin

The year 2019 has been one marked by significant strategic successes for India, countering the persistent pernicious behavior of Pakistan — and fundamentally shifting the geopolitical dynamics on the subcontinent.

On February 26, 2019, the Indian Air Force (IAF) conducted a successful deep penetration raid on a training camp of the Pakistan-based Islamist militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) near the town of

Balakot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan.

The air strike was in retaliation for a terrorist attack in the Pulwama district, Jammu and Kashmir, India, that resulted in the deaths of over 40 Indian Central Reserve Police Force personnel, for which Jaish-e-Mohammed claimed responsibility. One could debate the tactical effectiveness of the Balakot raid — but the strategic impact was unmistakable.

Up until then, Pakistan's 4th generation warfare strategy against

India combined the use of terrorists — which offers plausible deniability — with the inherent existential threat provided by its nuclear arsenal to immunise those terrorist operations. India's response to the terrorist attack in Pulwama strategically decoupled Pakistan's volatile linkage of terrorism and the potential use of nuclear weapons.

One basis for Pakistan's continuous terrorist attacks against India has been Islamabad's claim that Kashmir is "disputed" territory — which has resulted in two wars

between India and Pakistan, the Kargil conflict of 1999 and many other armed clashes. In an attempt to disrupt that cycle of violence, the Indian government amended Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution, which had given special status to Jammu and Kashmir — a change viewed by the vast majority of the international community as an internal matter. Pakistan has long sought to "internationalise" what is, in essence, a bilateral disagreement over territorial sovereignty. For weeks after India's action, Pakistan has called for a



meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to discuss Jammu and Kashmir. Thanks to the support of its "all weather ally" China, Pakistan did get a closed-door Security Council debate, the outcome of which was

a diplomatic "nothing burger." According to one United Nations diplomat, members failed to even come up with a statement to the press — the lowest level of Security Council action.

(Contd on page 21)