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About 100 people fall ill on Emirates flight to New York: US authorities

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a statement that about 100 people complained of feeling sick on Emirates Flight 521, which landed with least 521 passengers at John F Kennedy International Airport.



STORY ON page 18

Pakistan's military has quietly reached out to India for talks



(Agencies) ISLAMABAD: Concerned about Pakistan's international isolation and faltering economy, the country's powerful military has quietly reached out to its archrival India about resuming peace talks, but the response was tepid, according to Western diplomats and a senior Pakistani official. The outreach, initiated by the army's top commander, Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, began months before Pakistan's national elections. Pakistan offered to resume on-and-off talks with India over their border dispute in the Kashmir region, which stalled in 2015 as violence flared up there.

(Contd on page 18)



Manmohan Singh says Modi govt 'failing on all fronts'

(Agencies) Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government of failure on all fronts, saying it had led to agrarian distress, economic turmoil and deteriorating relations with neighbouring countries, and called for a national debate on providing an alternative narrative. Speaking at the launch of senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal's book 'Shades of Truth--A Journey Derailed', Singh also charged the government with failure to fulfil a plethora of promises made to the people during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and claimed that national institutions vital for good governance are experiencing unprecedented new strains. (Contd on page 18)

'Whole thing is crazy'

US President Donald Trump wants to stop subsidies to India, China

Attacking the WTO, US President Donald Trump said he thinks that the World Trade Organization was probably the worst of all.



(Agencies) President Donald Trump on Friday said he wants to stop the subsidies that growing economies like India and China have been receiving as he wants the US, which he considers as a "developing nation", to grow faster than anybody. Addressing a fundraiser event in the Fargo

city of North Dakota, he also accused the World Trade Organization (WTO) of allowing China to become a "great economic power". "We have some of these countries that are considered growing economies. (Contd on page 18)

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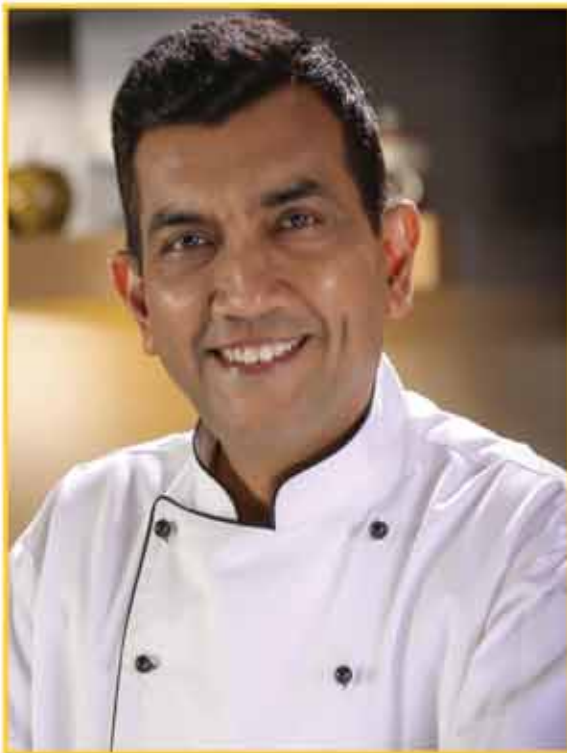
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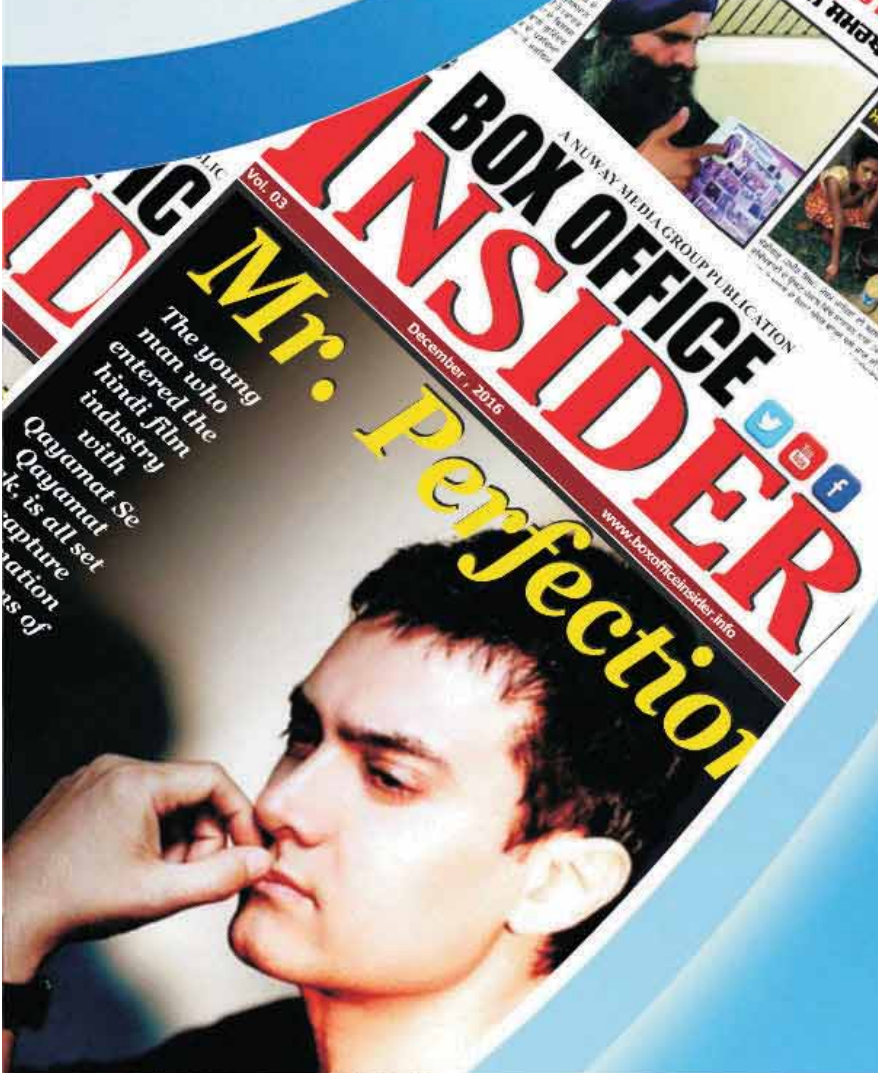
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As China courts central and eastern Europe, whither India?



In a rare high-level engagement by India in an increasingly pivotal region, President Ram Nath Kovind is on a visit to Bulgaria and the Czech Republic.

Long seen as an area of competing Russian and western interests, central and eastern Europe (CEE) has not always featured prominently in India's foreign policy agenda. Despite trips to 11 western European countries since 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is yet to visit central or eastern Europe. In part, this is because economic and people-to-people links remain weak. The region accounts for only 1.2% of India's exports. While Indian investment is slowly growing — consider Apollo Tyres' \$557-million investment in a greenfield facility in Hungary in 2017 — it is still modest. Despite these constraints, the CEE countries appear keen to bolster business ties with India in agriculture, energy, transportation, cyber

security, and information technology.

While Indian engagement with the CEE to date has been mostly economic, it is natural that it should start assuming a strategic character as well, not least because of China's sustained outreach. In July, Bulgaria hosted the seventh '16+1' Summit, a meeting of central and eastern European leaders with China that saw participation from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, the Baltic States, Albania, and six former Yugoslav countries.

Since its initiation in 2012, the '16+1' framework has been somewhat controversial. Although Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has stated that the mechanism is not a geopolitical tool, many western European officials have raised concerns about Beijing using the body to drive a wedge between the European Union and some of its member states, 11 of

The main obstacle, other than scale, is the lack of exposure and knowledge about opportunities in each other's countries among business communities in India and the CEE states. Greater political engagement can help to rectify some of that.

whom are participants.

For Beijing, the region's true significance lies in Europe being the endpoint of the network of infrastructure projects that comprise China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While many European leaders initially welcomed Chinese investments as part of BRI, some have started to express doubts. British Prime Minister Theresa May recently emphasised that China needs to adhere to global standards. Similarly, French President Emmanuel Macron has argued: "The ancient Silk Roads were never only Chinese... If they are roads, they cannot be one-way." But despite the considerable coverage — and growing anxiety — over BRI and 16+1 in Europe over the past few years, a few realities need to be kept in mind about Chinese engagement with the CEE. First, as in other regions, there are significant gaps between the amounts of Chinese investment promised and the amounts delivered. A special \$11.15 billion fund established by China has not been tapped,

grand plans for a Budapest-Belgrade railway line have been derailed for potentially violating EU tendering rules, and talk of China financing a new airport in Warsaw appears to have lost steam. Meanwhile, China's economic relations with western Europe dwarf those with the CEE states. Beijing's largest trade relationship in the region is with Poland, but its exports there are still less than a quarter of its outgoing trade to Germany. The disparity applies equally to investment. In the UK alone, China has been involved in deals worth over \$70 billion, compared to just \$3.3 billion in the nine CEE states for which reliable data is available. Nonetheless, regional leaders point to the dire need for infrastructure investment from China, and cite the successful completion of Chinese-backed projects such as the Pupin Bridge in Serbia and highways in Macedonia. Officials from these countries also argue that the 16+1 format is the only means for smaller countries to engage bilaterally with Beijing. In private,

diplomats from the region reveal concerns about the impact of Chinese investments on trade imbalances, the levels of associated debt, and political strings being attached. For instance, Montenegro's debt to China has increased substantially over the course of the construction of a recent highway.

Beyond the gap between promises and delivery, there is also immense variation in China's economic relations with the CEE countries. As of 2015, Hungary was the largest recipient of official Chinese financing, while other countries had received negligible sums. Among non-EU states, Serbia has been the largest recipient, while Chinese investment in the Baltic States has been relatively insignificant. Similarly, while China's exports have increased across the region, its trade with the likes of Bosnia and Herzegovina or Albania remains marginal.

Finally, despite the relatively modest economic impact of

16+1 and the variation in relations, China is already beginning to demonstrate its political influence in the region. For example, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro have supported China's controversial claims to the South China Sea. Similarly, Hungary has sometimes been outspoken in calling for China to be recognised as a market economy, a position at odds with the rest of the European Union.

The scepticism of China's efforts naturally presents opportunities for India. Indeed, in one area in which India is carving out a normative leadership role for itself (in terms of sustainable connectivity), central and eastern Europe may well be an area of promise, one in which India can support efforts by the European Union and others. But the main obstacle, other than scale, is the lack of exposure and knowledge about opportunities in each other's countries among business communities in India and the CEE states. Greater political engagement can help to rectify some of that.

Why India's tourism sector needs close monitoring

There is no doubt that India needs tourists, but it's imperative that we plan for the long haul, and not focus on just the quick gains



The United Nations World Tourism Organisation, a specialised agency of the UN, has said that international tourist arrivals in India grew from 14.57 million in 2016 to 15.54 million in 2017 and

receipts increased from \$22.42 billion to \$27.36 billion. This is good news for India because tourism is one of the mainstays of the economy. In fact, almost 300 leading tour operators from across the

globe will be in New Delhi later this month to participate in an event that focuses on marketing India as a destination. This is part of the government's efforts to make a

renewed attempt at selling its tourist destinations to the world, aiming for 20 million tourist arrivals over the next three years. This is not an ambitious target. India can reach it provided the Centre and the states take care of certain basic issues: security, infrastructure and connectivity (the latest round of the UDAN regional connectivity scheme has awarded 325 routes to airlines as well as helicopter operators for enhancing air connectivity to 73 new airports and helipads in tier 2 and tier

3 cities). While the rush of tourists is good news, this is also an opportune moment to be cautious about the way we expand the sector's footprint. For example, look at what has happened to Barcelona and Venice. Fed up with constant streams of tourists, both places are now resisting them. In other places, the situation has come to such a pass that Airbnb and the so-called sharing economy have been accused of "hollowing out our [western] cities". Amsterdam is restricting short-term renting out of properties by residents

after protests against the swamping of the city by tourists last year. Problems have beset Shimla, Ladakh and Goa in India where the unregulated tourist rush has led to serious environmental problems. Recently, the Uttarakhand High Court banned trekking after local people said irresponsible trekkers are destroying the meadows in the state. There is no doubt that India needs tourists, but it's also imperative that we plan for the long haul, and not focus on just the quick, short-term gains.

Washington must address Indian concerns over the effects of its new sanctions on Iran and Russia

The twin US pressures on the energy and defence fronts have made India acutely aware of the risks of aligning itself closer with Washington. After ensnaring India in its Iran and Russia sanctions, Washington has sought to save the promising Indo-US strategic partnership by throwing in concessions. In reality, the concessions are intended as tools of leverage.



The US has emerged as India's most important partner. The inaugural India-US two-plus-two ministerial dialogue will help highlight the growing convergence of their interests in the Indo-Pacific region. However, in India's neighbourhood, Washington and New Delhi are still not on the same page. For example, after gratuitously assassinating the third consecutive chief of the Pakistani Taliban this summer to please Pakistan's military generals, the US held face-to-face talks with the Pakistan-backed Afghan Taliban in Qatar. While the Pakistani Taliban is the Pakistan military's nemesis, the Afghan Taliban is America's main battlefield foe in Afghanistan, yet the group is still missing from the US list of foreign terrorist organisations.

More broadly, the US and India have become key partners in seeking to create a free, open and democracy-led Indo-Pacific. The critical missing link in this strategy, however, is the South China Sea, which connects the Indian and Pacific oceans. US reluctance to impose tangible costs on China's continued expansionism in the South China Sea has emboldened Chinese inroads in the Indian Ocean.

One issue likely to figure prominently in the two-plus-two meeting is how India has emerged as a prime victim of two new sets of US economic sanctions — on Iran and on Russia. The new sanctions directly impinge on India, a longstanding significant buyer of Russian weapons and the second-

largest importer of Iranian oil after China.

The twin US pressures on the energy and defence fronts have made India acutely aware of the risks of aligning itself closer with Washington. After ensnaring India in its Iran and Russia sanctions, Washington has sought to save the promising Indo-US strategic partnership by throwing in concessions. In reality, the concessions are intended as tools of leverage.

For example, the Pentagon's top Asia official, characterising Indian media reports as "misleading", has made it clear that India can expect no waiver from Russia-related sanctions if it signs major new defence deals with Moscow. The congressional waiver crimps India's leeway with its stringent conditions, including a six-monthly presidential certification specifying the other side's active steps to cut its inventory of Russian military hardware.

On the Iran-related sanctions, no waiver for India is still in sight. With global shipping operators already pulling back from business with Iran and oil prices rising, India's energy-import bill is increasing. US sanctions threaten to affect even India's Pakistan-bypassing transportation corridor to Afghanistan via Iran, including the Chabahar port project. The Trump administration is clearly seeking to influence India's arms-procurement and energy-import policies. This is in keeping with its increasing unilateralism, including dictating terms to allies and friends. Canada, for example, has been warned

to accept US's terms or face exclusion from the new NAFTA. Japan is buying a \$2.1 billion US missile-defence system, not because it can effectively protect it from missile attacks, but because of US pressure to buy more American military hardware.

Washington is similarly pressuring New Delhi to buy more American weapons, although the US has already emerged as the largest arms seller to India. But, while the US basically sells defensive military systems, Russia has armed India with offensive weapons, including a nuclear-powered submarine and an aircraft carrier. Washington is also seeking to sell more oil and gas to India, besides pressing it to switch imports from Iran to Saudi Arabia and other US allies. However, next-door Iran, offering discounted pricing, will remain critical to India's energy-diversification strategy. Meanwhile, the US — after its success in getting India to accept a logistics assistance pact, which includes access to designated Indian military sites — has pushed for India to endorse the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA),

which the Indian armed forces initially feared could compromise their network. India, instead of leveraging its ties with Washington, appears set to announce at least an in-principle agreement on a modified COMCASA during the two-plus-two meeting, if not sign it. Why is it that, in the run-up to any important summit or high-level meeting, India agrees to make a key concession to the other side? And why is that the other side doesn't feel similarly pressured to make a concession to India? Isn't reciprocity the first principle of diplomacy? Before finalising COMCASA, India should clinch some major defence deals with Russia, including for the S-400 system, so as to test the US response. Instead, it is concluding new defence deals with the US. The US and India will remain close friends. Washington, however, must fully address Indian concerns over the extraterritorial effects of its new sanctions on Iran and Russia. Make no mistake: Washington has introduced a major irritant in the bilateral relationship that the twice-postponed two-plus-two dialogue cannot purge.



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The US must stay the course on the terror issue

Pakistan's leadership is expected to argue in meetings with US officials that it can still play a central role in ending the war in Pakistan, but this can only happen if it stops backing and providing safe havens to top commanders of the Taliban and Haqqani Network.

Ahead of secretary of state Mike Pompeo's visit to Islamabad on September 5 with the American military chief, the US has signalled it is serious about its demand that Pakistan crack down on terrorists operating from its soil and choke their funding. This has come in the form of a move to cancel the payment of \$300 million as reimbursement from the US Coalition Support Fund for Pakistan's expenses on the war on terror, mainly in support of operations by foreign forces in Afghanistan.

This is in addition to the cancellation of another payment of \$500 million from the Coalition Support Fund earlier this year and the

suspension of security aid worth nearly \$2 billion in January on the orders of President Donald Trump. Mr Trump had famously accused Pakistan of providing only "lies and deceit" for \$33 billion in aid over nearly two decades, and recent remarks by top US officials indicate the thinking of the Trump administration hasn't changed. Defence secretary, Jim Mattis, said last week the "primary part" of discussions between Mr Pompeo and the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, General Joseph Dunford, and their Pakistani counterparts will be the need to act against terrorists. Furthermore, the US seems in no mood to relent, despite Pakistan's assertion it

is playing a key role to end the fighting in Afghanistan. This is largely because of the large amount of information in the public domain about the continuing activities of groups such as the Haqqani Network and the Afghan Taliban, whose leadership is based in Pakistan. For India, Pakistan-based groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed continue to be a concern, with videos recently shared on social media showing JeM operatives openly raising funds during Eid-ul-Azha despite Pakistan being placed on the "grey list" of the Financial Action Task Force for failing to curb terror financing. Pakistan's leadership is expected



to argue in meetings with US officials that it can still play a central role in ending the war in Pakistan, but this can only happen if it stops backing and providing safe havens to top commanders of the Taliban and Haqqani Network. Except for a token reference to the 2015 National Action Plan for terrorism, Pakistan's new Prime Minister Imran Khan has given no hint of what he plans to do to counter terror. The US must stay the course so that Pakistan's support for the Taliban doesn't allow the militants to strengthen their position in Afghanistan.

Raj Kapoor's priceless legacy is up for sale

The sons of the late Raj Kapoor have decided to sell RK Studios. Two generations of Indians haven't an emotional connect with it

When circumstances compel us to narrate tales of tragedy and mishap, even news developments can demoralise us or make us anxious. The subject I've chosen to write on this time may not affect the country or the world, but it sure moves my heart. In the times of a vitiated public discourse, this is a rare event.

News has it that the sons of the late Raj Kapoor have decided to sell RK Studios. They say the film studio has turned into a loss-making unit. It was gutted when the sets of a reality show caught fire last year and they incurred huge losses. Attempts to modernise it may run into difficulties. Parking space is scarce and since it is a densely populated neighbourhood, expanding the built area is impossible. It is a historical truth that whoever flourishes inevitably collapses one day, but since when have such philosophical proverbs helped reduce the pain that one feels?

Two generations of independent India have a deep emotional connect with the studio. Let me begin with my own family. Both my father and I watched Awaara

at a special stage in our lives. When the film released, my father was a student of BA and it left a profound impact on him. Similarly, when I was pursuing my graduation, Awaara was back at one of the cinemas in Agra just for a week. I rushed to watch the first show and even today, Raj Kapoor's mood in the song 'Hum tujhse mohabbat kar ke sanam, hanste bhi rahe, rote bhi rahe', is fresh in my memories. It appears the background music at the beginning of the song and the visuals of a knife stuck into a tree trunk have registered on the hard-disk of my mind this very moment. A hand pulls the knife out of the tree trunk and then the camera closes in on Raj Kapoor's melancholic face. He starts to sing and notices the name of Rita, the leading lady, engraved on the trunk of another tree. Unconsciously, he begins to carve out the last letter of the name with the Rampuri knife, as if he is stabbing at his heart instead of the tree. The words in the backdrop reach our ears: Ai dil ki lagi kya tujhko khabar, yeh dard utha bhar aayi nazar (Do you know what has injured my heart? A pain is rising and

tears have welled up). As the song moves towards its crescendo, a breathless Nargis emerges and stands behind Kapoor. By this time the lights have dimmed. A gripping darkness and reckless wind embrace the protagonists. This inimitable fusion of camera work, music, lyrics and acting managed to tug at the heart-strings of everybody sitting in the cinema. One doesn't know how much Krishna Cottage contributed to this song, but it is clear that the venue inspired Raj Kapoor to create some immortal work, energised him and helped him take great creative strides. The juiciest love stories of famous actresses also originated here. It was here that Ganesh Chaturthi and Holi were celebrated with gusto and spirit by Raj Kapoor. The biggest names in the film industry longed to get an invitation from him, but it would be a mistake to assume it was just a playground for the great showman. Contrary to this, RK? Studios was a gurukul (learning ground) where Hindi cinema came into its own and acquired the strength to



become world-class. The popularity of Mera joota hai Jaapani and Awara hoon is still alive in people's minds. In a world that changes loyalties every day, which institution can stay timeless and eternal? But RK and his studio managed to achieve this. That's why the news of its sale makes me sad. I remember a lively evening in Bonn, when many years ago, along with a famous danseuse from India, I visited the residence of Beethoven, the creator of the Ninth Symphony. I was thinking: why can't we Indians conserve the memories of our artistes? Today, years later, the news about the sale of RK Studios has again made me restive. Granted, the fire in 2017 wreaked havoc. The mask

used in Mera Naam Joker, the piano that featured in a number of timeless songs, the dress worn by Dimple Kapadia in Bobby and along with it, many other articles, were charred. But the fire could not burn RK Studios. Even after that, people passing through Chembur would ask the taxi driver: "Please tell me when we reach RK Studios." Conserving this heritage is the responsibility of not just his sons, but the Indian film industry and the government. If Raj Kapoor were alive, he would have said in his inimitable style: "Hum Hindustanion ko virasat sanjone ki aadat nahin hai, Mrs Disa" (We Indians are not in the habit of conserving our heritage Mrs Disa).

Social Media Giants to Flag Fake News During Poll Campaigning: EC



(Agencies) New Delhi: The Election Commission would be working closely with Facebook, Google and Twitter during the forthcoming Assembly and 2019 Lok Sabha elections to keep an eye on political advertisements and publicity material on their platforms and block fake news, and defamatory and objectionable content, said news reports on Thursday. According to The Times of India, the trio has also

agreed to observe a 48-hour "silence period" before polling. During this time, they would ensure that no political advertisements go online. According to the report, the decision of the social media companies to screen and block negative political advertisements was voluntary and they had assured the EC that they would self-censor political content to identify partisan posts which can disturb a level-playing field or involve 'negative campaigning, fake news, personal attacks and inflammatory content'. It said that apart from blocking objectionable material and

advertisements, they will also flag such content to the EC. This will be the practice for 12 of the 14-day campaigning window and political advertisements and posts will be prohibited in the 48 hours prior to polling. The daily quoted Chief Election Commissioner OP Rawat as saying that "The EC's interactions with the three social media companies are complete. The companies will have posts that involve healthy campaigning. The action shall be completely voluntary." The move follows EC's decision to look at treating social media platforms as potential carriers of fake news which can

influence polls. These platforms, like Twitter and WhatsApp, may be brought within the ambit of paid news, said a DNA report. As of now, there is no specific law against "paid news". If such a law was to be enforced, every promoted tweet, post and video by political parties on any social media platform would be treated as paid news. Speaking to the daily, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) OP Rawat said, "There are several allegations in the world against social media platforms and they are subject to many probes. We are taking all steps to contain this so that our elections do not get influenced by it."

Gay sex decriminalised: History owes apology to LGBT community and kin, says Supreme Court

Section 377 Supreme Court Verdict HIGHLIGHTS: The verdict Thursday was on five petitions moved by dancer Navtej Johar, journalist Sunil Mehra, chef Ritu Dalmia, hoteliers Aman Nath and Keshav Suri and business executive Ayesha Kapur.

(Agencies) Section 377 The verdict Thursday Supreme Court Verdict Live Updates: A five-judge Constitutional bench of the Supreme Court Thursday, in four separate but concurring judgments, legalised same-sex relations between consenting adults. It termed the 2013 judgment constitutionally impermissible. The apex court was hearing a clutch of petitions challenging criminalisation of homosexuality. The five-judge bench was headed by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra and comprised Justices R F Nariman, A M Khanwilkar, D Y Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra.

During the four-day hearing earlier this year, the Centre had said it would not contest the petitions, and left the decision to the "wisdom of the court". In its affidavit, the Ministry of Home Affairs said: "I state and submit that so far as the constitutional validity (of) Section 377 to the extent it applies to 'consensual acts of adults in private' is concerned,

the Union of India would leave the said question to the wisdom of this Hon'ble Court

Arun Jaitley says reasons for fall of rupee are global, not domestic

(Agencies) Union finance minister Arun Jaitley on Wednesday said that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was doing whatever necessary on the rupee, which continued its fall against the dollar, and there was no need for any "panic" or "knee-jerk reactions". "RBI is certainly doing whatever is necessary. I don't think there is any need for the world's fastest-growing economy to come out with panic and knee-jerk reactions," he said at a media briefing. "We must bear in mind that dollar has strengthened against almost every currency. The rupee has either consistently strengthened or remained in a range, not weakened.... compared to what it

was four-five years ago, rupee is better off," Jaitley said. "If you look at the domestic economic situation and global situation, there are not domestic reasons attributable to this, but all reasons are global," he added. The Indian rupee's unabated fall continued for the sixth straight session on Wednesday, hitting yet another closing low of 71.75, down 17 paise against the US currency as surging oil prices and weak trend in emerging market currencies weighed on sentiments. Intra-day, the domestic unit plummeted to a historic low of 71.97 a dollar before finding some respite, staging some recovery towards the tail-end.



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Air taxi to cut travel time in Mumbai by 90%: Uber

Uber had named Dallas and Los Angeles in the US as the first two cities for the commercial launch of its aerial taxi service by 2023 and has been on the lookout to select an international city as its third partner.

(Agencies) Taxi hailing company Uber on Wednesday claimed that its air taxi can cut travel time in a congested city like Mumbai by 90%. It had named Dallas and Los Angeles in the US as the first two cities for the commercial launch of its aerial taxi service by 2023 and has been on the lookout to select an international city as its third

partner. Uber has shortlisted five countries — India, Japan, Australia, Brazil and France — and one of them will become the first Uber Air City outside of the US. Eric Allison, chief executive, Uber Aviation Program, illustrated that the 100-minute road journey from the city airport in the western suburbs to downtown Churchgate in south Mumbai can come down to

10 minutes using the futuristic service.

He added that the cost of flying through the service, which aims to use rooftops of high rises and erect dedicated 'skyports', will be at par with its taxis. "This is the type of urban mobility game changer that this kind of solution brings. We think that once we are able to do it at scale as we are able to drive fully into it

with the cost that these VTOL (vertical take-off landing) vehicles produce, we can do it at a cost comparable to our Uber X cost per passenger mile basis," said Allison. He gave a presentation on the service, explaining that the vehicles used for it are akin to helicopters with multiple rotors that will fly low to keep the airspace free for jets and also have low noise



levels. According to reports, Allison is slated to meet government officials in New Delhi Thursday for the service. According to the company, it is targeting to have electric powered vehicles which will fly in congested cities and is hoping for developments in battery technology for making up to 100 kms trips. It eventually plans to fly the vehicles automated, sans any drivers, to do many trips across cities.

20 bridges in Kolkata and Howrah past expiry dates, says Mamata Banerjee



(Agencies) As many as 20 bridges in the twin cities of Kolkata and Howrah are weak and unsafe as they are beyond their "expiry dates", Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee said on Thursday, announcing a ban on long trucks with "10 and 20 wheels" on such bridges. She said the bridges and flyovers such as Santragachi (Howrah), Ultadanga, Sealdah, Belgachia and Dhakuria are working "past their expiry dates." Civil engineers said by "expiry date", the chief minister probably meant design life that is usually 50 years for bridges. This period is calculated taking into account historic data such as earthquakes and wind speed and load projections such as rise in vehicular traffic. In a bid to prolong the lives of these structures and ensure public safety, the chief minister said the government are banning the movement of extra-long and heavy vehicles on them. "These don't serve any

purpose," she said. She also said that police will strictly prevent the overloading of trucks. "When nine tonnes is the limit, some are plying with 15 tonnes of goods. I have asked the police to stop this practice that also put bridges under avoidable stress," she said. The chief minister also said the bridges that have become weak were not made during their tenure. "Some of these were made during the rule of the CPI(M). Some were made even before them," she added. On the specific point of the Majerhat bridge, a section of which collapsed on September 4 killing three persons, she said she has set up a 10-member investigative committee led by chief secretary Malay De to inquire into the incident. The only technical person in the body is a retired chief engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD). The body is supposed to submit its report "at the shortest possible time", possibly within seven-eight days.

US asks Pakistan to act against culprits of Uri, Pathankot, Mumbai attacks

In the two-plus-two dialogue between the India and US, the two countries also decided to increase information-sharing efforts on known or suspected terrorists.

(Agencies) A joint statement issued by India and the US after the two-plus-two talks in New Delhi on September 6, mentions Pakistan twice in the context of "cross border terrorist attacks", and even refers to the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai, raising the hope that Trump administration will walk the talk on ramping up diplomatic pressure on India's neighbour to rein in terrorist outfits.

The two-plus-two dialogue between external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj and defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman and their US counterparts Secretary of State Michael R Pompeo and Secretary of Defence James N Mattis saw the two countries strongly urging Pakistan to take various measures to stop cross border terrorism. "India supports President Trump's South Asia Policy. His call for Pakistan to stop its policy of supporting cross-border terrorism finds resonance with us," Swaraj said. The mention of "cross-border terrorist attacks" in the joint statement further buttressed India's position that Pakistan continues to use its territory to aid and abet terrorist attacks



against India. The joint statement mentioned Pakistan twice, urging the country to act against terrorist outfits that target India; a similar statement in 2016 had mentioned the neighbour only once. The sides also decided to increase "information-sharing efforts on known or suspected terrorists," the joint statement issued after the meeting said. "The counter-terrorism cooperation between India and the US has acquired a new qualitative edge and purpose. We have agreed to deepen ties in international forums like the United Nations and the Financial Action Task Force", Sushma Swaraj said. "The ministers denounced any use of terrorist proxies in the region, and in this

context, they called on Pakistan to ensure that the territory under its control is not used to launch terrorist attacks on other countries. On the eve of the 10-year anniversary of the 26/11 Mumbai attack, they called on Pakistan to bring to justice perpetrators of the Mumbai, Pathankot, Uri, and other cross-border terrorist attacks," said the joint statement. The 26/11 terrorist attacks in Mumbai killed 166 people including six Americans. The two sides also expressed satisfaction over the working of the a bilateral dialogue on designation of terrorists launched in 2017. This is aimed at strengthening cooperation and action against terrorist groups, including Al-Qa'ida, ISIS, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, the Haqqani Network, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, D-Company, and their affiliates. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who met Pakistan's new Prime Minister Imran Khan Wednesday ahead of landing in India for the dialogue pressed him to take "sustained and decisive measures" against terrorists threatening regional peace and stability. Pompeo's statement came days after the US cancelled \$300 million in military aid to Islamabad for failing to rein in the terror groups operating from its soil.

Scheduled Castes among worst sufferers of India's job problem

Social discrimination and socio-economic realities add to disadvantages faced by Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the labour market.

(Agencies) Although we do not have employment trends from National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) after 2011-12, anecdotal evidence suggests that India's job challenge might have worsened in this period. The slow pace of job creation inflicts greater suffering on the workforce in an economy. This suffering however is not the same for all workers. Scheduled Castes (SCs), who are at the bottom of the social ladder in India, are among the worst sufferers. Entrenched social discrimination and existing socio-economic realities add to the disadvantages faced by SCs in the labour market.



SCs have the lowest land — the most important productive asset — ownership in India. This makes them more dependent on wage labour.

Statistics prove this point. According to the 2011-12 NSSO statistics, the share of wage labourers among SCs was 63%. This is significantly higher than the values for other social groups. These figures were 44% for Other Backward Classes (OBCs), 42% for upper castes and 46% for the rest. Even among wage labourers, SCs have a much greater share of casual wage workers, which signifies higher job insecurity and poor earnings. The share of casual wage labour was 47 percent for SCs compared with one third for OBC/higher caste /rest, and all India average. In fact, of the total casual labourers in the country, about 32 percent are SC, which is double their population share of 16 percent.

The disadvantage faced by SCs extends beyond their disproportionate dependence on wage work. Because, SCs face caste-based discrimination in hiring, they also have a greater unemployment rate than the rest

of the population. According to the latest NSSO statistics, the unemployment rate among SCs was 1.7 percentage points higher than the all-India average. SCs have had the highest unemployment rate in India since the 1990s. Higher unemployment among SCs can be seen for young workers and workers with similar levels of education. This underlines the fact that it is a systemic problem.

Why is unemployment rate higher among SCs when compared with OBCs and higher castes? Economic research points towards the discrimination of SC workers in hiring in the private sector. Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar has argued in Annihilation of caste (1936) that the restriction on SCs to take the occupation of high castes will reduce their chances of employment. The SCs who are denied access to occupation of higher castes suffer from the (non-voluntary) unemployment due to restriction in hiring. The high caste on the other hand would avoid working in occupation other than that their own, and would face unemployment voluntarily.

However, the magnitude of non-voluntary unemployment for SCs is likely to be much greater than voluntary unemployment of higher castes. The data on employment brings out this feature of Indian labour market. The 2011-12 NSSO survey shows that SCs are employed for lesser number of days compared with upper castes. A joint paper published this year in the Journal for Social Inclusion Studies has decomposed the difference in employment rate between SCs and upper castes, attributable to differences in human capital endowment (such as education and skill) and those attributable to discrimination in the labour market for the year 2011-12. While endowment differences accounted for around one-third of the employment rate, two-thirds of it were due to discrimination against SCs in the hiring process.

A primary survey conducted by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies gives us some insights into the nature of caste-based discrimination in employment. The survey was carried out among 1992 households in 80 villages across the states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh in 2013. A study of 441 farm wage labourers, indicates that about 41 per cent were denied work by the high castes due to caste prejudice. Of these, about 76 percent in grain harvesting, 20 percent in vegetable cultivation and 12 percent in drying of grains and chilly and 11 percent in domestic work were denied jobs, due to 'polluting status' of the untouchables.

About 71 percent of SC farm wage worker reported a loss of

an average of 43 work days due to discrimination in hiring. Similar discrimination is faced by the SC non-farm wage labourers. Of the total 389 non-farm wage worker, about 52 per cent reported denial of work due to caste background. The caste restrictions are mostly in domestic work such as cooking at high caste homes, serving food in restaurants, work in construction of temples and cultural and religious ceremonies. The average annual loss of employment in number of days in the survey year was about 28 .

The regular SC salaried workers in the rural private sector also face discrimination in hiring. Of the 314 regular salaried workers, about 18 percent SCs reported discrimination in selection. About 22 percent reported high caste employers giving preference to persons of their own caste in employment and about 23 percent said high caste persons being selected with less qualification. The studies on the

urban labour market also observed discrimination in hiring. A study by Thorat and Attewell in 2010 observed that for equally qualified SC and upper caste (about 4800 each) applicants, SCs had 67 percent less chance of receiving calls for an interview. What is more disturbing is that the high percentage of less qualified high castes (undergraduate) received calls compared with the more qualified SCs (post-graduates). There are other studies by economists such as Ashwani Deshpande that observed discrimination being faced by SCs in hiring in urban areas.

The discrimination against SCs in hiring results in high unemployment, low income and high poverty. For instance, in 2011-12 , about one third of the SCs were poor compared with 20 percent OBCs and 9 percent upper castes.

The discrimination in employment not only results in high poverty among SCs, but it also hampers economic growth in private economy. Standard economic theory tells us that for optimum growth, the perfect mobility of labour and capital is necessary. Discrimination on the basis of castes, leads to an imperfect and segmented labour market. This reduces overall productivity. This calls for affirmative action policies for securing non-discriminatory access to SCs in hiring. Affirmative action for SC labour would assume the form of reservation in jobs or similar policies. An affirmative action policy is also necessary to remove restrictions on labour and capital mobility to promote competition and optimum economic growth.

CHART 1 Social group-wise unemployment rates in India over time

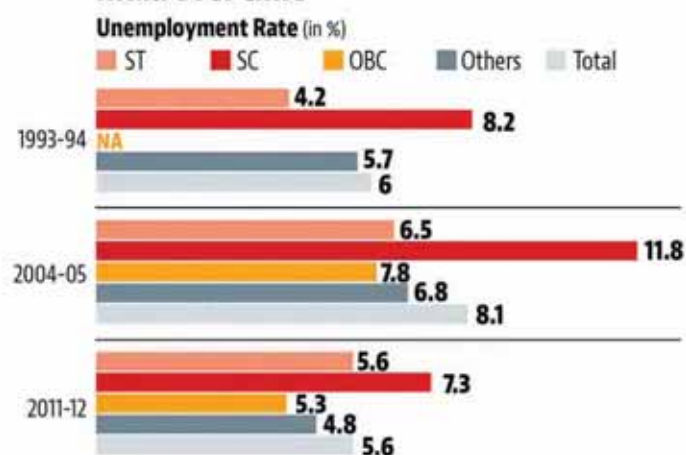
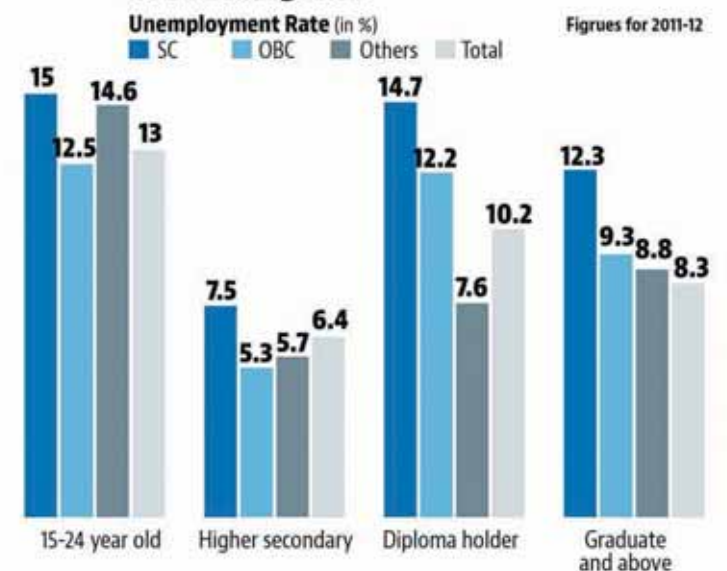


CHART 2 SCs have the highest unemployment rates across categories



Afghanistan: Two journalists among 20 killed in Kabul blasts



Journalists from Tolo News among those killed in twin bombings that injured dozens at sports club in the Afghan capital.

minority that has been targeted in the past by members of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Images taken at the scene showed young men in torn wrestling kit helping the wounded onto vehicles to be taken to hospital.

The first explosion was triggered by a suicide bomber and was followed by a car bomb shortly after, said interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned the bombings. "An attack on civilians and media workers of the country is an attack on freedom of speech and crime against humanity," he said in a statement. A reporter and cameraman from Afghanistan's largest broadcaster, Tolo News,

were killed in the second blast and four other local television crew were wounded, according to NAI, a group supporting open media in Afghanistan. Kabul police spokesman Hashmat Stanekzai said the second explosion hit as police were helping victims and a number of officers were wounded. Al Jazeera's Jennifer Glasse, reporting from Kabul, said the second bomb appeared to target first responders and journalists. "It has been a very deadly year here for journalists and for Afghans alike," Glasse said. On April 30, twin explosions in Kabul killed nine media workers and 16 other people. Social media users who purportedly witnessed the attack said the bomber killed the

guards at the club before blowing himself up inside.

He "detonated inside where a large number of athletes had gathered. There are a lot of dead and wounded", Mohammad Hanif said on Facebook. Wednesday's attack underlined the danger in Kabul as elections approach next month, as well as the threat facing the Hazaras - a Persian-speaking minority that has long faced discrimination. In mid-August, at least 34 people were killed in a suicide attack in front of an education centre in Dasht-e-Barchi, west of Kabul. ISIL - which has established a brutal reputation and which both the Western-backed government and the Taliban consider an enemy - claimed responsibility for that bombing.

(News Agencies)Twin bombings at a sports club in Kabul on Wednesday killed at least 20 people, including two journalists, and wounded 70 others. Two journalists - a reporter and cameraman - working for local Tolo News, were among the dead and others were wounded in the attack. Writing on Twitter on Wednesday, the head of Tolo, Lotfullah Najafizada, paid tribute to Samim Faramarz, 28, and Ramiz Ahmadi, 23, who he described as "two of our best journalists". Saad Mohseni, the head of MOBY Group, which Tolo News is part of, described the journalists as "young, fearless and thoughtful" in a Twitter post. No immediate claim of responsibility was made for the blasts in Dasht-e-Barchi, home to many members of the mainly Shia Muslim Hazara ethnic

Bhutan Parties Choose 'Big Brother' India Over Opportunist China



(News Agencies)"Our foreign policy shall prioritise strengthening our time-tested friendship with India," opens the foreign policy section of Bhutan's incumbent Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay's party manifesto.

The Himalayan nation is gearing up for its third general elections, and in no unclear terms does it state its commitment to bolstering the five-decade-old bilateral ties it shares with India.

While the PDP and the DPT— having governed the nation at least once—are more eloquent and clear-sighted about the granular details of Bhutan's foreign policy goals, the two new entrants, the BKP and the DNT, are still finding their political and diplomatic vocabulary.

Self Reliance and Sovereignty

All the four parties in the political fray underscore the

importance of self-reliance and sovereignty. For Bhutan, a large part of its internal socio-economic well-being is a function and outcome of its relationship with the neighbouring countries. Any party in power will have this Sword of Damocles hanging over their head. The PDP and the DPT pledge employment generation—a prime concern among the Bhutanese youth today—and seem to rely heavily on the hydropower projects that India has a key role to play in. Interestingly, the DNT has articulated that the reliance on electricity for job creation is a bit exaggerated. Their manifesto says, "Although electricity is, by far, given huge importance in the country's economy, there are limited youth employment opportunities in the sector, especially in view of the nature of jobs."

All the parties also appear intent on expanding their exports to achieve desired economic growth. The party may be ad-

ressing a constituency that believes that living under India's shadow may not be the ideal state of existence for Bhutan.

The DPT, on the other hand, is seeing India as a facilitator for its third-country exports plan, seeking to utilise the river ports of Brahmaputra.

The China Factor

"We like India but we don't like Indians, we don't like China but we like the Chinese," says an urban Bhutanese. While it may sound unpleasant, the statement tells the twin tale of minor and major irritants that the Bhutanese deal with. The nation is torn between the Chinese aggression along its borders and the hordes of Sunday tourists entering Bhutan through the Jaigaon-Phuentsholing gate haggling with local vendors. Bhutan sees itself as a proud nation and the perceived arrogance of Indian officials on deputation, who accord little importance to the Bhutanese culture, also does not

go down well with them.

Yes, comparing China's menacing countenance on the border with India's patronising demeanour is a bit of a stretch, but the Bhutanese are better off without both.

The Bhutanese got the real taste of their geopolitically precarious position during the Doklam standoff of 2017 involving India and China. They are beginning to speculate that their relationship with India is not without terms and conditions.

Yet, the scales are still tipping in India's favour. The DPT and the two new parties do not mention China even once in their manifestos. Only the PDP bothers to mention, almost nonchalantly, "We shall continue the ongoing border negotiations with China." The Bhutanese are still not looking at China as an ally or even an economic benefactor.

The ruling PDP's failure in bringing down the national debt—India remains the primary creditor extending significant hydro power loans to Bhutan—is said to have given the pro-China lobby some ammunition but the manifestos tell a different tale altogether. Disgruntlement about the power-tariff negotiations aside, Bhutan may not be looking for a replacement yet.

India Can't Take Goodwill

For Granted

India, however, will be ill-advised to take this goodwill for granted especially in the light of the Nepal conundrum. Post 2015-16 blockade in the Terai, India lost significant diplomatic ground, which China has been too eager to occupy ever since. A Nepal 2.0 avatar of Bhutan does not suit India at all, the Bhutanese are wary of it, too. China, however, is unlikely to waste time in exploiting a situation like this. It acted with alacrity in Nepal.

For a 10-year-old democracy, Bhutan has done a good job of keeping religion and politics apart despite the fact that constitutionally speaking, Bhutan identifies itself as a Buddhist nation. No monk or nun, Buddhist or otherwise, can stand for office or even vote. In contrast, Bhutan's neighbours are witnessing a bigger conflation of politics and religion.

Bhutan shares religious links with both India and China. Of late, Indian polity has found itself entangled in a communal discourse. The chinks in the armour of the world's largest democracy are there for all to see. Bhutan, perhaps, seeks more reassurances from India, and not just on Doklam.



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Nepal cracks down on lucrative helicopter rescue scams

Nepal has ordered a review of the way summit helicopter rescues are conducted after uncovering a multimillion-dollar scam in which climbers were pressured, sometimes by having their food spiked, to take costly flights down mountains.



(News Agencies) Insurance industry figures said the scam, which had been operating for more than five years, had caused at least one unnecessary death and involved dozens of helicopter companies, tour operators, hotels and hospitals. Thousands of climbers had been forced to abandon their ascents at the first sign of illness and take expensive helicopter rides to private hospitals, according to an investigation by the Nepalese government. Their bills were allegedly charged to insurance companies, with kickbacks given to the trekking guides, hotels and sometimes the climbers themselves. One investigation on behalf of insurers estimated there had been more than 1,600 helicopter rescues so far this year, of which about 35% had been fraudulent, costing the companies more than \$4m (£3.1m). Several international insurers warned that they would pull out of Nepal by 1 September if the government did not act. On Sunday, the tourism ministry issued new directives ordering helicopter companies, trekking operators and hospitals to submit every rescue invoice to a new government committee within 10 days of the bill being issued. Unspecified legal action was also proposed against 15 Nepalese companies accused of

unnecessary evacuations or hospitalisations, with more to be investigated in coming months, according to sources monitoring the inquiry.

'He became quite aggressive'

Danny Kaine was nearing the halfway mark of his five-day trek to Everest base camp in June when he told his guide he had a headache. "Instantly he said, we need a helicopter, we need to get you out," the experienced British trekker said. "He became quite aggressive." Kaine was flown to a private hospital in Kathmandu where he underwent a series of tests. "My final bill was \$12,800 – for a headache," he said. "I could've taken two Advil and it would've been fine." Unbeknownst to the trekking company, Kaine had been hired by three insurers to investigate why 2017 had been the most expensive year on record for the companies. He said the growing popularity of climbing Nepal's famous peaks and the allure of Mount Everest had led to a proliferation of trekking companies offering climbs at heavily discounted rates.

"The majority of the

trekking companies involved in the fraud are charging a lot less than legitimate companies, maybe \$500 for a \$1,000 trek," said Kaine, who works for the medical assistance company Traveller Assist. "They are losing money on each trek and need to make it up." Kaine said he had uncovered examples of budget-conscious travellers paying \$500 to trek to Everest base camp and upon arriving, being offered \$750 by trekking companies to feign illness and be evacuated by helicopter. "The heli company would pay the trekking company \$2,000 in commission, which they make back from the hospital that pays them a commission to bring them foreign patients, who they then over-treat and over-bill the insurer for," he said. "There's money at every level of this." An investigation by the Nepalese government starting in June found evidence that guides were putting baking soda in food given to tourists, causing diarrhoea and creating an excuse to fly them off the mountain. "We've heard of cases where tourists have been made deliberately ill," Prakash Sharma Dhakal, the

official who led the inquiry, told Agence France-Presse earlier this month. "In our investigation, we've seen a profit margin of up to 63% by some companies ... and hospitals have issued bills of up to 6m rupees (£40,700)." 'Instagram plays a huge part in this' Tim Riley, the managing director of the insurance company True Traveller, said the problem had emerged as rescue companies started investing in helicopters around 2010. "They need to get their money back," he said.

His company also covers tourists climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa, from which it has paid for one helicopter rescue in eight years. "We've covered about 40 in Nepal last year, and even that's massively down on the past," he said. "In 2013 we had six in one weekend." Kaine said the scam was a symptom of the growing popularity of climbing holidays in Nepal, fuelled in part by social media posts that showed off the beauty of the summits and made them seem accessible. "Five or ten years ago, people didn't think Nepal or Everest were possible,"

Infamous Dhaka jail used for trial of Bangladesh ex-PM Zia



(News Agencies) The Bangladesh government on Wednesday turned a notorious jail into a courtroom to try ailing opposition leader Khaleda Zia on corruption charges.

The 73-year-old former prime minister, already serving a five-year term in Dhaka Central Jail, was brought into the temporary courtroom in a wheelchair insisting she would not get a fair hearing, reports said.

"I know I won't get justice. You can rule whatever you like. I am

extremely ill. My hand and a leg are becoming paralysed," she told the court, according to the ntvbd.com news portal. "You can punish me however you want," the head of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party added.

Zia's lawyers have condemned the decision to use the jail, where she is the only inmate, into a court. They have said they will seek a ruling from a higher court to get the move overturned.

Zia was granted bail in a corruption case in May but remains

in jail while she fights dozens of other violence and graft charges.

The prison in the old Mughal district of Dhaka was built under British colonial rule in the 19th century and was Bangladesh's largest prison until it was declared abandoned in 2016. Four of Bangladesh's founding leaders were killed in the prison on the eve of a military coup in November 1975 while hundreds of death row inmates including politicians, coup plotters and Islamists were hanged there in the intervening decades.

Law and Justice Minister Anisul Huq told AFP the decision to use the Central Prison as the venue for Zia's trial "has been done lawfully".

Huq said there were other cases when prisoners had been tried in the same jail and the government had the constitutional right to set up a court anywhere by decree.

The next hearing will be held on September 12 and 13.

Zia was jailed for five years in February after being convicted of corruption, a sentence that triggered clashes between police and thousands of BNP supporters.

Reuters Journalists In Myanmar Convicted, Sentenced To 7 Years

(News Agencies) A court in Myanmar sentenced two journalists to seven years in prison Monday for illegal possession of official documents. Wa Lone, 32, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 28, both Myanmar nationals and journalists for the Reuters news service, were arrested for violation of the country's Official Secrets Act, which dates back more than 90 years to its time as a British colony known as Burma.

It was a "heartbreaking moment" for the men and their families, Reuters Regional Editor for Asia Kevin Krolicki told NPR's Morning Edition.

The journalists were investigating violence against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority; a military crackdown last year sent hundreds of thousands of people fleeing Myanmar for refugee camps in Bangladesh, where many still remain.

The journalists were arrested in December after meeting with police in a restaurant. They said police gave them documents, but then police immediately arrested them for possessing those documents.

One police witness reportedly told the court the journalists were set up. The documents were ones they "didn't solicit and never had time to read," Krolicki told NPR.

Condemnation of the verdict was swift and sweeping from human rights groups, press freedom organizations and Western governments.

"Today is a sad day for Myanmar, Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, and the press everywhere," Reuters editor-in-chief Stephen J. Adler said in a statement carried by the news agency. "These two admirable reporters have already spent nearly nine months in prison on false charges designed to silence their reporting and intimidate the press." Adler said Reuters may "seek relief in an international forum."

"The process that resulted in their convictions was a travesty of justice and will cast Myanmar as an anti-democratic pariah as long as they are wrongfully held behind bars," said Shawn Crispin, the senior Southeast Asia representative at the Committee to Protect Journalists. The U.S. Embassy in Burma called the conviction "deeply troubling for all who support press freedom and the transition toward democracy in Myanmar."

Myanmar official says 'totally underestimated' economic impact of Rohingya crisis

(News Agencies) SINGAPORE A Myanmar foreign investment official said on Wednesday he "totally underestimated" the economic damage of the Rohingya crisis, adding that the outcry over the jailing of two Reuters reporters would also have some impact on his country's reputation. Asked at an investor forum in Singapore what impact the crisis had on Myanmar's economy and investment, the director general of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), which promotes private sector development and investment, said previously the government had been able to control outbreaks of communal tension.

But the crisis in Rakhine State was different.

"I totally underestimated," the official, Aung Naing Oo, told the forum, referring to the impact of an eruption of violence

in 2016, which snowballed in 2017.

"But after two years ... now you can see that FDI in Myanmar is heading down, it is declining," he said, referring to foreign direct investment, though adding that he was confident the government could stabilize the situation.

Approved foreign investment into Myanmar has fallen in 2016 and 2017, according to data issued by the DICA, which operates under the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, and last year was the lowest since 2013.

Myanmar's government spokesman, Zaw Htay, contacted by telephone, responded with a message to say he was not immediately able to take any questions.

More than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled from Myanmar's Rakhine State into Bangladesh since a

military crackdown that began a year ago after Rohingya insurgents attacked security posts.

A U.N. mandated fact-finding mission said last week that Myanmar's military carried out mass killings and gang rapes of Rohingya with "genocidal intent" and called for top generals to be prosecuted. Myanmar rejected the findings.

The government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has been criticized for failing to speak out against the military crackdown in Rakhine, and investors have voiced concern that sanctions that long hobbled the economy for years under military rule could be reinstated over it.

In addition, two Reuters journalists, Wa Lone, 32, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 28, were jailed for seven years on Monday after being found guilty of breaching a law on state secrets.

They denied wrongdoing and their conviction drew international condemnation.

The reporters were investigating a massacre of Rohingya villagers by security forces at the time of their arrest in December. The military later confirmed that a massacre had taken place and punished several soldiers.

Aung Naing Oo, who has played a major role in drafting business laws, said the reporters' case had attracted widespread media coverage and their treatment would be a factor Western businesses would consider when making investment decisions.

"Not only the international community but also ... some of the local communities are not happy with the decision so therefore that will have some impact on our reputation," he told Reuters on the sidelines of the forum.

Pompeo hopeful U.S. can 'reset' relationship with Pakistan

(News Agencies) U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he is hopeful the United States can build a strong foundation to "reset" its relationship with Pakistan.

Pompeo arrived in the capital city of Islamabad on Wednesday along with a U.S. delegation hoping to break a diplomatic stalemate with leaders there -- including Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, Islamabad's new military chief -- and end the war in neighboring Afghanistan, which will soon enter its 18th year.

"We talked about their new government, the opportunity to reset the relationship between our two countries across a broad spectrum, economic, business, commercial, the work that we all know that we need to do to try to develop a peaceful resolution in Afghanistan that benefits certainly Afghanistan, but also the United States and Pakistan," Pompeo said, according to CNN. "I'm hopeful that the foundation that we laid today will set the conditions for continued success as we start to move forward."

U.S. relations with Pakistan have broken down in the past year since President Donald Trump accused the country of playing a double game -- publicly supporting U.S. efforts while secretly supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan. Last week, the Pentagon decided not to offer \$300 million in military aid to Pakistan. Pompeo said the funds could be restored if the White House deems Pakistan has shown a sufficient amount of progress toward combating terrorist groups, but added the country had yet to reach that point.

"We've still got a long way to go, lots more discussion to be had, but the relationship military-to-military is one that has remained in a place where some of the other relationships haven't frankly," he said. Pakistani leaders deny providing assistance to Afghan insurgents. Instead, they say the Taliban continues to recruit and capture more territory because of the U.S. presence and show of military force.

Through Bimstec, India and China must engage with smaller countries

For Nepal, India has been the most important trading partner but Kathmandu's economic engagement with China has deepened in recent years



(News Agencies) As Nepal hosted the fourth Bimstec summit last week, its geopolitical implications were glaring. It clearly pointed at regionalism that is in flux, with competing interests at play. For Nepal, whether it could make its mark in such a fluid situation, would depend on how it maintains a degree of autonomy in the India and China geopolitical race.

Nepal's Prime Minister, KP Oli, thanked visiting leaders from the six member states — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand — for attending the summit at short notice. Unlike the Saarc summit held in Kathmandu in 2014, when the major roads were dug up and reconstructed, this looked every inch a hurried affair. Never an easy job during the monsoon, the potholes to the conference venue, the President's office and the airport were being plugged as guests arrived in Kathmandu. It was an audacious undertaking even by our brave

standards.

But that hardly was a major concern. Nepal is currently the Saarc chair and the Saarc, headquartered in Kathmandu since its establishment in 1985, rests firmly in the Nepali public's imagination. To most Nepalis, Bimstec is still a vague regional grouping that puts distant Asean members (Myanmar and Thailand) together while some Saarc members (Pakistan, Maldives and Afghanistan) are left out. When Oli was elected the prime minister in February, the first head of the government to visit Kathmandu was Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. Abbasi was here to solicit Nepal's good offices as the Saarc chair to get the long-stalled 19th Saarc summit in Islamabad off the ground.

In their summit address last week, no leader mentioned Pakistan, a south Asian neighbour, or China, now a south Asian player. But they were both conspicuous by

their absence.

Connectivity was the buzzword at the summit. Buddhism was a binding force, with Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand in tow. Nepal and India have sizeable Buddhist populations and Nepal takes a lot of pride in being the birthplace of the Buddha, a message Prime Minister Oli delivered repeatedly during the summit. Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, said that India would host an international Buddhist conference in two years. The summit agreed to develop a Buddhist tourist circuit and a temple tourist circuit, and connect ancient cities in the region—a clear emphasis on deepening the common cultural values shared by the member states. What happened on the sidelines was politically symbolic, too. The Indian and Nepali Prime Ministers signed a memorandum of understanding for a preliminary survey of a 100-km Raxaul-Kathmandu railway. Modi visited Pashupatinath temple, as he invariably does while in Nepal, where Oli and he jointly inaugurated a 400-bed Nepal-Bharat Maitri Pashupati Dharmashala. In Kathmandu, public opinion on the Bimstec summit has been mixed. Many welcome it as an opportunity for Nepal to secure additional investments on connectivity and raise its international profile. But there is a broad consensus that the "India-led" regional grouping should not come at the expense of Saarc — a view echoed by the officials from other smaller Saarc member states.

Ahead of 2+2 dialogue with India, Pompeo urges Pakistan to take action against terrorists

US secretary of state Mike Pompeo travelled to Pakistan with military chief Gen Joseph Dunford, ahead of a visit to New Delhi for the inaugural 2+2 dialogue with India. The visit came days after Washington cancelled \$300 million in security-related payments to Islamabad.

The United States on Wednesday urged Pakistan's civilian and military leadership to take "sustained and decisive" action against terrorists and militants threatening "regional peace" as secretary of state Mike Pompeo held talks in Islamabad aimed at resetting bilateral ties. Pompeo travelled to Pakistan with the US military chief, Gen Joseph Dunford, ahead of a visit to New Delhi for the inaugural 2+2 dialogue with India. This was the first high-level US visit since Prime Minister Imran Khan's new government assumed power last month, and came days after Washington cancelled \$300 million in security-related payments to Islamabad.

Though Pompeo adopted a conciliatory tone by saying his meetings with Khan and foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi had laid the ground for outcomes that can build "confidence and trust", he also made it clear there was "a long way to go" before the US could think of resuming security-related aid to Pakistan. Pompeo didn't mention India but his remarks placed the onus for peace in the region on Pakistan.

Pompeo landed in India on Wednesday evening and was received at the airport by external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj. Pompeo and US defense secretary Jim Mattis will have discussions with their Indian counterparts Swaraj and defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday.

"In all of his meetings (in Islamabad), secretary Pompeo emphasised the important role Pakistan could play in bringing about a negotiated peace in Afghanistan, and conveyed the need for Pakistan to take sustained and decisive measures against terrorists and militants threatening regional peace and stability," state department spokesperson Heather Nauert said. Qureshi sought to give a positive spin to developments, tweeting that the talks marked the "beginning of a new dawn after a spell of darkness". He also sought US help to ease tensions with India. "We want ease on the eastern border if we have to look towards the western side," Qureshi told reporters during a briefing. He added it is "important that we should look at it and see

how we can improve that, who can help us to bring improvement (on the eastern border)".

A statement from the Prime Minister's House quoted Khan as telling Pompeo that his government's agenda was "focussed on human development and poverty alleviation, for which peace and stability in the region was a prerequisite". Khan also "underscored his commitment to peace with all neighbours".

Khan also spoke of strengthening the relationship with the US based on "trust and respect" and shared Pakistan's perspective on the situation in the region.

State department spokesperson Nauert said Pompeo expressed "hope for deeper counter-terrorism cooperation between our nations" during his meeting with Pakistan Army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa.

During a brief interaction with reporters before leaving for New Delhi, Pompeo said he had discussed "the opportunity to reset the relationship" with Pakistan and the work to be done to develop a "peaceful



resolution in Afghanistan." He added, "And I'm hopeful that the foundation that we laid today will set the conditions for continued success as we start to move forward."

Asked about the resumption of security aid to Pakistan, Pompeo said: "So we've still got a long way to go, lots more discussion to be had, but the military-to-military (relationship) is one that has remained in a place where some of the other relationships haven't, frankly."

In response to a question regarding any US warning of increased punitive action, Pompeo said, "We made clear to them that — and they agreed — it's time for us to begin to deliver on our joint commitments, right... And so there was broad agreement between myself and foreign minister Qureshi, as well as with the prime minister, that we need to begin to do things

that will begin to actually, on the ground, deliver outcomes so that we can begin to build confidence and trust..."

Pompeo's meetings were held against the backdrop of tense bilateral ties and sweeping cuts in American security aid because of Pakistan's reluctance to go after terror groups based on its soil. The US has accused Pakistan of turning a blind eye to the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network, a charge denied by Islamabad.

The US suspended nearly \$2 billion in security aid in January after President Donald Trump accused Pakistan of giving only "lies and deceit" in return for billions of dollars in aid over the years. Ahead of the talks, Dunford said Trump's South Asia strategy set clear expectations for Pakistan, including help to drive the Taliban to a peace process in Afghanistan.

Sec 377: SC has signalled a fresh phase in the evolution of rights jurisprudence

Beyond the LGBTQ community in India, the judgment will bring cheer across the globe to other communities seeking their place in the Sun

When asked in 2006 how he would rate the Supreme Court, Fali Nariman had a devastating riposte: "Do you feel like reading any of their judgments?" That cannot be said about the court's magnificent judgment delivered on September 6, reducing to ashes Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. In a unanimous verdict in *Navtej Singh Johar v Union of India*, a Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra declared the offending provision inapplicable to consensual sexual relationships between adults. The LGBTQ community stands liberated. Here is a judgment worthy of reading and rereading. It will endure as long as the court and the Constitution.

The Supreme Court does here, and does exceptionally well, what constitutional tribunals are meant to do. It draws on the submissions made in court, lifts the discourse through layered research and then applies prodigious analysis to distil the core of the case. The challenge before the court was not about physical acts but about identity. A

section of Indians found themselves criminalised for simply being who they are. This, the court held, destroys dignity and so severely undermines a person's self esteem that the offending provision had to be declared unconstitutional. Courts derive legitimacy from the power of reasoning and analysis in their judgments.

Thursday's verdict is rigorous in its analysis, careful in its survey of global jurisprudence and, most of all, sensitive to the human condition. The judgment is founded on the recognition of the need for intimacy in developing human relationships. The heart of the judgment is the court's belief that the Constitution creates zones of privacy and spaces for individuals to not conform. Constitutional morality trumps majoritarian notions. Indeed, no matter how small a minority, the Constitution will spring to its defence where the actions cause no harm. This has been a long journey. In 2000, a group of activists and lawyers began strategising on whether and how to challenge Section 377. The Naz

Foundation case was lodged in the Delhi High Court in October 2001. The Delhi High Court in 2009 reached the same conclusion in the Naz Foundation case the Supreme Court eventually did, on Thursday. However, after several twists and turns, that case met a grim end in a judgment of the Supreme Court in December 2013. This led to a fresh round of strategic thinking on how Koushal could be overturned. At one point, activists contemplated the possibility of certain state governments amending Section 377. The legislative route, however, meant that the Supreme Court's decision would survive. When the government refused to acknowledge the right to privacy, the Supreme Court was compelled to set up a panel of nine judges to reconsider previous decisions. On August 24, 2017, in an offshoot of the Aadhaar case, the Supreme Court took the opportunity to examine Koushal. The nine-judge bench in *Puttaswamy* recognised a constitutional Right to Privacy. The judgment also declared the law laid down in the Koushal case wrong.

However, it did not overrule it.

Finally, with the Supreme Court's verdict, Suresh Kumar Koushal is now buried. The verdict decisively restores to members of the LGBTQ community, long overdue access to the experience of full citizenship. This is a moment to be savoured by the LGBTQ community, finally, full citizens of India. The Court also points the nation down a constitutional path: "Let us move from darkness to light, from bigotry to tolerance and from the winter of mere survival to the spring of life? as the herald of a New India? to a more inclusive society." Inclusiveness is a core constitutional value.

Beyond the LGBTQ community in India, the judgment will bring cheer across the globe to other communities seeking their place in the sun. Moreover, by crafting doctrines of progressive realisation of rights and non-retrogression, the court has signalled a fresh phase in the evolution of human rights jurisprudence. Reassuringly, the Constitution remains a wellspring of hope and rejuvenation.

Sport can be a tool for women's empowerment

Women cricketers in outer Delhi juggle school, tuition and housework and still find the time to practice on the field

When I first met them two years ago, the girls of the Saksham Sports Club were playing cricket in Shahbad Dairy, on the outskirts of Delhi, where they live. Some were barefoot, others in faded salwar kameez but all wore an unmistakable fierceness. When a boy involved in an adjoining match caught the 14-year-old Champa, she yelled at him: "Who told you to interfere in our game?"

The daughters of rickshaw pullers, factory workers and daily wage labourers, these girls are fighting for a basic right — to play. They juggle school, tuition and housework and still find the time to practise on the field.

Despite the Asian Games success of Swapna Barman, Hima Das, Harshita Tomar and Dutee Chand, the sight of girls

playing a sport is rare anywhere, let alone at Shahbad Dairy, which despite the bucolic wholesomeness of its name, has one of Delhi's highest crime rates.

With more than three of five of Delhi's parks unsafe for women and girls, according to a December 2017 report by ActionAid, the message is clear: Public spaces belong to men. When girls exist on the margins of play, they learn that public spaces belong to men. You see this exclusion in other realms of public life. Less than 10% of judges in the higher judiciary are women; only 11.3% in Parliament and at just 24%, India's female labour force participation is among the lowest in South Asia. "Sport is the most effective tool of empowerment," says Suheil Tandon, who in 2013, founded Pro

Sport Development (PSD), a social enterprise that uses sport for the holistic development of youth. PSD just completed a three-day workshop with 23 football-playing girls in Ajmer district. "Earlier these girls were not even allowed to leave their homes," says Tandon. "Now they are leaders in their villages." In sport you cannot have caste-based segregation, say the girls. As a team they have chosen to boycott practices like child marriage. In other regions, PSD organises mixed gender matches that give girls the opportunity to play and, more crucially, boys the chance to appreciate the girls as teammates. Respect is the word used by Santlal (he goes only by his first name), who, in 2016, founded the Saksham Sports Club

that now coaches 75 girls. "In the beginning everyone passed mean comments," says 17-year-old Kavita, the daughter of a vegetable vendor and captain of the cricket team. "Now when the boys see us with our bat and wickets, they ask us, 'can my sister play with you?'" This week the cricket team is playing a national-level tournament, says Santlal. Players have already been to Telangana and Chandigarh. But exposure is limited; none of the girls had heard of the Asian Games, let alone watched them on TV and most don't even have access to a television. But, says, the still-fierce Champa, now 16, Mithali Raj, captain of women's cricket team, is a role model. "I will go to college," she says. "But only if it has a cricket programme."

India's job problem is easier to solve than its battle for wages

Five per cent unemployment rate means people who want a job, have a job; they don't get wages they want or need.

Dumbledore tells Harry Potter in Chamber of Secrets, "It is our choices more than our abilities that reveal what we really are". This advice is important for policy makers because their choices around questions decide answers. And every doctor knows that treating the symptom rather than the disease can be fatal. So, if you think India has a jobs problem, you will throw money from helicopters (NREGS), mandate a three-day work week (lump of work fallacy), and replace the shovels of digging workers with spoons (productivity be damned). But if you think India's problem is wages, then you will pursue formalisation, urbanisation, financialisation, industrialisation, and human capital. I'd like to make the case that India's official unemployment rate of around 5% is not a fudge because everybody who wants a job has a job; they just don't have the wages they want or need. Just like generals fighting the last war, too many politicians are stuck in yesterdays rhetoric of jobs rather than listening carefully to today's demands of wages. This debate needs thinking about five things; our firms, our productivity, our wages, our data, and a possible macro framework. Let's look at each in more detail.

Thinking about firms in any country is complicated but entrepreneurs essentially create two kinds of companies; a baby or a dwarf. Both are small but the baby will grow while the dwarf will stay small. India is a nation of enterprise dwarfs; we have 63 million enterprises of which 12 million don't have an address, 12 million work from home, only 6.4 million paid indirect taxes till GST, only 1.2 million pay social security,

and only 18,500 companies have a paid-up capital of more than Rs 10 crore. Formality and size matter greatly for productivity; when you can rank manufacturing enterprises by size there is a 22 times difference in productivity between somebody at the 90th and 10th percentile. With a 22 times difference in productivity, you will never pay the wage premium. But if you don't pay the wage premium, you will never be productive.

Our low national productivity — it took 71 years for the GDP of 1.2 billion Indians to cross the GDP of 66 million Britishers — is a child of the Avadi resolution of 1955 that unleashed the license raj and ensured that firms didn't have clients but hostages. GST implementation in 2017 is an important disruption; we added 4.7 million new enterprises in the last one year. Not every enterprise will become a large employer, but this huge addition of enterprises substantially increases the odds of formal employment and India producing more babies.

Thinking about productivity needs a deeper dive into farms and self-employment; 50% of our labour produces only 13% of our GDP (relative to high productivity of IT where 0.7% of our labour force produces 8% of GDP). We have too many farmers and reducing farmer poverty needs what economist Ashok Gulati called the 4 I's; incentives, investments, institutions and innovation, but the only sustainable solution is to have less farmers. Another assassinator of our productivity is 50% self-employment; the poor cannot afford to be unemployed, not everybody can be an entrepreneur, and many of India's 63 million enterprises are only viable with what Russian economist Chayanov called self-employment (you

don't have to pay yourself or your family market wages). But as Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman says, productivity is not everything but in the long run it is almost everything. Sustainable higher wages cannot come from regulatory fatwa's like unrealistic minimum wages — NREGS was rigged like LIBOR and led to galloping inflation — but come from the higher productivity of formalized non-farm jobs in urban areas done by workers with higher human capital.

Thinking about labour market data needs a deep dive into all four sources of employment data, household surveys, enterprise surveys, administrative data, and data from government schemes. But the notion that survey data is superior to all other kinds is unfair (29% of Indians in our household survey say they work for an enterprise with more than 9 employees but only 1.5% of enterprises say they have more than 9 employees in our enterprise survey). Administrative data often has shaky plumbing but the millions of new provident payers in the last few years represent data from a defined contribution salary deduction plan linked to Aadhar that is impossible to fudge. This data is important because it gives researchers, policy makers and employers new data across time, ages and regions and the source irrelevant (GST, Demonetization, Better Enforcement, Amnesty, Rediscovered morality, etc.) because it doesn't matter if a cat is black or white if it catches mice. The original sin in labour market data and strategy comes from the Arjun Sengupta report that not only created confusion between informal enterprises and informal employment data but surrendered by treating informality as

undefeatable. As a wise politician said, "You can have your own opinions but not your own facts". Thinking about wages needs acknowledging three fault lines; gross vs net, nominal vs real, and government vs market. The gross vs net transmission losses of 40% is highlighted by job seekers responding to salary numbers with the question "Haath waali salary ya chitthi waali salary?" i.e. the salary in the letter or in my hand. Nobody argues that gross should equal net but the current levels of confiscation for poor value for money schemes breed informality. The nominal vs real divergence is summarised by a kid in Gwalior who told me "Give me Rs 4000 per month in Gwalior, 6000 in Gurgaon, 9000 in Delhi, and 18,000 in Mumbai; my bags are packed and tell me where you want me to go". Since employers care about nominal wages and employees care about real wages, this divergence is a child of our patchy urbanisation — we only have 52 cities with more than a million people relative to China's 375 — and is killing migration. The Government vs Private faultline comes from the government paying too much at the bottom and too little at the top. Don't take the huge number of overqualified people applying for entry level government jobs as a proxy for unemployment; most have jobs but are opting for the unbeatable combination of wage premium, job security and low accountability. Any macro framework will be incomplete and tentative but the export manufacturing story for China arose because Deng Xiaoping skilled and was lucky; he caught a thirty-year supercycle of global growth, global openness to trade, and global deconstruction of manufacturing supply chains.

About 100 people fall ill on Emirates flight to New York: US authorities

As many as 100 passengers and crew reported feeling ill on Wednesday during an Emirates flight from Dubai to New York, and health workers were evaluating them as the airplane sat on the tarmac of JFK International Airport, authorities said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a statement that about 100 people complained of feeling sick on Emirates Flight 521, which landed with least 521 passengers shortly after 9

a.m. EDT (1300 GMT) at John F Kennedy International Airport. Their symptoms included cough and fever. Earlier, Dubai-based Emirates said in a statement that 10 passengers "were taken ill" on the flight from the Middle Eastern country and were transported to a hospital. It did not specify the symptoms or nature of the complaints.

The airplane involved was a double-deck Airbus A388 - the world's largest passenger aircraft, according to FlightAware.com.

CDC public health offic-

ers were working with other agencies to evaluate passengers, including taking temperatures and making arrangements for transport to hospitals, spokesman Benjamin Haynes said in the statement. Passengers who were not ill were allowed to continue with their travel plans, he said.

Some sick passengers were taken to Jamaica Hospital Medical Center with non-life-threatening conditions, according to a New York City Fire Department spokesman.

New York City Mayor Bill

de Blasio has been briefed on the incident, spokesman Eric Phillips wrote on Twitter.

Larry Cohen, who identified himself as one of the passengers aboard the plane, uploaded photos on Twitter showing dozens of police and emergency vehicles waiting outside the plane on the tarmac.

"All we have been told is that there are some sick passengers and that we need to remain on board," Cohen told Reuters via Twitter messaging.

'Whole thing is crazy'

Some countries that have not matured enough yet, so we are paying them subsidies. Whole thing is crazy. Like India, like China, like others we say, 'oh, they're growing actually'," Trump said. He said that they call themselves developing nations and "under that category they get subsidies." "We have to pay them money. This whole thing is crazy, but we're going to stop it. We're going to stop it. We have stopped it.

"We are a developing nation, too, OK? We are. As far as I'm concerned, we are a developing nation. I want to be put down in that category because we are growing, too. We are going to grow faster than anybody," Trump said amidst applause from the audience. Attacking the WTO, Trump said he thinks that the World Trade Organization was probably the worst of all. "But a lot of people don't know what that is, that allowed China to become this great economic power". On the trade deficit between the US and China, which has led to a

tariff war between the world's top two economies, he said, "I'm a big fan of (Chinese) President Xi Jinping, but I told him, 'we have to be fair'." "We can't let China take \$500 billion a year out of the United States and rebuild itself," he added. The President also said that the US should get paid for securing the wealthy countries from the outside harm. "I think it's fine, but they got to pay us for this. We're watching the whole world and they take it for granted.

"For years and years we've been protecting these countries. They're making a fortune. They've had very little military cost. We have the biggest military cost in the world. Most of it goes to protecting outside countries, some of whom don't even like us," Trump said. "We're protecting countries that have -- I got to say, they do have respect for us now, but they didn't have any respect for us, and they got to pay. They got to pay, you know, when they're wealthy," he said.

Pakistan's military has quietly reached out to India for talks

A key objective for Pakistan in reaching out to India is to open barriers to trade between the countries, which would give Pakistan more access to regional markets. Any eventual peace talks over Kashmir are likely to involve an increase in bilateral trade as a confidence-building measure. Increasingly, Pakistan's military sees the country's battered economy as a security threat, because it aggravates the insurgencies that plague the country. Pakistan is expected to ask the International Monetary Fund for \$9 billion in the coming weeks, after receiving several billions of dollars in loans from China earlier this year to pay its bills.

"We want to move forward and we are trying our best to have good ties with all our neighbors, including India," Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said. "As General Bajwa says, regions prosper, countries don't. India cannot prosper by weakening Pakistan. Bajwa linked Pakistan's economy to the region's security in a hallmark speech in October, and the idea that the two are inseparable has since become known as the Bajwa doctrine. The army chief is also seen

as more moderate than his predecessors were on India, which has been Pakistan's bitter rival since the bloody partition that came with independence in 1947.

The Pakistani general and his Indian counterpart, Gen. Bipin Rawat, served together in a U.N. peacekeeping mission in Congo about a decade ago and get along well, diplomats say. Earlier this year, Bajwa said the only way to solve the two countries' conflict was through dialogue, a rare statement from the military.

Diplomats say Bajwa has tried to reach out to Rawat to initiate talks. But the effort has been stymied by what one diplomat called a "system mismatch."

Diplomats in New Delhi say Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is preoccupied with elections expected early next year and does not want talks before then, fearing that if talks collapse — as they have many times before — it could cost them at the polls.

"Till the Indian elections, there cannot be an immediate betterment in bilateral relations," Chaudhry said. India's military and its foreign ministry did not respond

to requests for comment.

The new Pakistani government led by Prime Minister Imran Khan has been sending strong signals in favor of talks, though it is the military that ultimately controls foreign and defense policy. "If you take one step forward, we will take two steps forward," Khan said in his victory speech, addressing India. "We need to move ahead."

With Khan in office, talks may have a better chance because he is seen as the army's man, diplomats in both Islamabad and New Delhi say. India sees Khan's outreach as sanctioned by the military and believes he will clearly present Bajwa's demands and red lines.

That the military would initiate such a major foreign policy decision unilaterally, and before the elections, suggests it was confident that its preferred candidate, Khan, would win. Khan was sworn in as prime minister last month, in the wake of accusations that the army had intervened to back his candidacy.

Diplomats in Islamabad say Pakistan's outreach may also be driven in part by the country's Chinese

allies. Beijing has prodded Pakistan to stabilize its border with India, hoping for greater stability as it pursues its regional economic ambitions. China is investing some \$62 billion in Pakistan, mostly in large infrastructure projects through what is being called the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, part of China's global Belt and Road initiative.

The plan would give Beijing more direct access to important Western markets by building a series of highways through Pakistan, connecting China's western border to Pakistan's Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea. If Pakistani troops are freed up along the border with India, the thinking goes, they could be diverted to secure the country's western flank, where China's trade routes would be.

Chinese Muslim insurgents who oppose Beijing's rule have been active in Afghanistan and western Pakistan, and Pakistani insurgents, including Baloch separatists, have opposed the Chinese infrastructure projects. Last month, a Baloch separatist group attacked a bus carrying Chinese workers, wounding five.

Manmohan Singh says Modi govt 'failing on all fronts'

He criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government for the November 2016 demonetisation of high-value banknotes, the hasty July 2017 implementation of the Goods and Services Tax and failure to create jobs.

The book was released by Singh and former vice-president Hamid Ansari at a function at Teen Murti Bhavan in Delhi attended by senior Congress leaders Ahmed Patel, Mallikarjun Kharge, Salman Khurshid, Digvijaya Singh, Shashi Tharoor, Anand Sharma and Vivek Tankha, Puducherry chief minister

V Narayanasamy, former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah, Nationalist Congress Party leader Praful Patel and Pinaki Mishra of the Biju Janata Dal. Apart from Sibal, the

panel discussion was attended by former finance minister P Chidambaram, Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, Trinamool Congress leader Chandan Mitra and former Janata Dal (United) MP Sharad Yadav. Former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav, who was scheduled to take part in the panel discussion, did not attend the function.

In his book, Sibal has highlighted the failures of the Modi government and maintained that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance could not defend itself against the onslaught of allegations against it. Former Prime Minister Singh said the people are not impressed by figures put out by the Modi government to justify its claim of creating a large number of jobs.

Won't be as rich as Bill Gates but I can retire earlier, says billionaire Jack Ma

Jack Ma, China's richest man, says he will go back to teaching because it "is something I think I can do much better than being CEO of Alibaba".

(News Agencies) Jack Ma, China's richest man, is laying the groundwork for a future away from Alibaba Group Holding Ltd., the company he co-founded and turned into an e-commerce juggernaut. In an interview with Bloomberg TV, the Alibaba chairman said he is dedicating more of his time and fortune to philanthropy with the creation of a foundation in his own name focused on education, following in the footsteps of fellow billionaire Bill Gates. Ma, who turns 54 on Monday, has a net worth of more than \$40 billion according to the Bloomberg Billionaires

Index. While Ma sees himself as an accidental executive who only entered the business world with Alibaba's founding almost 20 years ago, he has become one of China's most recognised corporate leaders. Even after stepping down as chief executive officer in 2013, the former English teacher remains the public face of a company with a market value of more than \$400 billion and interests spanning e-commerce and Hollywood film production to cloud computing and online payments. "There's a lot of things I can learn from Bill Gates. I can never be as rich, but one thing I can

do better is to retire earlier," Ma said in the interview. "I think some day, and soon, I'll go back to teaching. This is something I think I can do much better than being CEO of Alibaba." When asked if that could happen this year, Ma shrugged and smiled. He didn't indicate if he would give away his money or put it into a trust as other billionaires have done. "You'll know very soon. I've prepared a Jack Ma Foundation," Ma said. "All these things that I've been preparing for 10 years." Ma was born in September 1964 to Chinese traditional musician-storytellers living

in Hangzhou, an ancient capital that's become a global high-tech hub and bastion of entrepreneurship, in part because of Alibaba's base there. He started Alibaba.com in 1999 as a business-to-business marketplace, backed by \$60,000 from 18 co-founders. With savvy deals and an investment from SoftBank Group Corp., it's now morphed into a behemoth that can make or break brands. Its customers use its e-commerce platforms to order products that last year saw package deliveries reach 55 million a day. Ma also controls Ant Financial, the online



financial platform that runs China's largest mobile payment system and money-market fund. The business has more than 870 million users via payment system Alipay and its affiliates. A focus on education wouldn't surprise followers of Ma, who has spoken frequently of its importance to him and some of his shortcomings as a student, including failing China's national university exam twice. "I was not

considered a good student but I improved, we keep on learning all the time. So I want to devote most my time to this," Ma said. During his time as chairman, he has helped guide growth at home and overseas while also spearheading its 2014 initial public offering, the biggest ever. Ma was among the first foreign business leaders to meet with Donald Trump after his election.

Rupee drops to record low of Rs 71.79 against US



(News Agencies) The rupee pared initial gains to drop to a fresh all-time low of 71.79 against the US currency, falling 21 paise in late morning deals Wednesday on sudden bouts of dollar-buying by banks and importers. Earlier, the rupee resumed higher at 71.43 against yesterday's closing level of 71.58 a dollar at the interbank foreign exchange market here. The Indian unit was trading on a volatile note, moving in a wide range quoting between 71.40 and 71.79 during morning deals. "Rupee's speculative demand is causing volatility amid crisis in the emerging market currencies and consistent rise in the crude oil prices," a dealer said. The dollar strengthened against a basket of currencies overseas as the US economy continued to exhibit strength amid a lingering threat of escalation in the US-China trade conflict, leading to a fall in the domestic unit. Meanwhile, the 30-share BSE Sensex is modestly lower by 29.83 points or 0.08 per cent at 38,128.09 at 1100 hrs.

Netflix's teen romance 'To All the Boys I've Loved Before' helps Yakult yogurt drink fly off the shelves

Viewers of Netflix's new romantic comedy, "To All the Boys I've Loved Before," have noticed the main character's sister, played by Amy Cathhcart, drinking a yogurt out of a distinctive little bottle, and are talking about it on Twitter,

(News Agencies) Dairy producer Yakult Honsha Co. is finding that the power of product placement is so potent it works even when it's mistaken. Viewers of Netflix's new romantic comedy, "To All the Boys I've Loved Before," have noticed the main character's sister, played by Amy Cathhcart, drinking a yogurt out of a distinctive little bottle, and are talking about it on Twitter, according to Mark Bachman, head of M Science's TickerTags, a research firm that analyses the relationship between social media and a company's performance. In the movie, the drink is called a "Korean yogurt smoothie," but audiences have clearly spotted Yakult's "distinct red foil top," Bachman said in a note to clients on Friday. "While the brand is of Japanese origin



and was never mentioned by name in the movie, it is clearly a Yakult bottle, which Twitter users quickly noticed," he said. Yakult's "mention frequency" spiked after the release of the Netflix movie and a majority of the conversations were directly related to interest in the product, according to the note. Shares of the stock, which have dropped about 6 percent this year amid slower sales growth, climbed more than 2.6% since the movie was released on Aug. 17. About half of that rally came today with a 1.7% gain. "Given the increasing conversation levels, we believe Yakult is achieving greater brand awareness, which should likely result in higher sales volume," Bachman said.

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos is richest man on planet with net worth of about \$166 billion



(News Agencies) As Amazon became the second US firm to hit a trillion-dollar value on the stock market, founder Jeff Bezos regained the crown as the richest person on the planet. Amazon's share price has climbed during the year, lifting the personal wealth of the company's 54-year-old founder with it. Forbes estimated his net worth about \$166 billion. He has gone on record with a formula for success that includes taking bold bets, riding change and rebounding from setbacks. "You need to be nimble and robust so you need to be able to take a punch and you also need to be quick and innovative and do new things at a higher speed, that's the best defense against the future," Bezos said in an interview published in Vanity Fair magazine last year. "You have to always be leaning into the future. If you're leaning away from the future, the future is gonna win, every time."

Fortis Healthcare's Shivinder Singh sues brother as empire collapses



Heirs to a generations-old business house once worth billions, the Singh brothers have in recent months seen a dramatic fall in their fortunes.

(News Agencies) The unraveling of one of India's most storied business empires has caused a rupture in its founding family, with one of the Singh brothers – synonymous with each other for decades – saying he has sued the other for alleged

"oppression and mismanagement" of their companies. In a statement, Shivinder Singh said he filed a case with India's National Company Law Tribunal against his elder brother Malvinder and Sunil Godhwani, former chairman of Religare Enterprises

Ltd., the financial services company the brothers used to control. Shivinder alleges Malvinder and Godhwani were to blame for "a systematic undermining of the interests of the companies and their shareholders."

QUAKE HITS HOKKAIDO

11 killed, 31 missing & 300 injured after 6.7 earthquake buries homes in Japan

REUTERS



Houses damaged by landslide caused by earthquake in Hokkaido, Japan. (Below) People get water from Japan's self-defence forces' water tank at an area damaged by earthquake.

A POWERFUL earthquake paralysed Japan's northern island of Hokkaido on Thursday, killing at least seven people, triggering landslides and knocking out power to its 5.3 million residents.

The death toll from the 6.7-magnitude, pre-dawn quake was likely to rise as rescuers searched houses buried by landslides.

About 33 people were missing and 300 were injured, public broadcaster NHK said. Four people were in cardiopulmonary arrest, a term used before death is officially confirmed.

The quake was the latest in a string of natural disasters to batter Japan after typhoons, flooding and a record-breaking heat wave within the past two months.

Aerial footage showed dozens of landslides exposing barren hillsides near the town of Atsuma in southern Hokkaido, with mounds of red earth and toppled trees piled at the edge of green fields. The collapsed remains of what appeared to be houses or barns were strewn about. "It came in four big jerks - boom! boom! boom! boom!"

one unidentified woman told NHK. "Before we knew it, our house was bent and we couldn't open the door."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said 25,000 self-defence force troops would be deployed for rescue operations. The island, a tourist destination

about the size of Austria known for its mountains, lakes and seafood, lost its power when Hokkaido Electric Power Co shut down all its fossil fuel-fired power plants after the quake as a precaution.

It was the first time since the utility was established in 1951 that had hap-

pened. Almost 12 hours later, power was restored in parts of Sapporo, Hokkaido's capital, and Asahikawa, its second-biggest city.

The government said there was damage to Hokkaido Electric's Tomato-Atsuma plant, which supplies half the island's 2.95 million households. It could take a week to restore power fully to all residents, Industry Minister Hiroshige Seko said.

All trains across the island were halted. Abe's Liberal Democratic Party begins a leadership contest on Friday but said there would be no campaigning through to Sunday. Abe and rival Shigeru Ishiba both cancelled campaign media appearances slated for Friday.

'NOTHING I CAN DO' Television footage from Sapporo showed crumbled roads and mud covering a main street. Police directed traffic because signal lights were out while drink-vending machines and most ATMs were not working.

Reuters

FACTORIES HALTED

FARMING, tourism and other services are big economic drivers on Hokkaido, which accounts for just 3.6% of Japan's gross domestic product, but there is some industry.

Kirin Brewery and Sapporo Breweries both said factories were shut by the power outage. A series of smaller shocks followed the initial quake, the JMA said.

By afternoon, backhoes and other earth-moving equipment in Atsuma had begun clearing debris. Japan is situated on the 'Ring of Fire' arc of volcanoes and oceanic trenches that partly encircles Pacific Basin.



The death toll from the pre-dawn quake is likely to rise

Prez Kovind unveils Mahatma Gandhi's statue in Bulgaria

A STATUE of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled on Thursday by President Ram Nath Kovind and his Bulgarian counterpart Rumen Radev at the famous South Park, located at the centre of Sofia.

The statue was conceived and erected by eminent Bulgarian sculptor Ivan Rusev. Kovind also presented a copy of Gandhi's book 'Hind Swaraj' to Radev. "Grateful to the people of Bulgaria for giving Mahatma Gandhi an eternal home in Bulgaria on their National Unification Day. This is a meaningful tribute to a man who dedicated his entire life to the service of humanity," Kovind said.



President Ram Nath Kovind with his Bulgarian counterpart Rumen Radev in Sofia.

The President wished the people of Bulgaria on Unification Day. "I am glad to be in Sofia to share this cherished moment." Kovind also invited companies

from the Balkan nation to manufacture in India as part of the ambitious 'Make in India' programme.

Kovind had arrived here on Tuesday from Cyprus on the second leg of his eight-day three-nation visit to Europe to continue India's high-level engagements with European countries. From Bulgaria, he will fly to Czech Republic.

"President Kovind meets PM Borissov of Bulgaria; calls for stronger bilateral relations; invites Bulgarian companies to come and manufacture in India as part of the 'Make in India' programme," the President's Secretariat tweeted. PTI

THE northern Israeli coastal city of Haifa on Thursday celebrated the centenary year of its liberation from Ottoman rule during World War I, honouring the brave Indian soldiers who laid down their lives in what is considered the last great cavalry campaign in history.

Septemher 23 is observed as Haifa Day

The Indian Army commemorates September 23 every year as Haifa Day to pay its respects to the three Indian Cavalry Regiments - Mysore, Hyderabad and Jodhpur Lancers, that helped liberate Haifa following a dashing cavalry action by the 15th Imperial

Israel honours Indian soldiers who liberated Haifa in WWI

Service Cavalry Brigade of the then British Indian Army at the Battle of Haifa in 1918.

Captain Aman Singh Bahadur and Dafadar Jor Singh were awarded the Indian Order of Merit (IOM) and Captain Anop Singh and 2nd Lt Sagat Singh were awarded the Military Cross (MC) as recognition for their bravery in this battle while Major Dalpat Singh was awarded a military cross for his bravery. PTI



Cadiz, pictured, is one of the stops on a seven-night trip on the Crystal Serenity.

From three days with Oprah to 117 nights at sea, we list some of the best cruises on offer

IN FULL SAIL

WHETHER IT'S discovering old Second World War sites, sailing around the Med or listening to talks by world-famous TV host Oprah Winfrey, cruising has something for everyone. We recommend some of the best ocean cruises on offer:

ASIAN ADVENTURE

Discover the rich culture of four South-East Asian countries in one eye-opening journey. Meet artisans in their workshops, mingle with monks in ancient temples and soak up the atmosphere in floating markets ashore on board new ship Viking Orion. A 15-day cruise from Hong Kong to Bangkok departing on April 7, 2019, calls at China, Vietnam and Cambodia. Viking (vikingcruises.co.uk).

D-DAY REMEMBRANCE

Mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day aboard classic British ship Marco Polo next year. A specialist lecturer will be on board to give insights into Operation Overlord and the sites you'll visit.

These include the replica of Pegasus Bridge and the port of Arromanches. On June 6, the ship will be cruising off the Normandy beaches when a ceremony will honour those who lost their lives on D-Day.

The ship leaves



Explore Copenhagen on the Scandinavian cruise; (right) Oprah hosts a 'Girls' Getaway' cruise to the Caribbean.



Portsmouth on June 2, 2019, for six nights, calling at Antwerp, Honfleur and Rouen. Cruise & Maritime Voyages (cruiseandmaritime.com).

SPOT THE BIRDIE

Get close to the wildlife of the Galapagos Islands aboard new luxury ship Celebrity Flora, launching next May. The 100-passenger ship offers lectures and presentations, and has guided tours.

You'll be astonished by the fearlessness of giant tortoises, blue-footed boobies, albatrosses and sea lions. Seven-night Quito and Galapagos Inner Loop fly-cruise holidays start on May 26, 2019.

Celebrity Cruises (celebritycruises.co.uk).

GO NUTS IN BRAZIL

Call at six ports in Brazil on board mid-size ship Marina. Between overnight stays in Rio de Janeiro and Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, you'll visit seaside resort Buzios, the wildlife haven of Ilha Grande, Parati filled with Portuguese colonial architecture, Santos, the gateway to Sao Paulo, Porto Belo famed for its beaches, and Rio Grande.

A 12-night cruise departs Rio on December 7, 2019. Oceania Cruises (oceaniacruises.com).

A CHAT WITH OPRAH

Join Oprah Winfrey for a Girls' Getaway to the Caribbean aboard Holland America Line's Nieuw Statendam. Hear the talk show host in one of three Conversations With Oprah. The three-night Girls' Getaway

cruise sails round trip from Fort Lauderdale on January 30, 2019. Holland America Line (hollandamerica.com/OprahMag).

FIND THE FAMILY TREE

Head for New York and spend a week at sea drawing up your family tree. A new Journey Of Genealogy cruise aboard Queen Mary 2 will have experts on ancestry on board.

Queen Mary 2 leaves Southampton for New York on November 4. Cunard (cunard.co.uk).

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Welcome the New Year in by seeing the Madeira fireworks show. You can do your shopping in Lisbon on Christmas Eve and wake up on Christmas morning on the Atlantic Ocean ready for a festive dinner. A no-fly, Christmas and New Year Canary Islands cruise aboard Ventura departs Southampton for 14 nights on December 21, 2019. P&O (pandocruises.com).

SPANISH STEPS

Catch the last rays of summer along the Costa del Sol on a seven-night trip aboard luxury ship Crystal Serenity. Sailing from Barcelona to Lisbon, the ship visits Valencia, Alicante, Malaga, Cadiz and Gibraltar. Departure is on October 7, 2018. Crystal Cruises (crystalcruises.co.uk).

SCANDINAVIAN WALKS

Pack your walking shoes for a Scandinavian Islands tour. Your base will be British ship Boudicca. You'll explore the Danish island of Bornholm, the Swedish island of Gotland and Copenhagen.

The round trip cruise from Dover departs on September 15, 2019. Ramblers Cruise & Walk Holidays (cruiseandwalk.co.uk, 01707 386767).



The British ship Marco Polo has a stop at Antwerp on its six-night trip.

Could cheating help your relationship?

Why people say their spouses are more attracted to them AFTER having an affair

(News Agencies) Controversial new research suggests that infidelity can add value to a marriage.

The study, conducted by online dating agency Ashley Madison, revealed many people believe their spouse is more attracted to them – after they cheat.

The results showed that following an affair, a staggering 70 per cent of cheaters said their attitudes became more positive to life in general.

But science suggests this boost in optimistic outlook depends on your

underlying reasons for playing away from home. According to Ashley Madison, affairs are not always about replacing someone or something.

Of 1,700 people surveyed, statistics revealed 52 per cent of females and 56 per cent of males continue to have sex with their spouse whilst engaging in extra-marital dalliances.

'Most members report their spouse is more attracted to them after they began their affairs,' Isabella Wise, communications director

at Ashley Madison said. 'When people choose to engage in an affair in a meaningful way, the benefits to their emotional well-being can flow into other areas of their life.' Studies undertaken by Missouri State University in the US indicate those who sought affairs for sexual reasons reported an increase in overall contentment, while those who embarked for primarily emotional causes reported a decrease in life satisfaction.

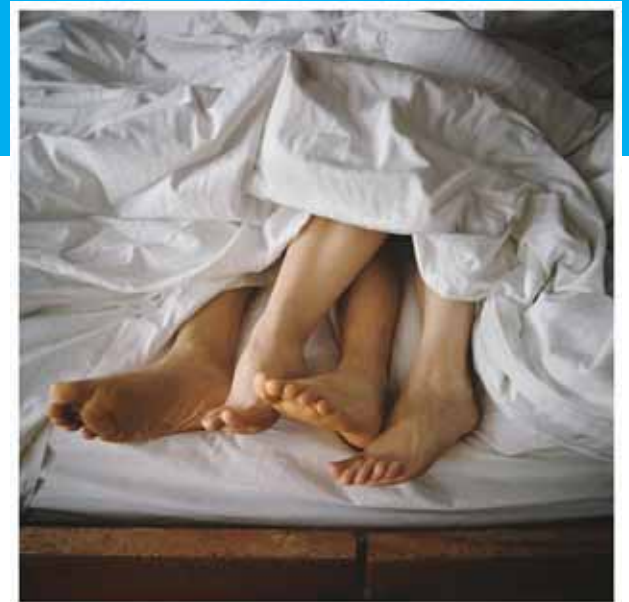
Professor Alicia

Walker, specialist in sexuality and culture at Missouri State, said elements of the findings were 'surprising'.

'It's perhaps unsurprising that people would say their satisfaction is increased during an affair, but participants reported that even after it ended, they were still happier than they were prior to the affair.'

One anonymous twenty-something year old Ashley Madison user living in the UK said she found the fulfillment she needed to return to her husband as 'a satisfied partner', adding her indiscretions had 'completely removed the anxiety' from their marriage. Another female member from the US said since meeting someone on the controversial married-dating site, the sexual aspect of her life was 'reinvigorated' which allowed her to become 'a better wife' than she was before.

A separate survey from Ashley Madison titled: 'Why do you cheat?' revealed what allows cheaters to return to their



household as a more satisfied partner after being unfaithful. For the majority, it came down to sexual needs not being met (76 per cent), while just over half said it made them feel 'more alive'. 48 per cent said they felt desired while 37 per cent declared their emotional needs were not being met by their significant other.



Why a day in the office wears you out

Sitting for hours using only our brains 'creates a chemical imbalance' - but these tips may help you feel more energized



(News Agencies) You've just spent eight hours sitting around, with nowhere else you have to be, moving only your hands.

That could describe a day at the beach or a day at the office. If it were about the former, you'd probably feel relaxed at the end of those

hours. But it could just as easily be about a work day, and at its end you would feel exhausted.

Work fatigue, research has shown, really isn't about physical activity at all - but scientists still don't know exactly why it is that our minds can make us so tired.

George Washington University psychologist and author of *The Molecule of More*, Dr Daniel Lieberman, shared the working theories behind mental fatigue - and what to do when you start to wear down.

he brain is a complex organ with many regions designed to collaborate with one another.

Depending on the kind of function necessary, different circuits talk to one another. These different functions might include swinging an ax, or filling out paper work.

When we do the latter, we're not moving much and that engenders a 'very different kind of fatigue than working in the garden,' says Dr Lieberman.

While physical tiredness

can help us fall asleep at night, mental fatigue can actually do the opposite, making it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep.

This is because you are 'not using your mind and body the way they evolved to be used,' Dr Lieberman says.

'We evolved to strike a balance and for our brains and bodies to work together. At a desk job, we are utterly sedentary and only using our brains. This creates a chemical imbalance that makes us less efficient at processing energy, making us drained and tired.'

Evolution informs a lot of what makes us tired at work, according to Dr Lieberman.

Our wild brain thinks in terms of two categories: the

resources we have and the ones we don't. Resources we have are tangible through our senses. Similarly, physical work or work that combines physical and mental effort typically has a more tangible pay-off, a thing you can see you've made or altered.

'For resources we don't have, but need, we have to focus on the possible and the future, and that includes abstract thinking,' Dr Lieberman explains.

'If you feel like having a peach, you have that idea in your imagination, in order to make it reality you need to be motivated, and plan how to get it and all of this is using the brain circuits to get what you don't have.'

7 Super Romantic Things That Husbands Do Unknowingly

Guys, if you think that your woman is tough to please, think again. Because, the reality is far from it. The big news is that your women actually are pleased by simple, everyday gestures. Shocked? Don't be! It, in fact, is true. For women, romance is not just limited to red roses, chocolates, candle light dinners and gifts. Romance means something much more to them. It can be anything from simple words of praise to helping her in the kitchen. Find out what more that you usually do, or can do, to make your lady feel special.



Making the bed

This is something that she probably expects the least from you! After managing her office, household chores and the kids, she is obviously exhausted. So, when she finds the bed all done and tidied, ready to snuggle in the already laid sheets, her joy knows no bounds! This is something that she will find most thoughtful and romantic.

Spending time with the kids

Looking after the kids, helping them in their school projects and studies, reading them bedtime stories, and other such simple things convince your wife that no one can be more lovable and caring than you. You definitely earn a lot of brownie points there!



Few words of praise

"My wife is wonderful," "My wife takes care of everything," "She is an excellent homemaker," and many such simple words, especially when said in front of friends and family, make her feel very special. To know that you value and respect what she does for you, makes her love you even more.



Helping in kitchen

Women know that men usually don't like to work in kitchen. But when they see you right next to them in the kitchen peeling potatoes, doing dishes, or even mixing salad, they go all "aww..." in their hearts! In fact, they find this gesture so endearing that they actually fall head over heels in love with you all over again.

Taking care of her when she is unwell

Those times, when you take leave from your office to look after your wife when she is ill, makes you nothing less than an angel. A woman loves it when her partner takes charge of the house when she is not well. She also loves when you remember her medicines, her meals and tucking her in bed, or just sitting beside her, holding her hand. She feels blessed, and thanks you silently for everything.



Accompanying her for shopping

It need not be for some pricey dress or shoes. Just notice the smile and the sparkle in her eyes when you accompany her even for household shopping. And, in the store, if she finds you holding her hand unexpectedly, then the "love hormones" are in for a sudden shoot-up, trust us.



An unexpected hug

That sudden hug, which you give her while she is doing her household chores just sways her away. Women find such gestures romantic as they make her feel special and cared for.

Why marrying my best friend was not the best decision of my life!



1 Marrying a best friend is not a good idea

When my wife sought a divorce, I wasn't shocked. I was almost expecting it. We had been married for three years and had known each other for more than twenty years. Yes, I married my best friend from school and when we took the plunge, we had no idea that it was the worst decision of our life.

2. It was a marriage of convenience

We were both in our late twenties when we tied the knot. We both had a past, which we were not proud of—she broke up with her

boyfriend after she caught him cheating on her and after a trail of failed relationships, I was not interested in investing my emotions on anyone new. We were both single for two



years and were under tremendous pressure from our respective families to 'settle down'. So when we decided to get married, it was a marriage of convenience because we knew each other for years and believed nothing can go wrong.

3 We mistook friendship for love

We didn't even have a first date. Can you believe that? We were the kind of friends who took our friendship for granted. I knew she was always there for me and she shared the same feelings. But we were just friends, we were not in love. And we

believed we can survive without love. It was too late when we realised that it's important to be friends with your spouse but a marriage cannot survive without love.

4 We were not compatible as lovers

We were best friends and we believed that was enough to be compatible partners. Trust me, it was far from the truth. And the worst thing was when we discovered we were not sexually compatible, we were in denial. We could not believe that despite knowing each other so well, we never felt sexually attracted.

5 When we fought we didn't have anyone to fall back on

Since we were best friends, we used to be each other's life support during crisis. When we got married, we didn't have anyone to fall back on. I missed the girl with whom I could share anything under the sun and she was the one who showed me the right way. When she became my wife, I didn't have anyone to ask



6 When things fell apart, I lost two persons—a wife and a friend

for advice when I had problems in my married life. When things didn't work out between us, we knew it was best to head our separate ways. But in the process, I ended up losing two persons—a wife and a friend. Although a lot of ex-partners turn friends after separation, it was not

possible in our case. We started our journey with friendship between two innocent children discovering the world together. But we ended it with a marriage gone wrong and two partners, remembering only the bitter experiences, vowing never to keep in touch ever. Yes, marrying my best friend definitely was a bad decision.



This is how your sleeping position can affect your skin



Can your sleeping position age you?

A good sleep is always correlated to healthy skin, but what if it's doing the opposite! Our sleeping positions can take a toll on the skin and cause acne, wrinkles. The signs can be puffy eyes, acne and flatter cheek only on one side. The way we sleep truly reflects on our look and the position can affect the skin. We got in touch with Dr Kiran Lohia, Celebrity Dermatologist to highlight the skin problems caused by wrong sleeping positions:

How does sleeping with

a pillow affect your skin?

Sleeping on your back is always a good way to sleep. Maintaining the 20-30-degree angle allows better fluid drainage in the body. However, many choose to sleep on the side or on their stomach. This pushes the face into the pillowcases, which has bacteria or even the creams or any product we have used on our face. The best solution is to clean pillowcases on a frequent basis, as it can cause zits or even rashes.

How does sleeping on your stomach affect your skin?

Many people love to sleep this way, but it's the worst way to sleep for anyone. As when we sleep, our skin needs to breathe. This position pushes the whole face into the pillow, which obstructs the skin's follicles. This causes clogged pores, acne, and lines. We don't allow enough circulation in this position, the pressure also causes puffy eyes and under eye bags. Your facial structure gets pressed against pillow every night for 8 hours—that's a lot of pressure for your skin. Eventually, this position can make your face flatter and trigger wrinkles. To avoid all this, one should not sleep in this position.

How does sleeping on your side affect your skin?

This position causes less damage to the skin than the stomach position. However, this isn't the ideal position either. When you sleep on your side, you put tremendous pressure on



one side. It flattens the cheekbone and triggers wrinkles on the side because of all the friction and pressure. Also, if you



have applied any skincare product, the product might get absorbed by your skin. **How does sleeping on your back affect your skin?**

Sleeping on the back is an ideal position for sleeping! First, you are not applying much pressure on your facial skin; this will cause fewer fine lines, less flattening

of the facial contours and will make your skin younger and smoother. In comparison to sleeping on the side or on the stomach, fluid won't accumulate around your eyes making them puffy. Also, your face won't touch the pillowcase, avoiding the back-and-forth exchange of oils, dirt, and grime.



Netflix's 22 July trailer shows uplifting dramatisation of Norway terror attack

Watch the first trailer for 22 July, director Paul Greengrass' uplifting dramatisation of the Norway terror attack of 2011

The trailer for the upcoming Netflix movie 22 July has just dropped. The film tells the true story of the aftermath of Norway's deadliest terrorist attack. On 22 July 2011, 77 people were killed when a far-right extremist detonated a car bomb in Oslo before carrying out a mass shooting at a leadership camp for teens.

22 July uses the lens of one survivor's physical and emotional journey to portray the country's path to healing and reconciliation. Actor Anders Danielsen Lie plays the titular role of the Norwegian far-right extremist Anders Behring Breivik. According to the story of the survival of Asne Seierstad, tells the story of the survival of Norwegian citizens, post the dreadful attack. 22 July will be made available on Netflix on October 10, in addition to a limited theatrical release in the US to qualify it for the Oscars.

Shahid Kapoor, Mira Rajput welcome baby boy

Shahid Kapoor and Mira Rajput have become parents for the second time. The star couple and their two-year-old daughter Misha welcomed a little boy into the family on Wednesday.



Shahid Kapoor and Mira Rajput have become proud parents to their second child. The Bollywood couple welcomed a baby boy on Wednesday, Delhi Times reported. Mira was admitted to Hinduja Hospital in Mumbai on Wednesday evening. Her mother was also spotted at the hospital by photographers. Shahid and Mira are also parents to their elder daughter, two-year-old Misha. They tied the knot in 2015 and in a recent interview to Rajeev Masand, Shahid talked about his wife with a lot of love. "I got lucky. I married Mira," Shahid

said. "She's as normal as it gets. We kind of hit it off and decided to get into an arranged marriage. By God's grace it's been wonderful, the last three years, and she's been a huge part of that for me." Mira was a student in Delhi University when Shahid met her. They married after a brief courtship. But despite the fame, Shahid said he has always craved normalcy in his life. "I'm very simple as a person," he said. "And although I might live a very lavish lifestyle, I'm very happy I share my life with someone who has a similar mindset."



Kareena Kapoor soaks up the sun, Soha Ali Khan plays snooker on Maldives vacation.

Kareena Kapoor Khan and Soha Ali Khan are clicking gorgeous picture on their vacation with the whole family in Maldives.

Kareena Kapoor Khan is making sure we stay jealous of her amazing life. The actor is currently vacationing in Maldives with husband Saif Ali Khan and son Taimur and her sister-in-law Soha Ali Khan, her husband Kunal Kemmu and their daughter Inaaya. Poonam Admania, Kareena's personal stylist and friend, shared a new set of pictures from Kareena's vacation on Instagram. "My love you my bebo #kareenakapoorkhan," she captioned the photos. Kareena is seen wearing a frilly white top and distressed blue denims. She is also carrying a big basket bag that bears the word 'Mrs' on it. Soha also shared a bunch of images from yet another day of fun in Soneva. She posted a video of Kunal going crazy about chocolates and herself posing pretty at the snooker table. She is seen

in an off-shoulder dress. Maldives, Taimur was seen sleeping in the arms of his nanny as Saif made a face for the camera. In another photo, Kareena and Saif are beaming at the camera as Taimur sits next to his parents. Saif and Kareena were gone for more than a month on a London vacation this June, around the time her film Veere Di Wedding was set to hit the screens. Saif came back just in time to promote his first Netflix series, Sacred Games. They earlier vacationed with Taimur in Switzerland.



Kangana Ranaut welcomed as Manikarnika's new director by Ankita Lokhande as controversy rages

Amid the controversy surrounding actor Sonu Sood's exit from Kangana Ranaut's ambitious film, Manikarnika, support for Kangana as the new director, has been coming up from all quarters. After the makers of the film endorsed her as the director, now one of her colleagues has put her weight behind her. Ankita Lokhande strongly endorsed Kangana as her 'new captain' and sounded happy at the prospect of shooting her first song for the film with her. Sharing two pictures with



Kangana, she wrote: "I feel my feet lighter. Rehearsing for my first bollywood song with master ji @ganeshacharyaa and our new captain kangana r a n a u t @team_kangana_ranaut Super excited to be part of it. #jhalkaribai Much much gratitude #kamaljain #zeestudios #manikarnika #releasingon25th jan #swipelef." Ankita plays the character Jhalkari Bai, a trusted aide of Queen of Jhansi, Laxmi Bai.

Yamla Pagla Deewana Phir Se movie review

This film is injurious to your health



Dharmendra, Sunny Deol and Bobby Deol fire their cottage industry once again with disastrous consequences for the audience.

Yamla Pagla Deewana Phir Se

Director: Navaniat Singh

Cast: Dharmendra, Bobby Deol, Sunny Deol

Rating: 1/5

My lasting memory of Yamla Pagla Deewana Phir Se is that everybody drinks a lot – there are vodka shots, daru desi, fancy champagne, neat whiskey, liquor mixed with nariyal paani, a character who begins drinking with breakfast and another who creates a ruckus after getting drunk at 10 in the night. They should serve some in theatres too, perhaps sprinkled on your popcorn and mixed with

your cola, because being soused is the only way you can survive 148-minutes of this loud, over-the-top drama.

The none-too-ambitiously named Yamla Pagla Deewana Phir Se is the third iteration of the cottage industry the Deols – dad Dharmendra, sons Sunny Deol and Bobby Deol – began seven years ago. The first film had charm and it was fun to watch them riffing off their famous songs and dialogues. In 2018, the jokes have worn thin. For, how many times can you clap when the same old dhai kilo ka haath is retreaded and served as

a punch line?

The Deols, however, refuse to come out of the time wrap. Every cliché, every trope that Yamla Pagla Deewana Phir Se met, it wanted to woo and take to bed. So, you have Dharmendra as the charming man and a chick magnet, Sunny Deol as the good-hearted man with a short temper and Bobby Deol as the black sheep of the family who will see the light in due time. The fact that the film begins in Amritsar gives it leeway to bung in enough 'balle balle' and 'puttars', 'lassi' and 'daaru' to last you a lifetime. A part of the film is based on Gujarat too and comes filled to the brim with 'kem cho', 'saru che' and a steady supply of dhokla.

Sunny and Bobby play

brothers – while Sunny is a famous vaid who comes from a long line of ayurvedic doctors, his brother just wants to get rich quickly. Sunny's Puran owns a jadi-booti medicine that cures everything from impotency to pimples. Enter Big Pharma that wants the formula at any cost and bribes Bobby. Sunny's dhai kilo ka haath (sorry, couldn't resist) does the talking and the Suit promises revenge. Dharmendra plays their tenant, a lawyer who wins cases purely based on his charm and travels on a Sholay-style bike with two cut-price apsaras. Kriti Kharbanda plays a Gujarati surgeon who loves her booze and should have had her license revoked a long time back. Big Pharma gets the formula

and a long court battle follows with Dharmendra representing the brothers. The writing is so lazy and dialogues so inept that the responsibility of the final mess should be equally shared by everyone involved. The blame for the two-and-a-half-hours length can easily be laid at the door of director Navaniat Singh. This film could have been wrapped up in 90 minutes or, better still, never been made.

The climax is so drawn out and painful that a visit to the dentist looks better in comparison. In a rare moment of truth, the cast accepts that they will be wasting the time for the next 20 minutes and then go ahead and do it. The comedy by this time

has reached such a nadir that calling it mindless would actually be a compliment.

Even the makers seem to have realized just how much they were stretching the paper-thin plot and second half has a lot of veteran actors in walk-on parts. Shatrughan Sinha shows up to say khamosh, Asrani's comic act is cringe-worthy and Rekha riffs off her old hits. If you are patient enough to last the entire film, there is Salman Khan in there too. But, from someone who has been through the wringer and lived to tell the tale, no Salman Khan cameo is enough to justify 2.5 hours of Yamla Pagla Deewana Phir Se. So, avoid the film and go and see that dentist.

Stree movie review

Rajkummar Rao's horror comedy needs more laughs



This comedy about a female ghost is pretty crazy, but despite good performances, the lines aren't funny enough and the plot isn't clever enough.

Stree

Director: Amar Kaushik

Cast: Shraddha Kapoor,

Rajkummar Rao,

Aparshakti Khurana,

Pankaj Tripathi

Rating: 3/5

So naive are the people of Chanderi, they believe the moon — called Chanda Mama in fairytales — is literally their uncle. So says a book of village lore hidden inside a copy of the Kamasutra in the local library. Many of its pages have been folded into paper-boats, but the book matters because Chanderi is under

attack from a female spirit. Sighted on the four nights of the annual puja, she abducts only the menfolk while leaving their clothes behind. Beware, boys who walk home alone at night.

Stree, directed by Amar Kaushik, is a comedy about a lovelorn tailor who falls for a girl who may or may not be the 'Stree' the town fears. She visits the town annually on the days of the festival, never enters the temple, and, perhaps most damningly, doesn't own a mobile phone. Could young Viki, a tailor so accurate he

can measure women with his eyes, have found himself a potential girlfriend? Or is this girl who wants him to make her lehenga the kind of bhoot who likes her clothes bespoke?

Based loosely on an urban legend from Bangalore, this is a potentially hilarious setup. The cast is solid with Rajkummar Rao as Viki, flanked by Aparshakti Khurana and Abhishek Banerjee as his two buddies, but despite the gusto with which the actors play off each other, Stree never quite brings down the house. The dialogues don't do justice to the absurd situations, and the lines are often underwritten — though this is less evident when greats like Pankaj Tripathi and

Vijay Raaz show up. The laughs are inconsistent, and the plotting feels sloppy and rushed. The ideas are fine, but the writing needed work. Rao is likeable as ever, especially when rattling off types of blouses, though this is too eager a performance to be entirely convincing. Rao's lovable lispng loser is a character we have seen before and there isn't much novelty to be found here, though there are a few moments when the actor conjures up something striking — like when he urgently contorts his face in a desperate imitation of Shah Rukh Khan because he's been asked, bizarrely enough, to look at a ghost with love. His body language around a

sewing machine is also right on the money. It is Shraddha Kapoor, surprisingly enough, who brings a certain charm to her initially inscrutable character, but once the film gives her more to do, she struggles in comparison to the fine actors who surround her. Khurana is wonderful as a guy who sells readymade clothing and believes in only filling fifty bucks worth of petrol in his bike at a time, while much of the show is stolen by Banerjee, a gangly actor with a zany and unpredictable energy. Tripathi is a fine choice to play that horror-movie cliché — the wise man who knows all and guides the heroes to their destiny — simply because he can render any

line irresistible, but it is disappointing to watch him spell out the basics of the local legend to young men who have grown up in that town and should know better. Then again, Stree is all about men who should know better. Kaushik's film gives us not only a pleasant/terrified town, but a place that is both sexually repressed as well as sexually keen: old men have birds - a n d - b e e s conversations with their sons, grown men aren't allowed to watch lovemaking scenes in the movies, and yet the word 'friendship' implies a relationship between young men and local prostitutes. The ideas, as I said, are there.



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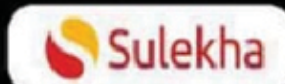
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