



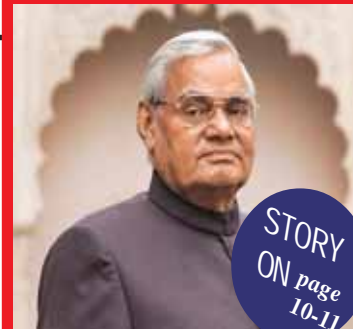
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STORY
ON page
10-11

Atal Bihari Vajpayee

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The pros and cons of a depreciating currency

The real world is often drastically different from the abstract assumptions of economic textbooks. The argument for currency depreciation leading to an improvement in trade balance assumes price elasticity of imports and exports.



STORY
ON page
23

Billionaires reach for the stars while world suffers



(Agencies) With all due respect to Jeff Bezos and other billionaires who plan to spend billions of dollars of their personal wealth on space travel, hundreds of millions of children who lack access to basic health care and schooling more urgently need help right here on Earth. The world economy is pumping trillions of dollars into the accounts of a few thousand people. These riches should be directed first and foremost to end the millions of needless deaths caused by extreme poverty, and to educate the hundreds of millions of children who lack schooling.

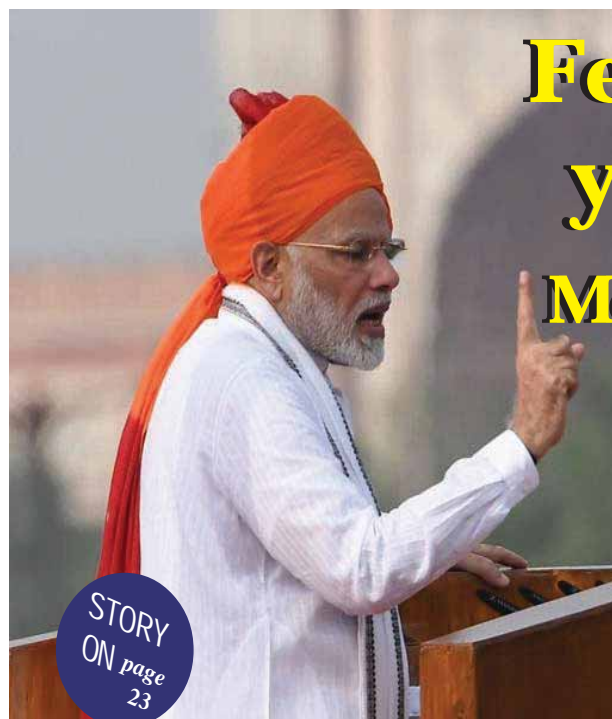
(Contd on page 20)

Was mafia concrete to blame? Italy bridge collapse



STORY
ON page
23

Feel proud of yourselves, Modi tells honest tax payers



STORY
ON page
23

Mentioning that India's direct taxpayers base was just 4 crore till 2013, PM Modi assured honest taxpayers that they would not face any harassment.

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(See Full Page Advt. on Page 32)



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South Abington Man Sentenced To Over 19 Years In Prison For Fraud And Identity Theft Scheme

(By Our Staff Reporter) SCRANTON – The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania announced today that Hiteshkumar Patel, age 52, a resident of South Abington Township, Pennsylvania, was sentenced on August 9, 2018, by United States District Court Judge Robert D. Mariani to serve 234 months in prison on the charges of conspiracy and aggravated identity theft. According to United States Attorney David J. Freed, Patel pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire and

mail fraud, as well as aggravated identity theft in November 2017. The investigation revealed that beginning in or about August 2015 through May 2016, Patel was involved in a multi-faceted international conspiracy and devised a scheme to defraud that included individuals who falsely represented themselves as Internal Revenue Service (IRS) agents, as well as individuals associated with an illegitimate online loan business. Individuals who falsely claimed to represent the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) contacted unsuspect-

ing victims throughout the United States. The victims were told that they had to immediately make a monetary payment in order to satisfy outstanding IRS tax debt and/or IRS penalty fees. Victims were told that there would be severe consequences if they did not immediately comply, such as federal agents knocking on their door, notification to employers, garnishment of wages, and even arrest. Victims of the online loan fraud scheme were instructed that in order to receive the proceeds of their

online loan application, they had to first make monetary payments associated with the processing of the application, such as fees for expediting the loan and insurance. Some victims of the loan fraud scheme were also told that outstanding IRS debt had to be satisfied before their loan application could be processed. All of the victims were instructed to remit monetary payments to a number of different individuals via the U.S. Mail, Western Union, MoneyGram, and/or RIA (Walmart to Walmart). The

monetary payments were received by Patel, or by members of the unlawful telemarketing organization and unindicted co-conspirators. The investigation identified 634 individuals directly tied to Patel's criminal conduct from across the country. The victims collectively sustained a loss of nearly \$900,000. At sentencing, Judge Mariani stated that "Telephone schemes and online fraud have become a scourge in our society." He described Patel's crimes as "reprehensible" and "lacking in human decency."

British MP Accused UN official Ravi Karkara of Sexual Harassment: Exclusive

(By Our Staff Reporter) A British member of parliament said Friday that he was among the men allegedly sexually harassed by a top United Nations official. Lloyd Russell-Moyle told Newsweek he decided to speak out after reading the Newsweek exclusive story on allegations against Ravi Karkara, a senior advisor at the U.N. Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Karkara, a former senior advisor to the Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, is accused of sexually harassing young men. Russell-Moyle, 31, worked with him at the U.N. and several international events before he was elected in 2017 to represent Brighton Kemptown as a member of the Labour party. Russell-Moyle told Newsweek that Karkara sent him pictures of male genitalia on a dating app in 2014, made unwanted sexual advances, and explicitly linked Russell-Moyle's workplace access and opportunity to his responses to those advances. "He sent me penis pictures while I was at the U.N. a number of times, through Grindr," a gay dating app, Russell-Moyle said. "On its own, sending penis pictures on Grindr isn't the end of the world... people do it. You move on."

Tough policy for international students in US



(By Our Staff Reporter) MUMBAI: International students in the US will find the going tougher after the final policy guidelines were published by the US government. Starting August 9, students and their dependants will automatically begin to accrue unlawful presence in the US the day after they violate their "student status" even if the period of stay granted has not expired. The new policy reverses the prior

International student memorandum, international students who fall out of status and timely file (within five months) for reinstatement of that status will have their accrual of unlawful presence suspended while the application is pending. If the reinstatement application is denied, the accrual of unlawful presence resumes on the day after the denial, said an official USCIS statement. Cyrus D Mehta, New York-based immigration attorney and managing partner of a law firm, explained to TOI that the improvement (over the draft guidelines) is insignificant, especially for a student who may have unknowingly violated his/her status earlier. If this is discovered many years later, the accrual will be from the day of violation and the student could find himself or herself debarred from entering the US.

Over 21,000 Indians overstayed visas in US last year

(By Our Staff Reporter) In the year 2017, more than 21,000 Indians who were supposed to leave the country at the end of their permissible limits overstayed their visas, as per the latest official report. While the percentage of Indians overstaying and not leaving the US after the expiry of their visas is not very high compared to some other nations, but in sheer number India ranks among the top 10

countries whose citizens come to the US legally and continue to stay illegally. The Department of Homeland Security in its latest annual report released today said that in 2017, more than 10.7 lakh Indians visited the United States on the popular B-1, B-2 visas, which is issued to those who come to the US for business, visit or tourism purposes.

Of these, 14,204 over-

stayed in the country. According to the report, 1,708 of these Indians left the US later after the expiry of their visas, while there is no record of 12,498 Indians leaving the country. This could be presumed that they continue to stay in the US as an illegal immigrant.

Comparatively in 2016, a little over 10 lakh Indians visited the US on B-1, B-2 visas. As many as 17,763 overstayed in the US. Of

these 2,040 left the US sometime after the expiry of their visas, while 15,723 continued to stay illegally, as per the official DHS figures.

In 2017, the report said, 127,435 Indian students and research scholars came to the US on F, J and M visa categories. Of these 4,400 Indians overstayed in the country. Figures indicated that 1,567 left the US later on, while 2,833 Indians are still in the

US. Among other categories of non-immigrants, more than 4.5 lakh Indians were expected to leave the United States in 2017, of which 9,568 of them overstayed their visas. Among them, 2,956 left the US after the expiry of their visa term, while 6,612 are suspected to be illegally staying in the country. In its 2017 Entry/Exit Overstay Report, the DHS said there were 52,656,022 in-scope nonimmigrant ad-

missions to the US through air or sea port of entries (POEs) with expected departures occurring in the fiscal 2017; the in-scope admissions represent the vast majority of all air and sea nonimmigrant admissions. Of this number, the DHS calculated a total overstay rate of 1.33 per cent, or 701,900 overstay events. For India it was 1.32 per cent.

UK police returns stolen Buddha statue to India after 57 years

Police handed over the bronze statue with silver inlay during a ceremony Wednesday in London marking India's Independence Day.



(By Our Staff Reporter) A Nalanda, Bihar, in August 12th century Buddha statue stolen from the Archaeological Survey of India's museum in

1961 was returned to the Indian high commission by Scotland Yard on the occasion of Independence

Day. Sheila Stewart, detective chief inspector, handed over the bronze statue to high commissioner, YK Sinha,

after a flag hoisting ceremony in the Gandhi Hall of India House. The statue was one of 14 stolen from the museum. It changed hands several times before being delivered to a London dealer for sale. Once the dealer and the owner were made aware that the statue was the same one that had been stolen, they cooperated with the Yard's Art and Antiques Unit and agreed for it to be returned to India.

The statue was identified at a trade fair in March 2018 by Lynda Albertson of the Association for Research into Crimes

Against Art and Vijay Kumar from the India Pride Project, who then alerted police. Detective constable, Sophie Hayes, of the Art and Antique Unit, said: "We are delighted to be able to facilitate the return of this important piece of cultural heritage to India. We have established there was no criminality by the current owner or the dealer who was offering it for sale". "This case has been a true example of cooperation between law enforcement, the trade and scholars. Particular credit must go to the eagle-eyed informants who made us

aware that the missing piece had been located after so many years."

Michael Ellis, minister for arts, heritage and tourism, said: "As we celebrate India's Independence Day, I am proud to highlight the latest example of the UK's cultural diplomacy in action". "We are one of the first countries to recover one of the 14 elusive Buddha statues stolen from Nalanda nearly 60 years ago. This underlines how law enforcement and the London art market are working hand in hand to deliver positive cultural diplomacy to the world."

'Chalo India' creates a euphoria at the India Day Parade in New Jersey!



(By Nutan) Edison, New Jersey - 'Chalo India' is the event that is synonymous with festivities & celebrating the spirit of India. This 3-day event guarantees to entertain and inform while providing an opportunity to people in USA to connect with their roots. And this was the exact feeling, the huge crowd experienced at the India Day Parade on Oaktree Road in New Jersey on Sunday afternoon.

A large tent was constructed outside the office of 'Chalo India', and was decorated beautifully with colorful standees and posters of the upcoming event. The entire team of 'Chalo India' was dressed in the colors of the Indian Flag as they sang and danced to the theme song of the

event. As the curious crowds passed by, they joined in and danced along, to the patriotic music and the signature song that played in the background. In no time, the booth turned into the main center of attraction. It seemed almost like a scene from a Hindi film, where the street was filled with people as they enjoyed every moment, despite the sweltering heat. 'Chalo India' 2018 attendees will primarily explore seven festivals, with number of celebrities coming to the event including famous Bollywood singer Sonu Nigam, Bollywood actor and presenter Annu Kapoor, popular Bollywood singer Sudesh Bhosle, folk-fusion band Papon, known Gujarati folk singers Osman Mir and Kirtidan Gadhavi, known national poets

Kumar Vishwas, Surendra Sharma, Gujarati poets Anil Chavda, Harsh Brahmabhatt, known comedians Bharti Singh, Sairam Dave, motivational speaker Jay Vasavada and many many more. Over 30000 visitors are expected to attend the event over the 3 days. Previous events by AIANA have proven that it's an excellent tool to reach focused and targeted audience. This magnum opus straddles across the hope and aspiration of each generation seeking convergence of value and culture. The entire team of 'Chalo India' led by founder Suni Nayak is looking forward to seeing everyone at this major celebration that will offer something for young and old alike, not just for Indians but also for the non-Indian individual.

72nd Independence Day of India - 15 August 2018



(By Our Staff Reporter) On the occasion of 72nd Independence Day of India, Consul General, Sandeep Chakravorty hoisted the National Flag at the Consulate premises in the morning of 15 August. It was followed by the playing of the National Anthem. Consul General read out President's Address to the Nation delivered on the eve of the Independence Day. More than 200 people including prominent members of the Indian community and local dignitaries including Congresswoman Grace Meng, Assemblyman David Weprin, Assemblyman Raj

Mukherjee, Senator Vin Gopal and also Bollywood actor Anupam Kher attended the ceremony. A short cultural program was held by Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, which included singing of patriotic songs and poetry recitation. At the initiative of local Indian community organizations, iconic monuments in New York and surrounding areas were lit up on the occasion with the colors of the Indian flag. These included the Empire State Building, Niagara Falls among others. "5. This year, on the occasion of India's Independence Day, performances

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) sponsored a seven member group consisting of acclaimed Kathak dancers - Sandip Mallick & group with Anuj Mishra and group to present Kathak! A short glimpse of their performances were shown during the morning ceremony. The team in collaboration with this Consulate & Battery Dance Company will be performing at Robert F. Wagner Park this evening; Saraswathi Hall, The Hindu Temple Society of North America on August 16 and finally at Navatman's Drive East Festival on August 17 before heading to Dallas for other scheduled performances



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Why being poor is a sin in India

More than 70 years after Independence, economic progress is just a mirage for India's underprivileged

(Agencies) As I write these lines, the anguished cries of innocent girls in Muzaffarpur and Deoria are weighing heavy on my heart and my mind.

Why don't those eager to celebrate India's Independence Day pause and think about this: In more than seven decades, what have we contributed to the nation's childhood and adolescence? We should also introspect about what becomes of sentimental slogans such as "Today's children are the citizens of tomorrow".

As an Indian, when I look back, I discover that in the name of progress, even as roads and infrastructure were being created and enormous modern aircraft began soaring over people's heads, prosperity was just a mirage for those on the lowest ladder of society. These 'ignorant' people are not aware their nation has become the sixth-largest economy of the world as their lives are spent worrying about three

words: roti, kapda aur makan (food, clothing and housing). To make these three words meaningful, what have politicians in our independent nation done?

Just raised slogans election after election and then conveniently forgotten their promises. Our politicians may agree or disagree on trivial matters, but they are one when it comes to policy and honesty of intent. Indian politicians keep two masks handy. They keep changing them depending on whether are in power or in the Opposition. What doesn't change is the destiny of ordinary people. You may recall the outrage over the brutal gang-rape of Nirbhaya. The entire nation stood up to defend women's rights, it appeared. As a result, the already stringent laws were made even stronger. But criminals don't carry out heinous crimes after reading the legal fine print. The repercussions are before us. The Muzaffarpur and Deoria cases are

unravelling and with every layer that is coming off, the ensuing stink has made the nation recoil in horror. The Opposition of that time is now in office. Yesterday's office-bearers are today in the Opposition camp. So they can claim a right over unleashing slogans and outrage. They are exercising this right. Because of this, the nation is seething under a deluge of charges and counter-charges. All this may take a toll on a few officials, but just change of faces isn't enough to fix a flawed system. Also, rapes and poverty don't go away with enactment or amendments of laws. Here I would humbly like to bring up Delhi and the national capital region. As per government statistics, 54.57% people staying here can be classified as affluent. In the same Delhi, three innocent girls became victims of hunger deaths and within a week, another such incident came to the light in Ghaziabad. We are a land



of contradictions! How can the rich be so irresponsible and insensitive? Even if the people were callous, why did the political system created on the edifice of their votes stay oblivious to all this? Instead of helping these innocents get nutrition and dignity, the system merely tried to carry out a whitewash. They have been doing this and they'll continue to do it because our political system is not committed to finding a lasting solution to these problems. Our honourable politicians know that the outrage will last just a few days. The people's attention can soon be diverted to something else. This process of distracting and misleading the common

man has turned our republic into a system of tumult. Kautilya wrote in the Arthashastra that the ruler must stay sensitive towards the protection and progress of his subjects. But the exact opposite is happening in our democracy. Some of our politicians display great commitment towards safety and welfare of animals, but how much do they value human beings? I would like to return to the incident in Mandawali. Mangal Singh, whose daughters died of hunger, didn't have a ration card of any other proof of social security. Unaware of the debate being carried out in Parliament on Aadhaar, on which millions were spent, when he headed out in

search of employment, he was without any State identity. Hunger took away the young ones in his family because it wasn't part of any religion, community or group perceived as a vote bank. What will be a greater misfortune for India than the fact that we are more sympathetic towards animals and intruders from other lands than our own children? Questions are bound to be raised. Is being poor in India a sin? Don't you feel that those dreaming of India becoming the world's biggest economy should first worry about this? Till the country's deprived get freedom from poverty, we have no right to celebrate the festival of freedom.

The Referendum 2020 has put a strain on India-UK ties

A negative fallout on the diplomatic front set to go beyond the London show. New Delhi made no bones about how it is irritated over Britain for allowing "a separatist activity which impinged on India's territorial integrity and seeks to propagate violence, secessionism and hatred".

It's tempting to dismiss the Sikh radicals-led 'Punjab Referendum 2020' rally at London as "a stunt without status", a term former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's used to trash Amnesty International's reports on troubled Northern Ireland. But Sunday's spectacle at Trafalgar Square, aimed at rallying support for a separate Sikh homeland, was more than a mere publicity stunt. It was attended by 2,500 expatriate Sikh hardliners, mostly from Britain, still wedded to the long lost cause of Khalistan. This event not only signifies the propaganda-potential of ragtag radical groups

operating from foreign soils, but Indian security agencies also see in it an insidious play by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) through a project, codenamed 'Op Express', to play the Sikh card and revive turmoil in peaceful Punjab. Such sinister portents are not unfounded. The posters calling for Sikh referendum, a cause célèbre of a US-based advocacy group Sikhs for Justice, sprung up in major gurdwaras in Pakistan during the annual Sikh pilgrimages in recent months. Some of the brains behind the London event had a criminal-militant past in the dossiers of Indian security agencies, before they fled India. This

explains India's alarm and alacrity behind its frantic -- and eventually in vain --- diplomatic moves to block the pro-referendum show. The Westminster, however, played hardball, refusing to disallow the radicals' gathering on grounds of freedom of expression. The only comfort New Delhi got was from a parallel 'pro-India' show of Britain-based NRIs. Back home in Punjab, the latest pro-Khalistan antic found no favour from any quarters, not even with pro-Khalistan splinter groups such as Dal Khalsa and Akali Dal (Amritsar). Rather, political parties closed ranks in condemning the bogey of Khalistan. Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh



called the London event as "an attempt by a handful of frustrated ISI-backed foreign-based Sikhs to foment trouble in India". The fallout of the event will largely be on India-UK relations. New Delhi made no effort to hide its irritation over allowing "a separatist activity which impinged on India's territorial integrity

and seeks to propagate violence, secessionism and hatred". The episode has further strained the already not-so-cordial India-UK ties in the uncertain times of Brexit and its impact on bilateral trade. But, what is certain is that India will keep up its tough stance on Sikh radicals active in some

foreign countries. Earlier, New Delhi had driven home its no-nonsense approach to Canada, forcing it to course correct its approach towards the anti-India fringe in the Sikh diaspora. In that sense, the London event is a wake-up for India to not lower its guard on security and diplomatic fronts.

Donald Trump should be cautious about choosing to lie

Even when a president's motives are not self-serving, he should be cautious about choosing to lie. But as the sheer number of lies indicates, the US has never seen a president like Donald Trump. The more a leader deceives the public, the more he erodes trust, weakens institutions and creates damaging precedents.

By June 1 of this year, US President Donald Trump had made 3,259 false or misleading claims, according to The Washington Post Fact Checker's database, which tracks and categorises every suspect statement uttered by the president. That's an average of more than 6.5 false claims a day, up from a daily average of 4.9 untrue claims in his first 100 days, and reaching eight per day in May. Trump is clearly going for a record. Trump's supporters justify his mendacity on the grounds that "all politicians lie." Indeed they do, and a little introspection leads us to admit that all humans lie. But the amount and type of lying make a difference. Too many lies debases the currency of trust. Not all lies are born equal. Some are self-serving. A president may lie to cover his tracks, avoid embarrassment, harm a rival, or for convenience. Other presidential lies serve a loftier purpose. In some circumstances, historians even applaud the fact that a president decided to deceive the public for what he considered a larger or later good. John F Kennedy misled the public about the role of American missiles in Turkey in the deal that ended the Cuban missile crisis in 1962; but that was certainly better for their interests than a high risk of nuclear war. A more ambiguous example occurred in 1941, before the United States entered World War II. In trying to persuade an isolationist public that Hitler's Germany was a threat, President Franklin D Roosevelt said that a German submarine had attacked a US destroyer, when in fact it was the American side that had initiated the action. In wartime, when loose lips can sink ships and secrets are crucial, Winston Churchill argued that the truth may be "so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." Machiavellian deception is often part of a strategy in bargaining to get a deal, and Trump claims to be a master of that art. Perhaps that explains his lies about North Korean weapons, European tariffs, and Russian President Vladimir Putin's interference in the 2016 US presidential election. But his dishonesty concerning the size of the crowd at his inauguration, the payment of hush money to women, or his reasons for firing former FBI Director James Comey has nothing to do with statecraft. It is purely self-serving manipulation of others and the public. Even when a president's motives are not self-serving, he should be cautious about choosing to lie. Before he turns to lying as an instrument of statecraft, he should consider the importance of the goal, the availability of alternative means to achieve it, and whether the deception can be contained or is likely to establish a pattern. The more a leader deceives the public, the more he erodes trust, weakens institutions, and creates damaging precedents. Roosevelt's lies in 1941 were intended to awaken the American people, but he also set a precedent that Lyndon B Johnson could use in 1964 to win congressional support for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which led to a dramatic escalation of the Vietnam War. The danger is that leaders tell themselves they are lying for the public good when they are doing so for political or personal gain. Johnson did not want to seem cowardly or to be portrayed as the man who lost Vietnam. He continually lied to the American people about the progress that was being made in the war. He also wanted to keep the war limited. One of the moral benefits of a limited war is the prevention of damage through escalation. But such wars involve an element of bluffing. To maintain credibility in bargaining with the enemy, a president must maintain a relentless public optimism, which serves to misinform the public. In Johnson's case, this imperative was reinforced by his personal motives. By 1968, people were saying that the only way to tell if he was lying was to see if his lips were moving. He decided not to run again. Johnson's successor, Richard Nixon, also lied about the Vietnam War, including his expansion of it into Cambodia. This was followed by his lying about his role in the cover-up of the break-in at the Democratic Party's headquarters, which had been carried out at the behest of his administration. When this was finally revealed by the Watergate tape recordings, Nixon resigned the presidency in 1974 to avoid impeachment. The damage that Johnson and Nixon did was not only to their presidencies but also to public trust. At the beginning of the 1960s, polls showed that three-quarters of Americans had a great deal of confidence in government. By the end of the following decade, only a quarter felt that way. While the causes of the decline were complex, presidential lies played a part. Some observers, pointing to his record in the private sector, argue that Trump merely lies out of habit. Others believe that the frequency, repetition, and blatant nature of his lies reflect not habit but a deliberate political strategy to damage institutions associated with truth. Either way, Trump has eroded the credibility of institutions such as the press, the intelligence agencies, and the US Department of Justice, making everything relative and playing to his extremely loyal base. Can a post-Trump America recover? It is worth remembering that Johnson and Nixon were succeeded by Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, who were notably more honest, and that public trust in government rose somewhat under Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. But as the sheer number of lies indicates, the US has never seen a president like Donald Trump.

Let's not take our freedom for granted

For today's generation independence is natural, a way of life because they haven't had to fight for it.

Most of us take India's freedom for granted. While the generation that went through the freedom struggle was fiercely protective of the values and ideals of the then leaders, the subsequent generations slowly forgot about them. Not that it was something wrong. It's quite natural for those who don't have memories associated with those traumatic moments to allow dust to settle on the past slowly. However, poignant stories of soldiers' valour and victory move us all. Soldiers actively participate in the mission of guarding the country, while others closely connected to them by bonds of blood and brotherhood often spend sleepless nights praying for their safety and well-being.

The moving words on a war memorial of 13 Kumaon (Regiment) near Rezang La Ladakh for the 1962 India-China war, bear repetition as long as there are wars and there are brave soldiers: "How can a man die better than facing fearful odds; For the ashes of his father and the temples of his Gods." For today's generation independence is natural, a way of life because they haven't had to fight for it. Moreover, it has always been hard to define what being a patriot or what being an Indian is. Nationalism is an abstract concept, a palpable emotion felt by us whenever the National Anthem is played. Being an Indian holds symbolical and spiritual meaning. There is always an emotional bond one feels for the motherland. In an increasingly globalised world now it is time to show that we are not only independent but also a power to reckon with. The present generation is innovative and brimming with confidence, with the youth wanting to carve a niche for themselves and set new objectives to conquer the world. They have keen awareness of the political, economic, social and environmental concerns of our times. So it is not fair to judge their patriotism that is not applicable in this technologically advanced era. One can safely say, however, that though preferences, sensibilities and lifestyles have changed, yet the true spirit of nationalism and passion to take the country to new heights and glory remain the same. Indian culture today: Our practices, rituals, heroes, stories, philosophies and world view are enriched by the confluence of progressive ideals which are woven into the warp and weft of our culture. We have been accretive. Whenever politics of hatred has polarised our society, people have stepped up to keep the faith, bridging communal divides. As we gear up to celebrate 71 years of independence in our nation's journey, let us pay tributes to our all the brave soldiers who laid down their lives for the country. The epitaph at the War Cemetery in Kohima says it all: "When you go home, tell them of us and say; for your tomorrow, we gave our today." Independence Day is time for us to learn from our soldiers, put our shoulders to the wheel, reform what needs reforming, build what needs building. I am not blind to all that is wrong but like a true Indian, I look for the best in limited resources with the conviction that all will be well soon. So we need to strive for a better India and beat back what is unacceptable. Nevertheless, I am proud to be an Indian. I love our glorious past, epics that bind us, our positivity, charity, spiritualism, warmth and resilience. Jai Hind! Glory to Mother India.



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Modi's Independence Day speech focused as much on achievements as on plans

The not-so-subliminal messaging was on the identity of the individual and the party best equipped to do these.



engineers and is good for the cause of science in India — but these were the big three. Mr Modi's fifth Independence Day speech, the last of his first term as PM, wasn't as aggressive as some of his earlier ones, but it was still a considered electoral pitch which, while emphasising this government's achievements, and setting it apart from the previous government, also focused on all that remains to be done. The not-so-subliminal messaging was on the identity of the individual and the party best equipped to do these.

(Agencies) It was by his government, with always expected that Prime Minister Narendra Modi one it would soon launch, a would use his Independence health insurance scheme Day speech as a sort of called Ayushman Bharat that summary of the will cover 500 million people achievements of his for Rs 5 lakh each. The government and a vision second was the reforms one, statement of its plans for where Mr Modi spoke about India ahead of parliamentary the hard decisions his elections scheduled for the government has taken, which middle of next year. He did people in and close to the just that, touching upon National Democratic Alliance every key issue and have often described as addressing every key indicative of the man's electoral constituency, from willingness to stake his women, to farmers, to small political capital on really big businessmen, to the poor, things.

but there was a larger message in his speech. In fact, there were three larger connected messages, linking Mr Modi the person (the first message) with his government's plans and projects (the second message) even as they set both apart from leaders and governments of the past (the third message).

The first message was on the man and his intentions. Yet again, Mr Modi sought to define himself as a leader who is in it for the sake of the country and its people, characterising himself as impatient and restless because he wants India and Indians to catch up with the rest of the world. The second message straddled two dimensions. The first was the welfare one, in which the PM spoke about the raft of schemes launched

The third message was about how, while pursuing its objectives, this government placed a premium on honesty and delivery. By dwelling at length on the performance of the United Progressive Alliance government, and contrasting that with the National Democratic Alliance's, Mr Modi sought to establish that the country has made tremendous progress under his leadership. Indeed, his message between the lines was that more could have been achieved had he inherited a country in better shape. There were other messages as well — including the one on the manned space mission which, while not exactly being India's "we choose to go the moon" moment, will enthuse scientists and

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Why India needs to decriminalise adultery

The law does not confer any right on women to prosecute the adulterous husband, or the woman with whom the husband has indulged in sexual intercourse



discrimination as it punishes only the man and spares the woman. There is no rationale, as he says, in treating one party involved in adultery as a victim and the other as a criminal. In doing so, the law violates article 14 of the constitution since it creates an irrational classification between men and women. In the present world, where women hold positions of authority in almost all spheres, the premise that the woman is always the 'victim' not only undermines the notion of women's agency but also is entirely unfair to men.

The law treats married women as the 'property' of their husbands on the ground that their relationship with other married persons depends on the "consent or connivance of her husband", which also means that a woman can sleep outside her marriage with the 'consent' of her husband. The law gives power to a husband to control the sexuality of his lawfully wedded wife. Monoandry, more than the protection of the sanctity of a social institution, therefore, seems to be the basic premise of

the law. The law allows the husband to control the sexuality of his wife in order to assert this sole claim to her body.

Besides the obvious gender discrimination that the law provides space for, the adultery law is problematic for several other reasons. The law gives a married man a right to blame an outside agency for the breakdown of his marriage. If a wife has chosen to sleep outside her marriage, it is important that the couple looks at the inadequacies in their own relationship and not hold an outsider responsible for the breakdown of their marriage. And if the relationship has lost its foundation of trust, it makes more sense that the couple approaches the courts for a mutual divorce than put a third person behind bars for breaking their marriage. The law only provides a psychological outlet to a spouse to blame a third person responsible for the failure of a marriage.

Do away with the law

It is still to be seen where the present debate on the law in the

Supreme Court leads the judiciary to, even though the apex court has opined that this provision wrongfully treats women as personal property and is against our fundamental right to life. The court has also observed that adultery as a ground for divorce can be viewed as ground for reasonable restriction, which doesn't mean that there is no sexual autonomy. It means that "there are valid limits to your sexual autonomy."

In my opinion, it is high time that India, like many countries around the world such as Bhutan, Sri Lanka and South Korea, decriminalises adultery. The legal system should not regulate whom one sleeps with. It should only regulate the process of separation when one or both the partners violate the sanctity of a marriage. Moreover, the criminalisation of broken trust in a marriage neither leads to a couple settling down again to a blissful life nor does it alter the social behavior of the society.

The recent debate on the adultery law in India and the observations of the Supreme Court bench on the shortcomings of the law has generated much heat.

Whatever the outcome of the recent petition filed by Joseph Shine who has contended that Section 497 is "unconstitutional" since it discriminates against men, it is time that India debates on whether the law should be made gender neutral or scrapped altogether.

Explaining the law on adultery in India?

Breaking it down, Section 497 Indian Penal Code (IPC) says that

any man who has sexual intercourse with the wife of another man, without the consent of her husband, shall be held liable for the crime of adultery.

The law does not confer any right on women to prosecute the adulterous husband, or the woman with whom the husband has indulged in sexual intercourse. In simple words, the husband solely has been permitted to prosecute the adulterer.

What is wrong with it?

As rightly observed by Chief Justice Dipak Mishra in the recent case, the law per se is based on

Mob lynching should be categorised as a class of hate crimes

Any legislative response must not obscure the social vulnerability of victims, but address it unequivocally.



Last month, the Supreme Court came down heavily on the State for its failure to address mob lynching and recommended the formulation of adequate laws to tackle the problem. The government has set up a committee, which is expected to submit a report to the Cabinet soon. It is vital that we identify the most effective framework for addressing these crimes. After all, mob lynching is already criminalised under the existing laws. The Indian Penal Code holds people liable for cooperating in the commission of a criminal act with a shared intention. These provisions cover all acts of mob violence, whatever their motivation or pretext be. The current

crisis of mob violence is not the absence of substantive provisions but their lack of implementation. Available evidence suggests that in almost all documented cases, the police have been found wanting. They consistently fail to lodge FIRs or charge sheets on time. In many cases, allegations of collusion have been made against them. Poor investigation and reluctance of public prosecutors to pursue cases have resulted in bails for alleged culprits. The victims, often socio-economically weak, are unable to pursue criminal cases. They are subjected to counter-cases and threats, and often pressured to compromise.

These factors have impaired the

criminal justice response in individual cases. In order to create even an opportunity for effective implementation, the new law against mob violence must strengthen official accountability and facilitate victim empowerment. These two imperatives should help us in identifying the proper conceptual framework for the proposed offence, including the definition of "lynching". One available definition of the term is punishment meted out by institutions or groups of people outside the established legal procedures. Understood on these lines, the problem with mob lynching is that it compromises rule of law and the State's monopoly over violence because it is a form of vigilantism. But approaching the issue exclusively through this State-centric lens is severely limited and marginalises the voices of the victims of violence.

From a victim-centric perspective, mob violence causes harm to the victims by injuring and humiliating them. Moreover, the current problem of mob violence is a crisis of hate violence against minorities, particularly Muslims and Dalits. Hate crimes against minorities

create a pervasive environment of vulnerability where members of these communities feel that they can be subjected to violence anytime and anywhere. This is precisely why the Supreme Court noted that the targeting of specific communities leads to the destruction of the social fabric of the country, and compromises tolerance and freedom. Treating the problem of mob violence only as a problem of vigilantism misses this social dimension of the violence. More perniciously, approaching the problem as that of vigilantism presumes that the victim may have, in fact, committed a crime. This places the victims in the dock by privileging the account of the perpetrators of violence. This is particularly objectionable because enough evidence now points to the fact that many, if not most, cases of hate violence involve criminal elements such as extortion and political opportunism. The vulnerability of victims is already pervasive because they are at a disadvantage when it comes to being able to contest counter-cases and withstand political pressure. Rather than alleviating this vulnerability, treating mob

violence only as a problem of rule of law embeds it further.

A full appreciation of the context and consequences of violence should encourage us to think of mob lynching as a class of hate crimes. Aligning with the trans-nationally accepted definitions of hate crimes, mob lynching incidents here have been either wholly or partly motivated by the religious or caste identity of the victims. Mob violence in India is also a manifestation of the social and institutional exclusion of vulnerable minorities. All credible legislative efforts of addressing lynching around the world have been part of the civil rights response to counter racist violence. This includes the recent effort in the United States Congress that places the offence of "lynching" squarely within the national laws against hate crimes.

In its judgment, the Supreme Court focuses on the victims by providing guidelines on victim compensation and witness protection. The legislative response should follow suit, not by obscuring the social vulnerability of the victims but addressing it unequivocally.

Farewell to Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Final journey ends at Smriti Sthal, SAARC leaders attend funeral

(Agencies) Farewell to Atal Bihari Vajpayee: The final journey somewhat symbolised his life: somewhat planned, somewhat unpredictable, some moments of bridging a divide, some moments of being out in the cold. And it all played out on a hot, humid afternoon.

As bugles sounded the last post and soldiers fired in the air in salute, a sea of people at the Smriti Sthal in central Delhi bid a tearful farewell to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee whose mortal remains were consigned to the flames with full state honours Friday, a day after he passed away at age 93.

The final journey somewhat symbolised his life: somewhat planned, somewhat unpredictable, some moments of bridging a divide, some moments of being out in the cold. And it all played out on a hot, humid afternoon. Friends and rivals sat together, watching in silence as Vajpayee's foster daughter Namita Kaul Bhattacharya lit the pyre. Many in the crowd fought tears when the Tricolour draping Vajpayee was folded and handed over to grand daughter Niharika. Not since the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991 had Delhi seen such a multitude gather to have a last glimpse of their leader. People in hundreds poured on to the roads as the cortege headed to Smriti Sthal from the BJP headquarters on Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg —



■ **Thousands escort Atal on his last journey**

■ **PM walks 4km in cortège, ignoring security protocol**

■ **Daughter lit pyre amid cries of 'Atal Bihari Amar Rahe'**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah led the mourners on foot the entire distance. At Smriti Sthal, Modi and Shah were joined by President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, BJP veteran and Vajpayee's close friend L K Advani, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, former Prime

MinisYoung men were propping up a makeshift structure, dragging an asbestos sheet over an overhead iron frame. "It is a cloudy day, and we cannot take chances. What if it rains?" a CPWD official said.

Among the first to reach the site were Trinamool Congress leaders Sukhendu Sekhar Ray and Dinesh Trivedi. "We were asked by Didi (Mamata

Banerjee) to come here," Ray said. Trivedi, on his part, said he had "amazing memories" of the man he knew. A ter Manmohan Singh, Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and a host of dignitaries, including Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Afghanistan's former President Hamid Karzai. The ceremony, watched in homes and offices across the country, went off with clockwork precision — it was, after all, a state funeral. But long before the ceremony, there were moments of panic, last-minute arrangements at the cremation venue. Shortly after noon, when people were filing past Vajpayee's body at the BJP headquarters, policemen showed up at Smriti Sthal with boards announcing the VIP

alighting point. As Army personnel brought the wreaths, someone raised an alarm about stray dogs. Three dog catchers promptly turned up and began chasing the dogs — and a municipal van showed up. And then it was time to stockpile, arrange the sandalwood logs for the final rites. Suman Gupta from Nigambodh Ghat, one of the organisers, said 400 kg of sandalwood and samagri were to be used. Special Protection Group personnel came to check the sacks. "Don't worry, we are careful," one of the SPG officers told the priests. As word came in that the cortege had left the BJP office, the pace of work at Smriti Sthal picked up. BJP leaders Muralidhar Rao and Smriti Irani asked workers to hurry up. Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was also there to oversee the arrangements. Leaders began arriving. Around 3.30 pm, Mulayam Singh Yadav came in and sat alone on the front row. At one end, AAP's Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia sat next to Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh. Next to Singh were Congress leaders Anand Sharma and Ghulam Nabi Azad. The Badals too showed up.

As he sat alone, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was joined by BJP's Murli Manohar Joshi and they were seen with RSS leaders Bhagwat and Bhaiyyaji Joshi. Rahul Gandhi walked in around the time the cortege reached the Smriti Sthal.

As the casket was brought in, personnel of the three Services and their chiefs led the ceremony. By 5.45 pm, an hour after the pyre was lit, most leaders had left. The crowd that had waited outside came in. Vajpayee's family was still there.

Vajpayee was very impressed by Modi's election strategy-making in both the 1995 and 1998 elections.



Vajpayee said, **"You must leave Delhi and go away from here."**

Modi was shocked and asked, **"Where would I go?"**

Vajpayee answered in one word: **"Gujarat."**

Few days later on October 7, Modi took oath as the Gujarat CM.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee was ahead of his times, says PM Narendra Modi in his blog

(Agencies) In the blog, Modi decodes how Vajpayee rescued the economy in the mid 1990s and how he was ahead of his times. PM Modi also talks about Vajpayee's four decades of illustrious leadership and the high standards of debate in Parliament. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has written a blog on Former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee after his demise at AIIMS yesterday. PM Modi wrote about Atalji's statesmanship, towering personality, amicable nature and foreign policy which raised India's stature in the global order. In the blog, Modi decodes how Vajpayee rescued the economy in the mid 1990s and how he was ahead of his times. PM Modi also talks about

Vajpayee's four decades of illustrious leadership and the high standards of debate in Parliament. Here is the full text of the blog. In times of turbulence and disruption, a nation is blessed to have a leader who rises to become its moral compass and guiding spirit, providing vision, cohesion and direction to his people. And, in such a moment at the turn of the century, India found one in Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was gifted in spirit, heart and mind. For those of us who knew him, he was, first, the rarest of human beings, who touched and inspired everyone he met. He was compassionate to the core, generous in spirit, warm beyond measure and kind to a fault. He was deeply respectful of

others and gifted with a rare sense of humour that he often turned upon himself.

Orator without parallel, he could switch from disarming humour to a lofty vision with ease, with a rare ability to connect with people naturally, to stir them to self-belief and to a higher cause. Sharply perceptive, he could summarize the most complex issues and discussions in a single sentence or question.

Born into a family of modest means and high ideals, he hailed from a small town in MP. His youth was defined by academic excellence and quest for public service during the gathering momentum of freedom struggle. Starting as an ordinary Karyakarta in the Jana Sangh, he organized

the only truly national-level party - the BJP - and helmed its organization work after the passing away of Shri Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.

Through the four decades of leadership in Parliament, the

struggle against Emergency (who can forget that memorable rally in Delhi's Ramlila Maidan when his speech became the roar of the nation), the clarity to represent his party with passion but always speak for the nation, he defined the spirit of democracy in India.



(Top) Heavy security accompanies the cortege. (Above) A coffin decorated with flowers and wrapped in the Indian flag carries the body of the late former Prime Minister during his funeral procession. (R) PM Narendra Modi pays his respects during the funeral.



Atal's first tenure was uneventful in terms of governance but the other two terms, which were consecutive, changed India forever in many aspects.

5 DECISIONS OF VAJPAYEE THAT CHANGED INDIA

By **Prabhash K Dutta**
in New Delhi

ATAL Bihari Vajpayee remains the only non-Congress PM to have occupied the chair thrice and only the third overall after Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. His first tenure was uneventful in terms of governance but the other two terms, which were consecutive, changed India forever in many aspects.

After the defeat of Rao government in 1996, the economy faced derailment. Vajpayee brought it back on the track and when he demitted office, the GDP was growing at more than 8 per cent and a double-digit growth was in sight.

built — completed in 2012 six years after the original deadline of 2006. It generated thousands of jobs for rural India.

Rich & healthy govt

The first serious attempt to make Indian government economically strong was made in 1991 when Vajpayee undertook the task of disinvestment as a mission. Former journalist Arun Shourie was made the minister for disinvestment.

Many PSUs were freed from government control. The Fiscal Responsibility Act was passed in 2003 making it mandatory for the government to keep the finances in good health. The move suddenly improved public sector saving.

After the defeat of Rao govt in 1996, the economy faced derailment but Vajpayee brought it back on track

Nuclear India

The Indira Gandhi government had conducted the first nuclear tests in Pokhran in 1974. The next was by the Vajpayee government in 1998 with five nuclear tests in May. With this, he declared India's nuclear capabilities to the world with no-first-use policy.

Education for all

For decades after Independence, the Centre had failed to find a way to boost school education and check dropout rates. The Vajpayee government came up with a simple, yet novel scheme called Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan. His government launched the scheme in 2001 with the objective of achieving the goal of universal literacy in India. The government also made education a fundamental right of all kids ages between six and 14. The result was that the school dropout rate came down by 60 per cent in just five years.

India Today TV

Telecom revolution

After assuming office in 1998, he brought the new telecom policy and opened up the sector. The monopoly of the government-owned telecom companies ended and private players infused life into the moribund sector. Vajpayee introduced a win-win telecom formula. The government got more revenue from profits made by private companies. The new policy reduced the cost of telecom companies owned by the government.

Connecting India

Vajpayee envisaged a highway network to connect the corners of the country. This is the fifth-largest highway project in the world. This project looks like an urban centre connection programme, but it was actually a policy to give rural India access to urban India. A total of around 6,000 km of highways were

INDEPENDENCE DAY 2018

INDIA CELEBRATES THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speech

(Agencies) On the occasion of the 72nd Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi unfurled the tricolour and addressed the nation from the ramparts of Delhi's Red Fort, in his fifth year of the BJP-led NDA government's current term. Modi talked of India's ambition in space exploration, congratulated the all-women INS Tarini team that circumnavigated the globe, and batted for women's safety. Here are some key takeaways from Modi's 80-minute-long speech:

1. The PM spoke of the progress made by scientists and the Indian space programme. Highlighting achievements like India launching 118 satellites in a go, Modi said that before 2022, which is when India completes 75 years of independence, "A son or daughter of India will go to space with a tricolour in their hands."

2. Saying that he is impatient to provide a quality of life to his people, Modi announced his aim of "Housing for all, power for all, water for all, LPG for all, toilet for all, skill for all, health for all, insurance for all and connectivity for all."

3. PM Modi expressed pride talking about the Indian Navy all-women crew of INS Tarini, which circumnavigated the globe.

4. India is constructing twice the number of highways and producing record crops and mobile phones," he declared, emphasising on the speed of work undertaken by his government in comparison to that of the previous UPA government.

5. Remembering the sacrifices of martyrs who fought for India's freedom, Modi stated that next year will mark the 100th anniversary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

6. The PM announced Ayushman Bharat, his

flagship health policy, which will aim to cover over 10 crore vulnerable families. Slated to roll out on September 25, the scheme will provide a health cover of up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year.

7. Stating that the north-east is developing as a hub of change, PM Modi said that more and more news of sportspersons from the North-East is being reported. "In last four years, we have taken Delhi to the northeast, which once seemed so far away," he said.

8. The PM said that India has now become a multi-billion dollar investment destination, while it was counted in the fragile five and had an impression of policy paralysis.

9. Stating that India stands

second highest in fish production, while production of honey has doubled and sugar has tripled, Modi said that his government aims to double the income of farmers by 2022 with the help of innovation to reach a record level of food grains production.

10. Quoting WHO reports, Modi said that the lives of 3 lakh children have been saved due to the cleanliness resulting from the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan.

11. Modi said that the recently concluded monsoon session of Parliament was dedicated to social justice. Adding that "Dalits, woman and weaker sections of the society have been empowered", Modi mentioned the passage of the bill to create an OBC commission.



FACT CHECK

There were several big claims in PM Modi's speech. Mail Today does a reality check.

TRACTOR SALES REACHED RECORD HIGH

Tractor manufacturers notched up their highest-ever sales in 2017-18. At 7.11 lakh units, sales are 22% higher than the 5.83 lakh units recorded in 2016-17.



HIGH GROWTH OF START-UPS IN TIER 2 & TIER 3 CITIES

A recent NASSCOM and Zinnov report found that startups from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities account for about 20% of total startup base in India. Around 40% of the active business incubators and accelerators are now located in non-tier 1 cities.

99 PENDING IRRIGATION PROJECTS ARE COMPLETED

In 2016, the government kicked off work to complete 99 major and medium irrigation projects pending for years. These projects will bring 7.6 million hectares of land under irrigation in some of the most drought-prone regions of India. However, these projects are not yet completed, as claimed by PM Modi.



INDIA IS WORLD'S SIXTH LARGEST ECONOMY

According to the World Bank, India is the world's sixth largest economy based on GDP current/nominal. It was ranked 10th in 2011.

INDIAN PASSPORT IS ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED AND WELCOMED IN THE WORLD

The Global Passport Power Rank put India at 65th position in 2018 based on its total visa-free score.



WE ARE SECOND LARGEST FISH PRODUCER

India was ranked 2nd in fish production even in 2014. Besides, India is a distant second to China. In 2016-17, total fish production in India was 11.41 million tonnes, as against 69.69 million tonnes in China.



₹13 CRORE MUDRA LOAN DISTRIBUTED, BOOSTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND JOBS

RTI application by India Today revealed that only 1.45 per cent of MUDRA loans are more than ₹5 lakh; 90% loans under ₹50,000, which "may be useful for someone like a single-cattle dairy farmer or some 'thallawala' but will not be sufficient to create substantial employment", according to economist Ajit Ranade.

KHADI SALES DOUBLED IN THE COUNTRY

In 2017-18, total Khadi sales across the country increased to ₹2,503 crore, a 118 per cent rise since 2014-15

INDIA'S HONEY EXPORT DOUBLED IN LAST 1 YEAR

India's honey export rose from 55,779.03 million tonnes in 2016-17 to 65,357.58 million tonnes in 2017-18, a 17 per cent rise, India's global rank in terms of honey export is 11th

5 CR PEOPLE CAME OUT OF POVERTY IN LAST 2 YEARS

According to the Brookings Institution's World Poverty Clock, India had 14.5 crore people under extreme poverty in January 2016. The number has come down to 8.3 crore in January 2018. This proves that nearly 6 crore people came out of poverty in last two years.

By Kaushik Deka

TRUE

FALSE

PARTLY TRUE



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Four killed, almost 200 houses damaged after rains lash Uttar Pradesh



(Agencies) A statement issued by the office of the UP relief commissioner said the deaths took place in Kannauj, Unnao, Etawah and Pilibhit districts on Tuesday. Apart from this, two people were injured in Lucknow, while as many as 196 houses

sustained damages across the state, it said. Four people were killed and nearly 196 houses damaged in rain-related incidents in the state over the last 24 hours, officials said on Wednesday. A statement issued by the office of the UP relief commissioner said the deaths took place in Kannauj, Unnao, Etawah and Pilibhit districts on Tuesday. Apart from this, two people were injured in Lucknow, while as many as 196 houses sustained damages across the state, it said. The MeT office in Lucknow

said that with the southwest monsoon remaining normal, rain/thundershower was likely at a few places across the state in the next two days. Meanwhile, a central water commission report said major rivers, including the Ganga, Ram Ganga, Sai, Sharda, Ghaghra and Rapti, were flowing at dangerous levels. The Sharda river at Palia Kalan, the Ghaghra at Elgin Bridge (Barabanki), Ayodhya and Turtipar (Ballia), and the Rapti at Balrampur were flowing well above the red mark, it said. The

Met office said light to moderate rain/thundershowers occurred at a few places across the state since Tuesday, with heavy rain/thundershowers at isolated places. As per data recorded on Wednesday, Dhaurahara received 9 cm rainfall, followed by Soraon and Karhal each with 7 cm, Bhogaon with 6 cm, Kakrahi and Salempur with 5 cm each, Shardanagar and Ghorawal with 4 cm each and Regoli, Karwi, Balrampur, Chunar, Ballia, Ghosi, Mahroni and Rath with 3 cm rainfall each.

India commissions more thermal power plants despite pollution concerns

India commissioned 13 GW of thermal power plants from January 1, 2017 till August 9 this year. But barring two, none of the new plants or units meets the stricter thermal power plant emission standards laid down by the environment ministry in 2015.

(Agencies) Despite having the largest number of critically polluted cities in India, Maharashtra added almost 2.5 GW of coal-fuelled power capacity in 2017, while overall, India commissioned 13 GW of thermal power plants from January 1, 2017 till August 9 this year. Barring two, none of the new plants or units meets the stricter thermal power plant emission standards laid down by the environment ministry in 2015. The issue of implementation of thermal power plant standards is now in the Supreme Court which has admonished the Centre for failing to implement standards and toying with public health. Chhattisgarh, another state that relies heavily on coal-fired plants, which contribute to 95% of the installed power capacity, also added 2.7 GW of capacity in thermal power stations, the highest for any state. Thermal power plants are an all-year-round source of air pollution, spewing particulate matter and oxides of sulphur and nitrogen, which produce secondary particulate matter. Burning of coal also produces greenhouse gases that disrupt climatic patterns. Mumbai is considered one of the most polluted metropolises in the world, and 16 other cities in Maharashtra feature on India's most polluted cities list prepared by the Central Pollution Control Board. In 2015, the ministry of

environment, forests and climate change notified stricter standards for thermal power plants that use coal, and these had to be met by December 2017. However, most existing thermal power plants did not meet the standards and have now been granted extensions, some of which stretch to 2022. As per the notification, power plants commissioned after Jan 1, 2017, have to meet the stricter norms from their date of commissioning. However, the

power ministry has argued that since the environmental clearance was granted before the issue of the new norms in 2015, the plants would need time to install the pollution-mitigation equipment.

"The environmental clearance for such TPPs was already accorded before issuance of new environmental norms by the ministry of environment, forests and climate change," RK Singh, power minister, told Parliament in the monsoon



session. Activists disagree with this explanation. "The notification clearly states that all under-construction plants should also comply with norms. Also logically, it is easier to retrofit while the plant is under construction, rather than shutting down power

plants after commissioning," Nandikesh Sivalingam, an air pollution activist with Greenpeace, said. Even if the plants started the process of retrofitting in 2015, when the norms were issued, they should be completed by this year, he added.

Manned mission in space by 2022, says PM Modi ; ISRO chief says India on track

In his Independence Day address to the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India will put an astronaut in space by 2022.

(Agencies) Sending a manned mission to space by 2022, a plan announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech, will make India the fourth country to send a human to space, after the erstwhile USSR, the US and China. "I am happy to announce that India has decided that by 2022, when India celebrates its 75th year of Independence, or before, an Indian -- could be a boy or a girl -- will go to space with the tricolour in their hand," Modi said. India's human spaceflight programme, Vyom, was proposed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) a decade ago. The Indian manned mission is likely have three crew members entering the Low Earth orbit for five to seven days using an

indigenous Mark GSLV III launch vehicle.

"We can achieve the 2022 target that the PM has announced. ISRO already has a crew module, the crew escape system was tested this year, and we have a launch vehicle. Not much more is needed as far as the technology is concerned," said ISRO chairman K Sivan. The mission is likely to cost less than R 10,000 crore, Sivan said. "For the mission, ISRO will have two unmanned flights before the final one manned one. The first unmanned flight is likely to be tested within two years and the timeline for the rest will be decided accordingly," said Sivan.

Work on an orbital vehicle to take the crew to the Low Earth orbit is already underway. In 2007, India tested its first



re-entry technology wherein a 550 kg satellite was sent into the orbit and brought back to earth safely in 12 days to test heat-resistant materials that are essential for re-entry technology. In July, ISRO successfully tested a crew escape system at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. The test was critical for a manned mission as it could be needed for pulling out crew members in case of a launch abort due to some emergency. India has already completed a

Moon and a Mars mission. India's first lunar probe Chandrayan-1 was launched by ISRO in October 2008, and operated until August 2009. The second lunar probe Chandrayaan-2 is scheduled to be launched by January 2019 and will attempt the soft landing of a rover near the moon's south pole. The Mars Orbiter Mission, Mangalyaan, was India's first interplanetary mission that was launched on November 5, 2013, and has been orbiting Mars since September 24, 2014.

Kerala floods: Red alert in 12 of 14 districts, Kochi airport shut till? Saturday as rain fury returns

The death toll in Kerala has risen to 40 as there is no let up in heavy rains and the operations of the Kochi airport have been suspended till Saturday.

(Agencies) Kerala reeled under flood fury on Wednesday as surging waters led to the Cochin international airport being shut till Saturday, hit rail services and threatened relief camps while a red alert was sounded in 12 out of 14 districts following heavy rainfall and opening of shutters of more than 30 dams.

The toll rose to at least 67, many areas were without power or drinking water, while more people were shifted to relief camps including 23,000 in Ernakulam.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that the state "is going through a serious situation" and asked everyone to cooperate with the government to deal with the "unprecedented situation".

This is the first time the Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) is being closed for four days after the area was flooded. Operations of international and domestic flights were earlier suspended till 2pm on Wednesday but authorities decided to shut the airport till 2pm on Saturday after reviewing the worsening situation.

"Operations were suspended after water reached the runaway in the early hours of Wednesday. Most of the incoming flights are diverted to Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikkode airports," CIAL director ACK Nair said.

The airport is situated near the banks of the swollen Periyar river and water from most of the dams in the upper reaches of Idukki is flowing into the river that later merges with the Arabia Sea. Shutters of Idamlayar, Idukki and Mullaperiyar dams were opened on Tuesday night to release excess water from the reservoirs. Sluice gates of 33 dams have now been opened across the state.

The arrival operations were suspended for two hours on August 9 in the view of a possible inundation in the airport area.

All Air India express flights from Cochin will operate from Thiruvananthapuram, a spokesman of the national carrier said. Train services were disrupted at many places and rail service between Thiruvananthapuram and Kanyakumari was

suspended after main bridges were swept away in the gushing waters. Railway officials said all trains in the state will run at a speed of 30kmph to avoid accidents.

Kerala sought more relief and help from the Indian Army and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). The toll in the worst natural disaster in the state could rise further with five people, three in Idukki and one each in Malappuram and Kozhikkode districts, have been missing since Tuesday night. Many other marooned have been saved by rescuers.

Many areas were marooned and landslides reported in Kannur, Wayanad and Kozhikkode districts. The state government asked visitors to avoid hilly areas as the popular hill station of Munnar was cut off from the rest of Kerala.

People to avoid the Sabarimala hill shrine in Pathanamthitta district as the water level in the nearby rain-fed Pampa River was rising.

The weather department has issued a red alert for Wayanad, Kozhikkode, Kannur,



Kasaragod, Malappuram, Palakkad, Idukki and Ernakulam districts till Thursday. The worst-affected Idukki and Wayanad districts received 80mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours, a spokesperson of the regional office of the meteorological department said.

Meanwhile, the Mullaperiyar dam in Idukki, which serves neighbouring Tamil Nadu, again became an issue between the two states with the neighbouring state refused to take more water from the dam where water level reached the maximum 142 feet. Chief minister Vijayan is likely to talk to his Tamil Nadu counterpart Edappadi K Palaniswami on the issue again. Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned the flood-hit state of Kerala in his address to the nation on the 72nd Independence Day.

"Many parts of the nation witnessed a good monsoon but at the same time parts of

India have been affected by flooding. My thoughts are with the families of those who lost their lives due to floods in various parts of India," Modi said.

In his Independence Day speech delivered in pouring rain, Vijayan said: "We are celebrating this year's Independence Day when the floods have ravaged the state. It is a disaster that has never been witnessed in the state. But if all of us join hands, we will be able to handle any disaster."

He said good work by armed forces and NDRF personnel have helped save many lives, while the "state has shown the world that it can overcome the worst situations through commitment and hard work".

Vijayan also urged people to contribute generously to the Chief Minister Distress Relief Fund in the wake of the state's worst flood disaster in 94 years.

Arvind Kejriwal refuses to accept AAP leader Ashutosh's resignation

Ashutosh, a former TV journalist who uses just his first name, had earlier on Wednesday announced his resignation from the party, citing personal reasons.

(Agencies) Delhi chief minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday rejected party leader Ashutosh's resignation, asking how could they accept it.

"How can we ever accept ur resignation?," Kejriwal said in a tweet, adding dramatically, "No, not in this birth" in Hindi. Ashutosh, a former TV journalist who uses just his first name, had earlier on Wednesday announced his resignation from the party, citing personal reasons.

"Every journey has an end. My association with AAP which was beautiful/revolutionary has also an end. I have resigned from the PARTY/requested PAC

[political action committee] to accept the same. It is purely from a very very personal reason. Thanks to party/all of them who supported me Throughout (sic). Thanks," he tweeted.

Ashutosh often defended the party in TV news debates, but felt sidelined in recent months, sources said. He was not in AAP's list of three candidates for a Rajya Sabha seat earlier this year. He has not visited AAP Delhi's office and kept away from important party activities for the last few months, sources said. He lost the 2014 Lok Sabha election in Delhi's Chandni Chowk constituency to union environment minister Harsh Vardhan.

Former prime minister? Atal Bihari Vajpayee's condition critical, on life support: Delhi AIIMS

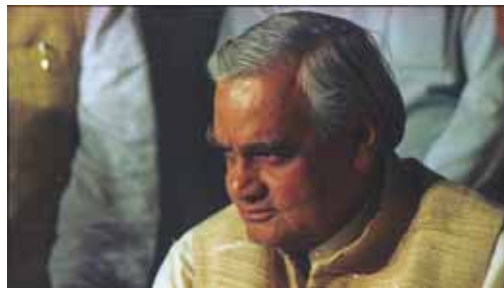
PM Narendra Modi and Smriti Irani visited AIIMS this evening to enquire about the health of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who is recuperating in the intensive care unit.

(Agencies) Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Wednesday evening after the health of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, admitted at the hospital since June, worsened.

"Former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee has been admitted for the last nine weeks at AIIMS. Unfortunately, his condition has worsened over the last 24 hours. His condition is critical and he is on life support," AIIMS said in a statement at 10.08 pm.

The former prime minister's overall health had deteriorated after he suffered a stroke in 2009. He was admitted to AIIMS on June 11 with kidney tract infection, chest congestion, urinary tract infection and low urine output, indicating impaired kidney

functions. He was put on slow dialysis to help his kidneys heal and is being treated in the intensive care unit of the cardio thoracic and neuro science tower at AIIMS since then.



Vajpayee in the hospital since June.

Among other senior leaders who visited Vajpayee on Wednesday were Union ministers Harsh Vardhan, Piyush Goyal and Smriti Irani, BJP leader Meenakshi Lekhi and Union minister Arun Jaitley's wife and daughter. The 93-year-old BJP leader has diabetes, has one functional kidney and developed dementia after a stroke in 2009.

How Pakistan celebrated its Independence Day



ul-Mulk, who hoisted the national flag in Islamabad on August 14, alongside Pakistani president Mamnoon Hussain (Sharif was handed a 10-year jail term on July 6 by an anti-corruption court.). "The economic problems being faced by Pakistan and the complex issues confronting it can only be overcome if we follow the teachings of the Quaid-e-Azam [Muhammad Ali Jinnah] and Allama Iqbal [Muhammad Iqbal] in their true spirit," Hussain said in a message for his compatriots. There were gun salutes in Pakistan's national and provincial capitals, Dawn reported. "People across the

country flocked to stalls that lined up streets to purchase national flags in different sizes, t-shirts, badges and other merchandise to display their national pride", the report said. "On this Independence Day I am filled with the greatest optimism," said Imran Khan, the former cricket hero widely expected to take over as prime minister. "Despite our grave economic crises, due to corruption and cronyism, I know if we are united in our resolve, we will rise to the challenge and Pakistan will become the great nation envisaged by our Quaid [Jinnah] and Iqbal," he

tweeted. Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have plummeted over the past year and have been kept afloat by lending from China. Its rupee has been devalued four times since December. The finance minister-in-waiting of the incoming government has said Islamabad will decide whether to seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (or friendly nations such as China) by the end of September. But last month's general election brought some good news: It marked a transfer of power between two civilian governments, the second in the country's history.

(Agencies) Hours before Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived at the Red Fort to deliver his annual August 15 speech, Nawaz Sharif — until recently his Pakistani counterpart — cut a cake in a Rawalpindi jail to celebrate his nation's Independence Day. That's according to report by Dawn, one of Pakistan's leading English dailies. It was the caretaker prime minister, Nasir

Bangladesh: Wave of Arrests Over Peaceful Dissent

(Agencies) (New York) — Bangladesh authorities are tracking social media accounts and have detained dozens of people across the country for criticizing the government over its violent crackdown on peaceful protesters, Human Rights Watch said today. The recent wave of arrests, targeting student protesters and journalists, has created an atmosphere of fear, putting a serious chill on free speech. Thousands of students took to the streets after a speeding bus killed two students

on July 29, 2018. The protesters called for safer roads, accountable governance, and the upholding of the rule of law but were met with teargas and rubber bullets from security forces and violent attacks by supporters of the ruling Awami League. After police stood by while government supporters beat up the student protesters, the authorities moved quickly to stifle any condemnation of the violence. Dhaka police have been conducting block raids in residential areas of the city where many

university students live. Students told Human Rights Watch that police have been going door-to-door, raiding houses, and checking phones for communications related to the protests. "Sheikh Hasina's government appears unable to tolerate criticism after Awami League supporters attacked protesters with machetes, sticks, and metal pipes and is apparently desperate to shut down dissent," said Brad Adams, Asia director. "The authorities should halt arbitrary arrests, prosecute

those involved in violent attacks, and immediately and unconditionally release people it has thrown in jail just for speaking out." Among those arrested is renowned photographer and activist, Shahidul Alam, who has been in detention for nine days, during which he says he was beaten in custody. Quazi Nawshaba Ahmed, an actress, has remained in custody, denied bail, after she was arrested on August 4, apparently accused of spreading rumors on Facebook.

15 YEARS CELEBRATING

As we complete 15 Years

"Words cannot express the monumental journey that each and every person reading this has crossed through. The South Asian Insider has completed fifteen year journey, that has brought a wave of information and has amassed everyone together in this community. Few people can claim to have been a part of a tireless effort to soar through the top of the skies of the newspaper industries and be able to remark on it, 15 years later. We believe an order of gratitude is granted to all of you. To everyone who has stayed with The South Asian Insider through our path, thank you.

If it was not for each and every one of you today who have supported our endeavours to become a reliable source of information, we would not have been able to voice our appreciation today. We as a family will continue to move forward with every article printed, with every word typed and with every voice incorporated into the publication that has stood to uphold the value of information and knowledge. Because with each idea shared, we as a community continue to move forward. And to all, thank you for sharing this achievement with all of us here today, working towards a new tomorrow."

-Sharanjit Singh Thind
Editor In Chief & Publisher

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Gut microbes are critical enablers

Promote healthy gut bacteria through appropriate nutritional interventions to boost overall health

h better cognitive scores in one-year-old infants, and has identified brain and behavioural characteristics clustered by gut microbiota profile, in middle-aged adults.

We now know that the human gut microbiome impacts human brain-health in numerous ways, such as stimulation of the innate immune system and the production of hormones and neurotransmitters that are identical to those produced by humans. In this way it stimulates different neurons of the enteric nervous system, thus impacting architecture of sleep, reaction to stress as well as memory, mood, and cognition. To build physical health, the gut microbiome allows appropriate

nutrient absorption and defends the body from invading organisms. It directly impacts the body's immunity and metabolism and determines our response to external medication and vaccines. The greatest load and diversity of microbial cells is believed to be within the gastrointestinal tract and any disruption in the balance of these microbes is also associated with a number of adult diseases such as diabetes, obesity, inflammatory illnesses such as arthritis, autoimmune conditions, and even psychological and neurological ailments.

Gut health is largely dependent on three factors: (i) the balance of the microbes present in the gut; (ii) the proper functioning of

the gut barrier that separates microbes from the immune system; and (iii) the well-being of the gut immune system itself. When the gut barrier allows appropriate nutrient absorption and defends the body from invading organisms, it directly impacts our body's immunity and metabolism. It also determines our response to external medication and vaccines. There are three main therapeutic approaches that might be used to address gut health: food, microbes, and medicines.

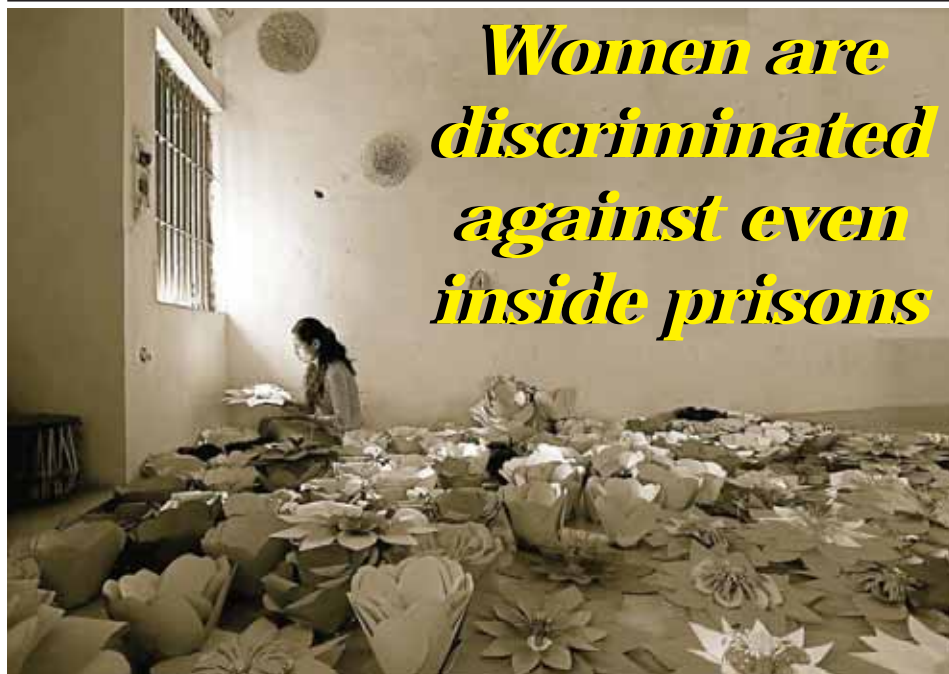
(a) Food: It is critical that infants get an adequate supply of breast milk in the first six months. In addition to helping with the growth of good bacteria, several

studies have shown that there is a mother-to-infant transfer of the required bacterial strains through breast milk. It is also important for gut-health that young children as well as pregnant and lactating women receive a balanced nutrition consisting of diverse, ideally fresh foods with adequate protein, fat, carbohydrates, and fibre as well as other key micronutrients and bioactive molecules that help good microbes and the individual grow. (b) Microbes: A separate therapeutic class involves ingesting the microbes themselves, such as carefully chosen probiotics (For example, Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium), or more exotic healthy bacteria found only in

the gut, that can help increase immune responses to oral vaccines and protect children from infectious diseases.

(c) Medicines: A third approach involves delivering gut-targeted pharmaceuticals that act upon the lining of the gastrointestinal tract to help improve the gut's barrier function and immune system. Medical science is rapidly learning how to manipulate gut microbes to address underlying disease vulnerability. There are several very promising gut-microbe-based clinical trials around the world that are evaluating interventions aimed at reversing the high rate of neonatal malnutrition and stunting.

Women are discriminated against even inside prisons



The month of August has brought cheer on the faces of six women inmates lodged in Tihar. For the first time in the history of Tihar, women inmates who have completed 12 years of imprisonment with a good track record are expecting to be transferred to the semi-open jail within the

premises of the Tihar complex. Tihar is the largest prison complex in South Asia and is one of the most over-crowded of prisons in India.

There are about 570 women prisoners lodged in Tihar of which 125 are convicts. Inmates who will now be shifted to the new jail will help run the system

of the same jail without constant surveillance of the staff. These women will be allowed to move freely within the prison complex but will not be allowed to leave the prison complex unlike the inmates who are shifted to the open jail. If any prisoner defies the law, the jail will have the right to send them back to the

The decision by Tihar authorities to launch a semi-open jail inside the complex for women inmates is a good move

regular prison.

The data released by the National Crime Records Bureau in 2015 reveal that out of nearly 3,800 inmates in open prisons, only 109 are women. There are 63 open jails in India, out of which only four are for women. These are located in Yerawada, Thiruvananthapuram and in Durgapura and Sangarner. This itself is a testimony of how we treat women behind bars too.

Delhi is the third state after Rajasthan and Maharashtra to start a semi-open jail for women. The logic behind the semi-open jail or an open-jail is to help the inmates gradually get back into society before their release. These set of jails operate without having rigid walls and provide adequate

freedom to the inmates to start a new chapter of their life. While in a semi-open jail the prisoner is not permitted to leave the prison, an open-jail opens its gates for the inmates to spend the entire day outside and come back by the end of the day. In many circumstances, they are even permitted to stay with their families. This system is immensely helpful in reforming and rehabilitating the inmates.

While the action taken by Tihar authorities is a welcome step, we cannot ignore the fact that women are discriminated against even inside the prisons. Before the intervention by the courts, prison authorities almost all across India felt that opening of spaces for women inmates will bring

with it multiple problems. Their arguments ignored the fact that disallowing eligible women to enter into the open jails will bring in tougher situations for those who have already reached the last leg of their punishment term and are reformed and certainly deserve to live a better life in the same manner as it is allowed to their male counterparts.

It seems we still have to walk a long way in bringing in the shades of equality for women. Delhi's Tihar can act as the torchbearer for other states by setting an example of justice, neutrality and fairness. After all, Tihar is seen as a model jail and being at the centre, has always been a newsmaker with different shades of news reaching the news desks.

Whatever happened to Al Qaeda in Afghanistan?

It's a mystery if remaining remnants of the group that perpetrated the 9/11 attacks are still even plotting overseas attacks.



The troops waging America's 17-year-old war in Afghanistan are confronting a puzzle: What has become of the enemy who drew them there?

Al Qaeda, the group whose Sept. 11 terrorist attacks provoked the U.S. invasion in 2001, has shrunk to relative obscurity among the military's other missions in Afghanistan, supplanted by newer threats such as a local branch of the Islamic State. And it is a matter of debate how much Al Qaeda's remaining Afghan presence still focuses on launching attacks overseas, according to current and former military officers and government officials, experts, and Afghans from areas where the group operates.

Only a small portion of the 15,000 American troops in Afghanistan are involved in the counterterrorism mission that the military calls its "core objective" there. Even fewer of those are hunting Al Qaeda, whose presence in the country has dwindled after years of drone strikes. Instead, U.S. special operations forces are focusing on the Afghan branch of ISIS, a less secretive group that in some way offers an easier target.

The changing complexion of the American mission, aimed primarily at aiding the Afghan government in its civil war against the Taliban, underscores how the conflict has morphed away from its original focus: preventing a reprise of 9/11 and punishing its perpetrators. That was also

the intent of Congress' 2001 war authorization, which the Pentagon still relies on as it sends combat troops to countries across the Middle East and Africa.

"We have decimated Al Qaeda" in Afghanistan, the next American general set to take command of the U.S. and NATO mission told Congress in June. A military assessment published the same month concluded that the few senior Al Qaeda figures remaining in Afghanistan "are focused on their own survival," while members of a local Al Qaeda subgroup are mainly helping the Afghan Taliban on the battlefield instead of plotting attacks abroad. But some experts warn that it's risky for the military to shift its focus from the group. They say Al Qaeda tries hard to fly under the radar and mask its true intentions, making it extremely difficult for U.S. intelligence agencies to track and assess.

"Al Qaeda may have decided, let's forget about external attacks for the time being and focus inside Afghanistan on helping the Taliban," said Seth Jones, a terrorism scholar at the Center for Strategic and International Studies who has consulted for military counterterrorism units. "That may be a strategic decision for the moment, and then at some point down the road they shift back."

Experts also say there is little evidence the Afghan ISIS branch is involved in planning attacks in the United States. The ISIS affiliate is mainly made up

of Afghans and Pakistanis, according to U.S. intelligence assessments, and is fighting against both the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Under the Obama administration, the core task of the top-secret military counterterrorism task force in Afghanistan was to hunt a few members of Al Qaeda's global leadership cadre. Those include a handful who U.S. intelligence believed were still, more than a decade after Sept. 11, actively coordinating future attacks on the West from isolated hideouts in the country's rugged northeast.

But a military drone strike killed the senior-most of those operatives in late 2016. Since then, strikes against ISIS have far outpaced those against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, according to two special operations officers speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss classified operations.

"The Americans are still going after Al Qaeda with drone strikes and special operations here, but ISIS is more of a priority for them now," said Bilal Sarwary, a parliamentary candidate and journalist from Kunar, a northeastern province with a longstanding Al Qaeda presence, in an interview.

Afghan officials say Al Qaeda activity in the area has also decreased after years of drone strikes. "There are very few Arabs in the mountains now. They are just trapped there," Mawlawi Shahzada Shahid, a cleric from Kunar who has acted as a liaison

between the government and Afghan insurgents, said in an interview last year. "They go to Syria and Libya and Iraq now instead of coming here."

That matches with a 2017 military analysis that described an exodus of "key Al Qaeda personnel" from Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Middle East. While the group would probably remain active in Afghanistan, the report predicted, "the future strategic direction of core Al Qaeda will likely align more closely with dynamics in the Levant," a reference to a stronghold Al Qaeda has carved out amid the chaos of the Syrian civil war.

A United Nations Security Council report released last month suggested that Al Qaeda "military and explosives experts" recently moved from Afghanistan to Syria.

From Al Qaeda's perspective, "I don't know why they would replace senior people in Afghanistan anymore when they are killed when Yemen and Syria are much more permissive for their purposes," echoed Jonathan Schrodin, director of the special operations program at the Center for Naval Analyses, a government-funded think tank.

But "I don't think they're ever going to go away from Afghanistan completely," cautioned a senior special operations officer with counterterrorism experience there. "They're great at going to ground and reappearing in other forms."

That, say some experts who study Al Qaeda, is exactly what the group is doing in Afghanistan — switching its focus from a small group of foreign operatives secretly planning global attacks to a larger, newer regional subgroup, called Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent. Founded in 2014, the Indian Subcontinent subgroup has sometimes been dismissed as "not real Al Qaeda," said

Thomas Joscelyn, a terrorism analyst at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies — in part because it is composed mostly of locals, not the Arabs who fill many of Al Qaeda's top positions. While most senior Al Qaeda personnel "are trying to hide," Gen. John Nicholson, the outgoing top commander in Kabul, said last year, the subgroup members are "more active" but are focused on training Taliban members who are fighting the Afghan government.

Afghanistan's defense minister claimed this week that foreign militants were involved in the Taliban's assault on the eastern city of Ghazni, the capital of a province where the Al Qaeda subgroup has operated alongside Taliban fighters in recent years. The last time the military touted the death of a well-known Al Qaeda leader, it was a Pakistani national who was second-in-command of the subgroup. The military's announcement of his death — in a strike outside Ghazni last December — described him as an adviser to the Taliban and made no mention of planning attacks outside Afghanistan.

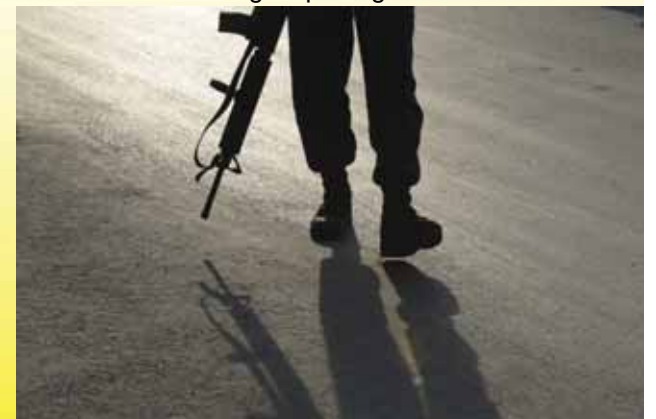
By contrast, when a drone strike killed Al Qaeda's longstanding top commander in Afghanistan in 2016, a dual Saudi-Qatari national named Farouq al-Qahtani, the military said that he had been "directly involved in planning threats against the U.S. in the last year." Joscelyn said drawing a sharp distinction between the main group

and the regional subgroup is a mistake. "There's not a firm line between the personnel planning attacks overseas and those training local insurgents," he said, noting that Qahtani, who was widely viewed as a member of Al Qaeda's management layer, had also been deeply involved in training local Taliban fighters.

The military insists it has never taken its eye off the Al Qaeda ball in Afghanistan, despite the scarcity of announced strikes against the group and the nearly two years that have passed since it announced the death of a well-known senior operative involved in external plotting.

"We've been actively hunting Al Qaeda from the lowest rifleman up to their emir and everyone in between," Nicholson said in a POLITICO interview earlier this year.

A spokesman for Nicholson's headquarters said military operations had killed 65 Al Qaeda members this year, but would not estimate how many were part of the subgroup or how many were foreigners. This week, U.S.-backed Afghan commandos reported killing an Al Qaeda operative — apparently an Egyptian — who had been assisting the Taliban in the south, far from the northeastern region the military has long described as the group's main Afghan stronghold. Yet Nicholson has also acknowledged that "the majority" of counterterrorism air strikes are now against ISIS targets.



A look at the Independence Day speeches made by prime ministers since 1991

Every year, on Independence Day, the Prime Minister addresses the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort. The speech is one of the most significant moments in the life of the republic - for it reveals the priorities, the passions, the concerns, the challenges of those who govern the Indian state. It also reveals the political preferences of the leader and is a mix of motivating and reassuring citizens about the state of the nation.

HT looked back at the speeches made by Prime Ministers since 1991, when India embarked on economic reforms and inaugurated a new phase in its nation-building project. Here is a look at the key messages of PMs since then.

1991

Let's get the economy right

It was the year of change. From the ramparts of the Red Fort, PV Narasimha Rao, soon after initiating economic reforms, called on the country to cooperate as the government tackled the 'worst-ever economic crisis' and social discontent. 1991 was also when both Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab were engulfed in violence. Rao said nothing could be achieved through bloodshed. Referring to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, which was demanding the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, the PM also said India's roots were in secularism. "The day we get divided in the name of religion, the country will disintegrate."

1992

Three-year moratorium on divisive issues

In the following year, Rao



proposed a 'three-year moratorium' on contentious issues which threatened the country's unity and integrity to focus on economic reconstruction. He also returned to the theme of Ayodhya, and reiterated his government's resolve to protect the Babri Masjid and resolve the issue through negotiations. A little over three and a half months later though, in December, the mosque had been demolished.

1993

Don't abet terror

In his third speech, Rao sent out a strong warning to Pakistan, whose role in encouraging terror across the border in Kashmir was clear, and said India would give a 'befitting reply'. He also told Islamabad it should understand that the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India was final. But domestic concerns remained on his mind. He staunchly defended his economic reforms, spoke about the increase in foreign currency reserves, improvement in balance of trade, and argued reforms would also help the poor and workers.

1994

Return PoK

In yet another indication of how strongly Pakistan's role in Kashmir dominated national thinking in the period, Rao used the Independence Day address to tell Islamabad that it was time for them to return to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. He also promised that elections would be held in Kashmir soon (it eventually happened in 1996). He once again went back to the theme of economic development - and claimed that his government had brought stability.

1995

Liberalisation not anti-poor

Economic reforms and its impact had now slowly become visible. At a time when there was concern that it had left out the marginalised, in election year, Rao used his final address to say that the government's aim remained poverty alleviation. He claimed that the entire aim of reforms was welfare, strengthening rural base, infrastructure and fulfilling basic needs of people. This, however, turned out to be his final speech - as Rao lost the next elections.

1996

'Humble farmer' speaks

HD Deve Gowda, the Karnataka leader who accidentally became PM with the backing of regional parties and Congress, spent months preparing to deliver his speech in Hindi. Gowda referred to his origins as a 'humble farmer' to suggest he understood the problems of

the poor. The PM also sprung a surprise by announcing a decision to grant statehood to Uttarakhand, and a slew of welfare schemes, including rice and wheat at subsidised rates.

1997

'Satyagraha' against corrupt

It was IK Gujral's turn next, and the PM used the occasion - the 50th year of Indian Independence - to call for a 'satyagraha' against corruption, which he termed as a bigger threat than 'external aggression'. The PM said, "Nothing works without pay-offs."

He also regretted the 'hesitation' in Indian politics to give equal space to women and made gender equity a key theme of his speech. Gujral also announced that primary education would soon become a fundamental right. He declared it was now time for 'economic swaraj'.

1998

'Nuclear tests not for war'

This was Atal Bihari Vajpayee's first Independence Day speech, which came a few months after the Pokhran tests. Vajpayee credited Indira Gandhi for laying the foundation of these tests, and reiterated that nuclear tests were not meant for war. He has also talked about resolving all issues with Pakistan and China through talks. Reassuring minorities of "full security" and guaranteed participation in

war" and asserted that Kashmir will remain an "unbreakable part" of India. The year saw some communal incidents in some parts of the country. Vajpayee sternly warned that attempts to spread communal discord and incite violence would not be tolerated. This was also the year when three new states Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were carved out of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh respectively.

2001

Liberalisation hasn't benefited everyone

Two years after the Kargil conflict, India had invited Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf for summit-level talks at Agra. In his speech, Atal Bihari Vajpayee spelt out the reasons for the failure of the Agra summit, saying Musharraf had come with single-point agenda of forcing India to accept Pakistan's terms on Kashmir. "I could not have accepted this." The surfacing of the UTI scandal had prompted him to take a tough stand on corruption, vowing to act against any person, however big or powerful, if found involved in graft cases. He also spoke on the economy, and said fruits of liberalisation hadn't reached everyone.

2002

Free and fair elections in Kashmir

As assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir were a few months away, Atal Bihari Vajpayee promised from the ramparts of Red Fort "free and fair" polls in the troubled state. In his speech, he invoked Kashmiriyat, talked about friendly relations with Pakistan and also mentioned the Gujarat riots. (Contd on page 20)

1999

End cross-border terror

The Kargil conflict had just ended. A few months earlier in February, Atal Bihari Vajpayee had taken a bus journey to Lahore to promote peace in the sub-continent, a move for which he faced flak from the rivals. His speech as a caretaker Prime Minister was dominated by praises for martyrs and wounded soldiers. He also ruled out any talks with Pakistan unless it ended cross-border terrorism and announced the induction of long-range Agni-II ballistic missiles into the defence arsenal.

2000

Kashmir 'unbreakable' part of India

After the fall of the 13-month-old Vajpayee government in April, the BJP-led NDA returned to power in the Lok Sabha elections held in September-October 1999. In his first speech in his new term, Vajpayee warned Pakistan for its "undeclared





PHOTOS: AUTO BILD

Mingsha Shan or the sand dunes (left) along the city are one of the major tourist attractions in Dunhuang, China; the town is also well-known for the Buddhist Mogao Caves (above).



At the crossroads of two primeval routes, Dunhuang marked a key point in the journey of ancient travellers.

NAVIGATING *along* SAND DUNES

By **Auto Bild team**
in Dunhuang

SET out on the GLAdventour, we're driving down from Stuttgart to Pune in an Indian-registered Mercedes-Benz GLA 200 CDI and support car Mercedes-Benz GL 350 CDI. Currently, we're on the southern branch of the Silk Route, which started even before we entered China.

It took us three days to cross the first state in China but now we are in the second state, Gansu, and are headed to the third, Qinghai. Our first task, however, is to explore Dunhuang, a very popular tourist centre because of the Buddhist Mogao Caves near it.

Since we cannot take our cars anywhere close to the caves, we



As the team climbs onto the Tibetan Plateau, the landscape changes and temperature falls.

head for the next biggest attraction of the city, the Mingsha Shan or the sand dunes. They are majestic, appearing out of nowhere and towering over the city. We decide to take a detour to get close to the sand dunes.

Dunhuang marked a very important point in the journey of ancient travellers because it

was here that they had to make an important decision: whether to continue East towards the centre of China on this branch of the Silk Route or turn South towards India.

It's not a choice for us, so we turn South towards Golmud, which lies south of the Gobi Desert, and is touted as



the Salt Lake City of China.

On our way out, we stop by at a replica of the ancient city of Dunhuang, which has also been used in many Chinese movies and long-running TV serials to portray an old Chinese town. It is complete with shops, residences, a city hall, a Buddhist temple, a horse riding school and even an execution square.

Soon the road starts to climb onto the Tibetan Plateau and the temperature drops to well below zero degrees Celsius. The roads get icy and the landscape varies between stark brown and white even as a herd of Bactrian camels grazes on the sparse brown grass.

As we cross one high-altitude pass after another, we can't help but marvel at how well

the Chinese have made their roads. There are switchbacks and loops, but it has been made in a very motorable manner unlike the roads in our part of the mountains that are very difficult to negotiate.

We pass by a replica of the Pangong Tso, one of many salt lakes in this region, which is in the shape of a crescent. Crystal clear waters reflect the landscape around and the setting sun casts a magical light over the endless vistas of brown and white.

The city itself does not seem special but is the first one that has a Sheraton and a Hilton, thanks to the large mining operations in the region.

Our schedule for the next day includes a serious drive, passing altitudes of over 5,000 metres and pit stops at smaller towns (which may not have Internet connectivity) on the way to Lhasa.

To see more log on to intoday.in/gladventure

A look at the Independence Day speeches made by prime ministers since 1991

"The horrific explosion of communal violence in Gujarat was one unfortunate example of this. There can be no place for such violence in a civilised society," he said.

2003

No political discrimination

This was Atal Bihari Vajpayee's last speech from Red Fort as the NDA government advanced the Lok Sabha elections by six months to April 2004. Pakistan and Kashmir continued to be the central theme of his Independence Day speech. He spoke about having established cooperative relations with states ruled by rival political parties. "Political discrimination on account of ideological differences is unacceptable to us," he said. Vajpayee also announced that India will send its own spacecraft to Moon by 2008 and the mission was named Chandrayaan I.

2004

Uphold constitutional values

It was the first independence day speech of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Months after the Congress-led UPA coming back to power, which many did not expect, Singh spoke about the need for good governance and 'code of conduct for political parties and everyone in public life' to uphold the 'values enshrined in the constitution.' He also stressed on how a 'purposive' bilateral dialogue with Pakistan can bring peace and stability in the region. The 45-minute speech was laced with intention to usher in change in governance in 'priority' sectors that ranged from education to infrastructure. The speech was hailed as forward-looking and erudite.

2005

Focus on Aam Aadmi

In his second Independence Day speech, Singh exhorted the nation to take its 'rightful place in the world' buoyed by the robust economic growth. The continuing violence in Jammu and Kashmir had the Prime Minister sending a tough message to Pakistan that Indian response to extremist attacks can be 'hard'. He emphasized that the focus of his government is not only economic growth but also the 'empowerment' of aam admi. He also spoke about how time has come for every Indian to take pride in his or her 'Indian identity' and work for equitable development.

2006

Stop terror and extremism

Two years into office, Singh used the ramparts of Red Fort to deliver a strong message to Pakistan, urging the neighbour to understand that 'popular support for peace process' will be hugely

'undermined', if Islamabad continued with its policies to foster extremism in India. He emphasized that 'cross border' terrorism is hampering regional peace and prosperity. In his speech he also said India has 'wars to fight for aam admi against poverty, inequity and unemployment'. He sought consensus on 'national issues' and urged the political parties to shun 'divisiveness.'

2007

A nation of young people

The year 2007 marked the 60th year of country's Independence. Singh delivered a speech befitting the occasion, reflecting on the accomplishments of the past and speaking on the challenges ahead. The PM said the best is yet to come, quoting English poet Robert Browning. "We are a nation of young people. Once unleashed, the energy of our youth will drive India onto a new growth path," Singh said. What was significant was that Singh didn't mention the India-US nuclear deal that was threatening the longevity of his government. Nor did he speak about Pakistan in his 50-minute speech.

2008

Let's make peace

"Let's Make Peace" was the underlining theme of Singh's speech. With a shadow of terror attacks looming, Singh also said "terrorist and those who support terrorism" are enemies of people and countries must collectively "defeat them." He chose to speak to mention about the nuclear deal with the US saying the pact would 'spur' economic growth. Singh said modern science should 'find solution to our energy problem'. He also announced a special skill development mission and launching of a new space aircraft

2009

Restoring growth biggest challenge

Singh used the opportunity to explain the slowing down the economic growth in the wake of global crisis. The economy grew at a rate of about 9% from the year 2004-05 to the year 2007-08. This growth rate came down to 6.7% in 2008-09 due to the global economic crisis. "It is only a result of our policies that the global crisis has affected us to a lesser extent than many other countries", Singh said and maintained that that restoring our growth rate to 9% is the greatest challenge he has at hand. Reflecting on the deadly terror strike in November 2008, Singh spoke about the efforts his government was putting in place for national security. He also said that the nation-building is the 'highest duty' for everyone.

2010

Discussion and dialogue way to peace

In 2010, Manmohan Singh made a fresh appeal to young people in Kashmir and Naxals and said that discussion and dialogue was the only way to resolve issues. On the economy, he accepted that inflation was on the rise and hurting the common people, while he cited subsidy burden to explain why the government had to increase prices of petro products (auto fuel was regulated at that time). But Singh spoke of agricultural reforms not only as a solution to high inflation but also to ensure development of rural India. This was the year of the Commonwealth Games, and it found a mention in his speech.

2011

Hunger strikes won't solve corruption

Manmohan Singh's seventh speech as Prime Minister reflected the growing allegations of corruption against his government. The Commonwealth Games scam and the 2G scam were already making headlines and Singh said that one single step cannot root out corruption, hunger strikes are not a solution but a multi-pronged effort is required to control it. In this context he mentioned a Lokpal legislation, Judicial Accountability Bill and a legislation for public procurement. He mentioned corruption 16 times in his speech.

2012

Slow growth national security threat

Concerns about slowing growth and high inflation was evident in Manmohan Singh's independence day speech in 2012. The PM made an explicit connection between slow growth and national security. Singh blamed the global economy as well as lack of political consensus as major roadblock for increasing the pace of growth. He also spoke about the need to create more employment opportunities in the country and in that context laid down the idea of a National Skill Development Authority.

2013

No place for narrow sectarian ideologies

His last speech as Prime Minister was a recap of the achievements of the past UPA and Congress years. As growth slumped to 5%, concerns were evident in Manmohan Singh's speech as he spoke about effort to expedite stuck projects, remove bottlenecks of environmental clearances. He ended his speech with an appeal towards creating a tolerant society that celebrates communal harmony at a time when the

challenge from the Bharatiya Janata Party had grown. The Independence Day celebrations acquired a sharp political edge this year, as the PM contender from the BJP, Narendra Modi, gave his own address in Gujarat, rebutting Singh.

2014

Ten year moratorium on communalism, casteism

Prime Minister's Narendra Modi's first speech from the rampart of the Red Fort was historic in many senses. Significantly, at a time of apprehension about the government's political priorities, the PM announced a moratorium of 10 years against promoting communal and caste tensions.

Calling himself the Pradhan Sevak, Prime servant, he spoke at length about Swachh Bharat and the need to make more toilet in schools; he also spoke of financial inclusion and announced a scheme for MPs to adopt model villages.

2015

A corruption-free India

In his second speech, Modi made a strong pro-poor, pro-farmer and anti-corruption speech. On one hand, he announced Start up India, Stand up India to appeal to the young and as a mode of job creation; on the other hand, he rolled out a slew of social welfare schemes on pension and insurance. He spoke against corruption, mentioning it 19 times during his speech, and said that there has not been any allegation during his term. Modi also said that in 1000 days all non-electrified villages would be given a

power connection.

2016

Thank you, Balochistan

The highlight of Modi's 86-minute speech was his reference to Balochistan—a sensitive topic for Pakistan administration. He said he is grateful to people of Balochistan, Gilgit and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir who had wished India on Independence Day. Modi also used the address to highlight the government's social goals - including medical aid of upto 1 1 lakh for people below the poverty line - and reach out to middle class by saying they would be spared the tyranny of the tax authorities.

2017

Kashmir needs to be embraced

At a time when Kashmir continues to face unrest, PM Narendra Modi adopted a conciliatory approach and said the Kashmir problem will be solved neither by gaali, abuses, or goli, bullets, but by embracing all Kashmiris. He also condemned violence in the name of faith and said the slogan before Independence was Bharat Chhodo but now it should be Bharat jodo. He empathized with Muslim women who suffered Instant Triple Talaq - which would become a key political theme of his government - and said they are with their struggles. He continued his strong messaging against corruption and said that the government wants to create job givers not job seekers.

Billionaires reach for the stars while world suffers

The billionaires would still have enough left over to indulge their longing for mega-yachts, personal space ships, private tropical islands, and other conspicuous consumption. The digital age has created winner-take-all markets in information -- including our personal data -- and Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Page, Sergei Brin, and others are giddily reaping the benefits. In the past dozen years, according to Forbes Magazine, the number of billionaires and their net worth have both roughly tripled, from 793 billionaires with \$2.6 trillion in net worth in 2006 to around 2,200 billionaires with \$9.1 trillion as of March this year. The flood of wealth to the top vastly outpaces

economic growth. Much of the wealth reflects the redistribution of income from low-skilled workers, whose jobs and earnings are being lost to robots and artificial intelligence, to the super-rich owners of these "smart" systems. National income is shifting away from lower-skilled labor to the owners of high tech, including key technologies whose development was originally taxpayer-funded, like the Internet itself and Google's search engine. The system is rigged for those at the top. The tech giants divert their mega-wealth offshore, usually with the connivance of the IRS, which turns a blind eye on outrageous schemes that reassign US-based intellectual property to overseas tax havens

The pros and cons of a depreciating currency

In the abstract world of economics textbooks, a depreciating currency need not always be a bad thing. Currency depreciation can help countries improve their trade balance. An example can help us understand this. Let us assume Indians imported only iPhones and exported only shirts.

A fall in the rupee would make our imports more expensive, because Indians would be paying more in rupee terms for the unchanged dollar price of the iPhone. This would lead to a reduction in demand for iPhones and hence reduce our import bill. Similarly, an American retailer importing shirts from India would be able to get more shirts for the same expenditure in dollars. This would make him reroute more of his orders to India and lead to a rise in exports. An increase in net exports means an increase in economic growth.

The preceding discussion raises questions on the validity of alarmist commentary every time the rupee reaches a new low vis-à-vis the dollar.

Are such reactions driven more by warped notions of economic nationalism than actual economic interests? Not necessarily.

The real world is often drastically different from the abstract assumptions of economic textbooks. The argument for currency depreciation leading to an improvement in trade balance assumes price elasticity of imports and exports. In simple terms, a commodity is described as price elastic if its demand is responsive to a change in price.

One of India's biggest imports is crude oil. An economy cannot adjust its petroleum consumption with change in prices. Energy requirements are driven by level of activity and wealth in an economy. Herein lays perhaps the most important cost of a falling rupee for India. A fall in the rupee means a rise in price of India's crude oil basket (COB). This implies a rise in fiscal deficit and inflation.

A rapidly depreciating currency also deprives the economy from exploiting the gains of fall in international oil

prices. Chart 1 shows the annual change in prices of India's COB in dollar and rupee terms. In 12 out of 18 years since 2001-02, the change in the rupee price of India's COB has been unfavourable vis-à-vis the dollar price. This means that when oil prices have fallen, the rupee price has fallen less than the dollar price and when prices have risen, the rupee price has risen more than the dollar price. A bigger fall in the rupee at a time of rising oil prices is bound to increase this pain. It could be argued that the logic of depreciation being beneficial applies to other sectors of the economy. Our non-petroleum trade balance could improve. Non Resident Indians (NRIs) could be sending more money in remittances because every dollar gets much more in rupee terms. Unfortunately, the argument does not lend itself to a simple empirical scrutiny.

Chart 2 plots movements in India's non-petroleum trade balance and current account balance with the rupee-dollar exchange rate. It does not show

an improvement in trade/current account performance with a depreciating currency. To be sure, a multitude of factors apart from exchange rates affect trade and current account balance. This is even truer in today's age when the multilateral trading system is in serious jeopardy and world's two largest economies, the US and China, are heading towards a full-fledged trade war.

Also, exchange rates themselves are driven by factors which are hardly in control of governments and central banks even in the biggest economies. For example, if the US were to raise its domestic interest rates tomorrow, dollar deposits from across the world are likely to head back home. This is bound to generate headwinds for domestic currency in countries where they are parked currently. The short point is, any attempts to trivialise the costs of falling rupee are unjustifiable. What is also true is the fact that there are no easy and quick solutions to such problems.

Feel proud of yourselves, won't face harassment, PM Modi tells honest tax payers

In his last Independence Day address ahead of the next Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday hailed tax payers' contribution and assured them of protection against any harassment.

Listing the various successful schemes his government had initiated during the last four years, he said that the entire credit for these works goes to the honest taxpayers and not to his government.

Mentioning that India's direct taxpayers base was just 4 crore till 2013, Modi said: "Today, the number of taxpayers stand around 6.45 crore. Indirect tax-base was 70 lakh in last 70 years. But after the implementation

of the GST (Goods and Services Tax), in one year, 1.16 crore people are paying tax now."

"We are committed to ensure tax payers don't face any harassment," Modi announced in a bid to reassure common people against tax sleuths.

Making an emotional appeal to people to pay taxes honestly, he said when they sit with their families for meals, they should feel proud how their taxes help poor people get food too.

"I want to reach out to honest tax payers. When you sit for a meal, you must think that because of your taxes, three more families also eat their meals. This is a great help and you should feel proud," he said his address

at the Red Fort. Observers say that Modi's outreach to taxpayers comes against the backdrop of some Opposition parties' criticism about alleged hasty implementation of the GST that has led to difficulties among a section of the trading and business establishment.

The PM also spoke at length on how his government has tackled corruption and stopped leakage of public money.

"I can never sit with eyes closed if resources are wasted without the implementation of schemes," he said.

"Six crore people never existed but money went out on their names in different welfare schemes. This

government has stopped that practice and saved almost Rs 90,000 crore from the exchequer that earlier went to some unscrupulous people," Modi added.

He gave an example how poor people were denied their dues at ration shops and the food items instead sold in markets.

"The price of wheat and rice would be Rs 24 and Rs 30-32 in open market but at ration shops, a beneficiary is entitled to get them at Rs 2 and 3. But these items were sold outside. Just imagine, by siphoning off just one kilo rice, one would earn Rs 30. We have stopped the fraud in ration shops," he said.

Was mafia concrete to blame?

The Genoa bridge collapse which has claimed the lives of at least 39 people may have been an accident waiting to happen after 'mafia' companies were involved in its construction, it has been claimed.

Italy has long been plagued with corruption and business infiltration by gangland bosses – particularly within the construction industry.

For decades, 'families' as mafia groups are often known, are believed to have blackmailed, conned and forced their way into big building contracts.

Engineers have now claimed the same thing may have happened when the Morandi Viaduct in Genoa was built

between 1963 and 1967.

A huge 260ft section of the 50-year-old Morandi bridge gave way at about 11.30am on Tuesday causing vehicles to plummet 150ft with tonnes of twisted steel and concrete debris into a river below.

An investigation into negligent miscarriage and negligent homicide has been opened by Genoa Public Prosecutor's Office. Investigations into the collapse, which happened during a storm, could now probe whether the initial build, or following maintenance, was carried out by corrupted firms, Canada's Globe and Mail reported.

Prosecutor Francesco Cozzi called the collapse "an immense and insane

tragedy" as Italians call for justice.

This would not be the first time Mafia-run firms have been linked to disaster.

Franco Roberti, head of Italy's anti-Mafia directorate in 2016, said Italian authorities must ensure the Mafia plays no role in the reconstruction work of the towns destroyed by earthquakes which killed about 300 people because of their shoddy work. 'There are risks; it is useless to hide it,' he told Italy's La Repubblica newspaper.

'The risk of infiltration is always high. Postearthquake reconstruction is a tasty morsel for criminal organizations and business interests.'

It is not just mafia men who are being blamed but Government officials and businesses.

Italy's deputy premier, Luigi Di Maio accused the Benetton group, which through its £6million holding company Atlantia controls Autostrade Per Italia, of pocketing profits instead of investing money for maintenance.

Since the accident it has been revealed concerns were raised over the 1.2 kilometres long structure which forms part of the A10 highway.

Photos from under the 90 metres high build showed parts 'crumbling' into disrepair. Known mafia men have made fortunes in the construction industry.

Russia Gave Bots a Bad Name. Here's Why We Need Them More Than Ever

Election meddling and social media fakery have made the automated applications politically toxic, but they can do a world of good in the right hands.



Internet bots—those automated scripts that do everything from gathering stock prices to commandeering innocent computers to launch cyberstrikes—have recently come under attack as threatening the web, democracy and our very way of online life. During the 2016 presidential election, Russia unleashed an army of bots to troll Facebook and other sites, amplifying political division in support of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders. Twitter reported that in May alone it found nearly 10 million bots each week. Some of these Twitter bots posed as fans to enhance the popularity of celebrities (when the bots were stricken from the rolls, former President Barack Obama, Katy Perry and Oprah suddenly became about 2 percent less popular). Ever ready to wield a legislative remedy, California is considering laws to formally define and regulate all manner of online bots.

If these bots are so terrible, why not simply outlaw them?

Well, for starters, the internet could barely function without them. Google, for example, can only index the web and present search results through the use of bots—it calls the process “Googlebot”—which it describes as a spider that crawls nearly every website on the internet, often every few seconds. Say what you will about the fairness of algorithms that order search results, but you’re not going to have much patience for a search engine that depends on humans laboriously copying data from individual websites to craft its rankings. Businesses commonly use bots to crawl and scrape the websites of competitors for real-time pricing information. But there’s another argument in favor of bots that gets far less attention, at least outside of a courtroom in Washington, D.C. And it is challenging the notion that all bots—even fake accounts—are evil.

The case unfolding in the federal district courtroom of Judge John D. Bates was filed by a group of

civil rights researchers who depend upon crawling and scraping bots, along with thousands of fake accounts, to uncover persistent and pernicious discrimination—based on race, gender or age—on employment and housing platforms, and across the very web itself. In their hands, internet bots are a potentially unparalleled tool for social justice, albeit one that happens to run afoul of the terms of service of platforms like Facebook and Twitter that prohibit bots and fake accounts. In a preliminary ruling in March, Bates held that these researchers could well enjoy a First Amendment right to create fake accounts, along with their attendant bot automation, to crawl web platforms, scrape their contents and use the data to statistically measure discrimination. He might as well have said, when it comes to bots, we must learn to tell good from bad.

If there’s such a thing as a good guy with a bot, it’s someone like Christian Sandvig. He’s one of a number of researchers in this new field of “algorithmic accountability,” and he’s a plaintiff in the pending D.C. litigation. Sandvig’s mission is to detect online discrimination in housing or employment opportunities on online platforms and on the web writ large. Do women see fewer ads for high-paying CEO jobs than men? Do white couples see ads for apartment rentals that black couples do not? Preliminary studies suggest the answer to both questions could quite possibly be yes, and often the cause might be an algorithm rather than a deliberate choice by an employer or a landlord. As Sandvig puts it, what do we do “when the algorithm itself is a racist”?

We have known for a little while now that on certain social media platforms there was a potential for people to do what people have done from time immemorial—discriminate. In a series of recent articles, ProPublica showed how Facebook allowed advertisers to

discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, or status as a parent—all categories protected by law—in placing ads for housing. In 2016 and part of 2017, an advertiser could exclude African-Americans from seeing housing ads; when Facebook fixed this setting, ProPublica reported in 2018 it was still possible to exclude based upon gender by checking a box to exclude moms with children, for example.

But these earlier ProPublica studies showed only that one could check these boxes, not that employers, landlords or real estate agents actually were. Moreover, these studies, telling as they are, do not address the big data algorithms that now dominate advertising. They do not tell us whether, for reasons that are not directly attributable to a person, the algorithm has determined based upon past data to show CEO jobs more to men than women.

Andrew Selbst, a scholar of online discrimination and big data algorithms, explains the problem. If you train an algorithm on past data about who holds the top CEO jobs, the data will include far more men than women. The algorithm, detached from all concern for workplace fairness, will conclude that maleness is a qualification for the job, and therefore show ads for those jobs to men more than women. Maleness ends up “being coded as merit. But it’s baked into centuries of discrimination. You’re tech-washing this old claim of seeing merit as this neutral idea.”

To test whether algorithms are racist, researchers adapt old-school civil rights testing—“audit testing”—to the vast and ever-shifting expanses of the web. Ordinary civil rights testers will send a white couple and a black couple—identical in every way except race—to apply for apartments. An online audit proceeds the same way, but with the repetitive speed of a modern processor operating at billions of cycles per second. Such “pair-audit tests” are a “really critical part of testing,” says Rachel

Goodman, a civil rights lawyer with the ACLU who represents the plaintiffs on the D.C. litigation.

But when applied online, these pair-audit tests must often be automated with bots and fake accounts because, as Sandvig points out, web pages and their ads are entirely personalized, different for each person visiting a site, and even different each time the same person visits the site. “Each of us is seeing a webpage no one else sees and will never be seen again,” he says. This discrimination is hidden because no one knows what they don’t see. Women will never know they weren’t shown that ad for CEO of a company because the ad was personalized for them by an algorithm that concluded they were less qualified than a similar man.

To detect this hidden and fleeting discrimination—as fleeting as when a person leaves a webpage—researchers need to create fake accounts on major platforms for housing and employment. They need to create bots, automated computer scripts that will visit these websites, thousands or hundreds of thousands of pages, and record what they find, before they evaporate.

For example, in a foundational 2015 study, researchers at Carnegie Mellon (among other universities) created 1,000 personas by starting a fresh web browser and clicking a setting that allowed them to set the gender. They set half male, half female. Each fresh browser became a new, virtual online person, and they built these virtual beings, using automated bot scripts, by having the browsers visit the same sites—in this case, the top 100 employment websites. This behavior primed the internet advertising universe—the so-called “persistent tracking cookies” advertisers use to identify a person’s interests—to recognize them as job-seekers. These web browsers, these 500 Johns and 500 Marys, then visited several websites, including The Times of India—useful

because its site contained so many text ads—and the researchers recorded the ads each browser was shown. (This account greatly simplifies but captures the thrust of the study, according to co-author Michael Carl Tschantz.) The study found that the Google ads treated the genders differently, showing “women” fewer ads for high-paying jobs than “men.” In one finding, Google showed an ad for a career coaching service for jobs paying more than \$200,000 to the “men” 1,852 times versus only 318 times to “women.” The study did not show that anyone acted intentionally. It did not even attribute blame for the discrimination. “We can’t be 100 percent sure why it happened,” said Anupam Datta, another of the study’s authors. It could arise from numerous sources, such as the algorithm used to generate the ads, the data set upon which that algorithm was trained, or even intentional discrimination by at least some of those placing the ads. But to really determine many of the causes would require “insider access,” Datta said. But it is this inside access that many platforms are unlikely to grant, according to Datta, “because of IP considerations.” Which brings us back to outsiders using bots—a realization that may have led the Knight First Amendment Institute to send Facebook a public letter last week requesting an exception from its ban on certain bots and research accounts often used by journalists. This 2015 ad study measured cross-platform discrimination facilitated by tracking cookies that allow advertisers to follow a person from site to site. But it did not create fake accounts or use bots to crawl and scrape data from the employment or housing platforms themselves. The researchers didn’t need to.

RBI puts 200 stressed bank accounts under scanner to contain rising NPAs

This exercise comes at a time when gross NPAs in the banking system has risen to around Rs 10.3 lakh crore, or 11.2 per cent of advances, compared to Rs 8 lakh crore, or 9.5 per cent of total loan, as on March 31, 2017.

(Agencies) Worried over rising non-performing assets (NPAs) in the banking system, the Reserve bank of India (RBI) has started scrutiny of 200 large accounts to assess level of stress and provisioning done against them by respective banks. The move is being seen as an effort by the RBI to contain the rising NPAs in the banking system. News agency PTI quoted a senior public sector banks as saying that the RBI is examining as to whether banks have followed prudential norms

in respect of these stressed assets.

The official added that the RBI is also assessing classification, provisioning and debt recast in respect of those loans.

This is a part of regular annual inspection of book of the banks that the central bank undertakes each year after the closure of the financial year, another official said.

Some of the accounts include Videocon, Jindal Steel and Power, the official added.

This exercise comes

at a time when gross NPAs in the banking system has risen to around Rs 10.3 lakh crore, or 11.2 per cent of advances, compared to Rs 8 lakh crore, or 9.5 per cent of total loan, as on March 31, 2017. Following the annual inspection of the last year, many lenders, including Axis Bank, Bank of India and Yes Bank, were caught for under-reporting of NPAs.

The lenders started reporting divergences since June last year for having under-reported NPAs in FY16. This was

followed by a second round of disclosures, starting October, of under-reporting in FY17 by a few lenders.

In most cases, this led to a shooting up of NPAs and an ensuing jump in provisions against dud assets. This eroded their bottomlines, and led to a sell-off in the stock causing erosion of wealth for investors.

Private sector lenders, which were reputed for their caution on the asset quality front vis-a-vis the poorly governed state-owned peers, were the



worst hit in this exercise.

Among others, mid-sized private sector lender YES Bank was found to have under-reported gross NPAs by a whopping Rs 11,000 crore in the two fiscals, while the third largest lender Axis Bank was found to have a divergence of over Rs 14,000 crore and ICICI

Bank had over Rs 5,000 crore on these accounts for FY16 alone. Last year, RBI had tweaked the rules to make it compulsory for lenders to disclose under-reporting of bad assets. Before this there was a massive book clean-up through the asset quality review (AQR) in the previous year.

The billionaires and the guru: How a family burned through \$2 billion

The master of Radha Soami Satsang Beas, Gurinder Singh Dhillon, is a key character in the unraveling of the financial and healthcare empire owned by the Singh brothers, Malvinder and Shivinder.



(Agencies) Along the river Beas in North India sits a sprawling spiritual commune that's somewhere between a traditional ashram and a Florida gated community. There's a grand meeting hall with tiered spires and pearl domes, but also tract housing and an American-style supermarket. It's home to 8,000 devotees of the Master: Gurinder Singh Dhillon.

His group, the Radha

Soami Satsang Beas, says it has more than 4 million followers worldwide. Many call him a God in human form. But in the secular world of money, Dhillon, 64, is a key character in one of the most dramatic collapses in the annals of Indian business: The unraveling of the financial and healthcare empire owned by the Singh brothers, Malvinder and Shivinder.

Over the years, the

brothers' main holding company loaned about 25 billion rupees (\$360 million) to the Dhillon family and property businesses largely controlled by them, according to documents and people familiar with the matter. Some of those outlays were financed with money borrowed from the Singhs' listed companies, and when combined with other Singh investments gone bad threw their empire

into a debt spiral, a Bloomberg News analysis of public records and interviews with 10 people familiar with the finances of both camps showed.

Heirs to a generations-old business house once worth billions, the brothers have in the last six months seen a dramatic fall in their fortunes. They've had their public shareholdings seized by lenders.

Uber quarterly loss jumps as it invests in 'big bets'

(Agencies) Uber has disclosed that its quarterly loss jumped despite taking in more money, as it invested in scooters and other "big bets". The San Francisco-based smartphone ride star reported it lost \$891 million on net revenue of \$2.8 billion, while overall bookings rose to \$12 billion. "We had another great quarter, continuing to grow at an impressive rate for a business of our scale," said Uber chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi. He added that Uber is investing in "big bets" including restaurant take-away delivery service Uber Eats and "environmentally friendly

modes of transport" like Express Pool, e-bikes and scooters. The company is also devoting resources to what it sees as high-potential markets in India and the Middle East, according to Khosrowshahi. Uber has made a practice of disclosing its earnings, despite not being required to since it is a private company. It said in May that its revenue revved up in the first quarter of this year and that its value climbed to \$62 billion in a new funding round. The company said its net revenue in the first quarter was \$2.5 billion on sales of \$11.3 billion.

Opposition sharpens attack on Modi govt as rupee sinks to 70 per dollar



(Agencies) The rupee complicated the job of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), potentially upsetting the government's fiscal math and handing fresh ammunition to political opponents of Prime

By the close of trading, the rupee clawed back some of its losses to end at 69.89 per dollar, up from its previous day's close of 68.93

Minister Narendra Modi. By the close of trading, the rupee clawed back some of its losses to end at 69.89 per dollar, up from its previous day's close of 68.93. In intra-day trading the currency hit a lifetime low of 70.08, following a 1.6% drop in the previous day's trading. The rupee's loss of 8.7% so far this year makes it the worst performing Asian currency.

Dealers said some state-owned banks sold dollars to bolster the rupee, perhaps at the behest of RBI. "The sharp drop in the domestic currency complicates the RBI's job of keeping inflation in check as India imports oil and even if oil prices stay at the current level, it will cost more to buy it. Moreover, this is more worrisome for corporate entities that have

foreign currency borrowings," said Soumyajit Niyogi, associate director, India Ratings and Research. While the macroeconomic context is different (largely because of India's comfortable foreign exchange reserves now), the situation is broadly reminiscent of 2013, when India was governed by a Congress-led United

Progressive Alliance government. In 2013, India joined the ranks of the so-called Fragile Five emerging market economies (the others were Turkey, Indonesia, Brazil and South Africa) amid a free fall in their currencies. A string of policy measures put in place by then RBI governor Raghuram Rajan helped the rupee stabilise then.

Cancer rarely affects elephants, here's the real reason behind it



A new study has identified a “zombie” gene that protects elephants from cancer, a finding that may pave the way for a new treatment for humans.

(A g e n c i e s) Researchers have identified a “zombie” gene that protects elephants from cancer, a finding that may pave the way for a new treatment for humans. Globally, nearly 1 in 6 human deaths occur due to cancer, whereas less than 5% of captive elephants — who also live for about 70 years, and

researchers from the University of Chicago found that elephants have 20 copies of p53. This makes their cells significantly more sensitive to damaged DNA and quicker to engage in cellular suicide.

Moreover, the elephants also have an anti-cancer gene called leukemia inhibitory factor 6 (LIF6) that returned from the dead. LIF6's function, when activated by p53, is to respond to damaged DNA by killing the cell. “Genes duplicate all the time,” said Vincent Lynch, assistant

professor at the varsity. “Sometimes they make mistakes, producing non-functional versions known as pseudogenes. We often refer to these dismissively as dead genes,” Lynch added.

The LIF6 gene makes a protein that goes, quite rapidly, to the mitochondria — the cell's main energy source. That protein pokes holes in the mitochondria, causing the cell to die. “Hence, zombie,” Lynch said. “This dead gene came back to life. When it gets turned on by

damaged DNA, it kills that cell, quickly. This is beneficial, because it acts in response to genetic mistakes, errors made when the DNA is being repaired. Getting rid of that cell can prevent a subsequent cancer,” he noted, in the paper appearing journal Cell Reports.

Elephants have eight LIF genes, but only LIF6 is known to be functional. This defunct gene seems to have emerged around the time when the fossil record indicates that the small

groundhog-sized precursors of today's elephants began to grow bigger, Lynch said. This started about 25 to 30 million years ago. This supplementary method of suppressing cancer may have been a key element enabling enormous growth, which eventually led to modern elephants. Exactly how LIF6 induces apoptosis, however, remains unclear. This will be “the focus of continued studies”, the researchers said.



(A g e n c i e s) Poor sleep can hamper your social life, say scientists who found that sleep-deprived people feel lonelier and less inclined to engage with others, avoiding close

contact in much the same way as people with social anxiety. Researchers at the University of California (UC) Berkeley in the US, have found that alienating

individuals more socially unattractive to others.

Moreover, well-rested people feel lonely after just a brief encounter with a sleep-deprived person, potentially triggering a viral

Lack of quality sleep can affect your social life and make you feel lonely

Well-rested people feel lonely after just a brief encounter with a sleep-deprived person, potentially triggering a viral contagion of social isolation.

contagion of social isolation. The findings, published in the journal Nature Communications, are the first to show a two-way relationship between sleep loss and becoming socially isolated, shedding new light on a global loneliness epidemic.

Researchers found that brain scans of sleep-deprived people as they viewed video clips of strangers walking toward them showed

powerful social repulsion activity in neural networks that are typically activated when humans feel their personal space is being invaded. Sleep loss also blunted activity in brain regions that normally encourage social engagement. To gauge the social effects of poor sleep, researchers conducted a series of intricate experiments using such

tools as fMRI brain imaging, standardised loneliness measures, videotaped simulations and surveys. First, researchers tested the social and neural responses of 18 healthy young adults following a normal night's sleep and a sleepless night. The participants viewed video clips of individuals with neutral expressions walking toward them.

First, researchers tested the social and neural responses of 18 healthy young adults following a normal night's sleep and a sleepless night. The participants viewed video clips of individuals with neutral expressions walking toward them.

Toxic marriage, constant fights can cause leaky gut and depression

Constant fighting with your spouse can cause leaky gut as well as depression and poor health. Earlier studies had linked it to heart disease and diabetes.



(A g e n c i e s) Married people who have nasty fights are more likely to suffer from leaky guts — a problem that unleashes bacteria into the blood and can drive up disease-causing inflammation, a study has

found. It's the first study to illuminate this particular pathway between bad marriages and poor health, said Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, from The Ohio State University in the US.

“We think that this

everyday marital distress at least for some people is causing changes in the gut that lead to inflammation and, potentially, illness,” said Kiecolt-Glaser, lead author of the study published in the journal Psychoneuroendocrinology.

Researchers at Ohio State recruited 43 healthy married couples, surveyed them about their relationships and then encouraged them to discuss and try to resolve a conflict likely to provoke strong disagreement.

Eat more eggs, boost your fitness and weight loss efforts

Eggs are a great weight loss food as well as rich in nutrients that help you stay fit and power your exercise routine.

(A g e n c i e s) Eggs are a superfood that are rich in protein but low in calories, which means it can fuel your workout

while not affecting your weight loss plans. Eggs are also a great source of Vitamin B complex, Vitamin D, B6, B12 and several minerals. It is also the perfect breakfast food for you as it can power you through the morning. Here are some of the benefits of eating eggs that you need to know about:

* Eggs are essential for various vital metabolic processes in the body as well

as normal cell function, growth, and energy production.

* The iron content of egg yolk can be easily assimilated and digested by the body.

* Eggs are nutrient-dense and filling, which makes it an ideal diet food. It reduces appetite and increases fullness, compared to foods



that contain less protein.

*Eggs contain lutein antioxidants that reduce chances of major eye disorders. Lutein is also a factor that helps to keep your brain healthy later in life. An egg a day can also cut down risk of stroke by

Mystery surrounds former sex-ring operator's Mueller probe role

The infamous "Manhattan Madam" has ties to President Donald Trump's former political adviser Roger Stone, who is under suspicion in the Russia investigation.

(Agencies) Special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe has entangled a strange and colorful cast of characters, from a Russian pop singer to a porn star to a convicted pedophile with murky foreign ties.

Now the list has expanded again, to include a notorious former prostitution-ring manager known as the "Manhattan Madam."

Kristin Davis, who has claimed she delivered escorts to disgraced former New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer, among other elite Empire State clientele, appeared before Mueller's grand jury on Friday.

Her appearance is shrouded in mystery, and it remains unclear what Mueller's interest in her may be. But she is close with Roger Stone, a longtime political adviser to President Donald Trump and one of his brashest defenders. Davis worked closely with Stone for years during her fleeting forays into New York politics —

she ran for governor in 2010 — and is even the godfather to her young son.

She has also served prison stints for running a prostitution ring and selling prescription drugs, and was most recently released in May 2016, according to the Bureau of Prisons. But on CNN last month, Stone called her "a brilliant woman who has paid her debt to society" and said Davis "has helped me build some websites," among other collaborations.

Davis' testimony Friday further underscores how widely Mueller's probe has reached, and how many unanswered questions remain about his work. It could also be the latest sign that prosecutors are tightening a ring around Stone, whom Democrats say has not been forthcoming about his 2016 contacts with WikiLeaks and its founder, Julian Assange; the website released thousands of Democratic emails during the 2016 presidential campaign that proved highly

damaging to Hillary Clinton.

Stone emphatically rejects such talk, saying he has nothing to hide. And he has dismissed speculation that Davis has anything to offer Mueller about whether Trump associates conspired with Russians to influence the 2016 election.

"She knows of no Russian collusion," Stone said on CNN on Wednesday night. "She's going to talk to the prosecutors voluntarily. She's not looking for a media circus in her life." (That may be wishful thinking: The scene outside the federal courthouse when Davis arrives is likely to be a chaotic scrum of reporters and television cameras.)

Whether or not that's true, Stone is clearly under Mueller's spotlight. The special counsel's team of prosecutors has already interviewed longtime Stone colleagues Sam Nunberg and Michael Caputo. Another Stone aide, Andrew Miller, is fighting a Mueller subpoena in court. And on



Thursday, MSNBC reported that Mueller's team is prepared to issue another subpoena to Stone associate Randy Credico, a comedian and former talk radio host who Stone has said was in touch with Assange. Stone has previously said he is prepared to be indicted, though he insists that if he is, it would be for an "extraneous" business-related infraction unrelated to Russian election meddling. Stone's denials of illicit contacts with Russians or with WikiLeaks have come under suspicion given comments he made during the campaign indicating that he'd been in contact with Assange. He later said those contacts were made through Credico, who

acted as an intermediary. Stone also acknowledged exchanging Twitter messages with Guccifer 2.0, the nom de plume of a figure who helped disseminate hacked Democratic Party emails in 2016. U.S. intelligence officials say Guccifer 2.0 was a front for Russian intelligence operatives, though Stone has cast doubt on that theory.

Stone insisted late Wednesday that Davis had no information that would contradict his assertions. The two have been friends for years, he noted, and he said she didn't work for him during the two years Mueller is most closely focused on: 2015 and 2016. Davis' attorney did not respond to a request for comment. Stone's own role in the probe has

been a central point of intrigue. He lashed out at congressional investigators last year for refusing to question him publicly. And he's insisted that he's had no contact with Mueller's investigators, even as they've encroached upon his closest associates.

Though Stone insisted that there are "no circumstances" in which he'd testify against Trump, he did crack the door open Wednesday to cooperating with Mueller's probe. After noting Mueller's apparent strategy of "squeezing underlings to get them to compose testimony against a bigger fish," Stone told CNN's Anderson Cooper on Wednesday: "I would not rule out cooperating if I could be helpful in some area."

Most Botox patients get the injections to look better at WORK

Because they think it gives them a competitive edge, survey finds

(Agencies) The boom in Botox is being driven by patients wanting to look better at work, a small survey has found. Demand for minimally-invasive cosmetic surgery is rocketing in the US: a staggering 15.4 million procedures performed in 2016, and early tallies suggest that figure was easily eclipsed in 2017.

To get a better idea of the trend, researchers at Northwestern University polled 511 people to get an idea of what's motivating them, in the first multi-center observational study ever performed. They found one of the most common reasons for patients getting Botox or fillers was to look 'better



in a professional context, while those who wanted the procedures for themselves were in the minority. Dishearteningly, the vast majority (69.5 percent) had turned to cosmetic surgery 'not simply to look attractive, but to address serious psychological and emotional issues'. Lead

author Murad Alam, MD, a dermatology professor at Northwestern in Chicago, urges clinicians to look at these findings as a red flag that they should be identifying people who are adjusting themselves for the sake of others, and to try to defer treatment in favor of psychological counseling.

'Patients seeking cosmetic procedures were found to be motivated by factors much more complicated than vanity, including impairments in emotional, physical, social, and professional quality of life,' Dr Alam and his colleagues wrote in the study, published today in the dermatology section of the Journal of the American Medical Association. While previous studies about patient motivation have stuck to categories laid out in other published reports, this was the first to create new categories based on emerging trends and interviews with patients.

New Zealand bans foreigners from buying property

(Agencies) The country's parliament on Wednesday passed a law banning foreigners from buying into most parts of its residential property market as the government seeks to cool red-hot house prices. The Overseas Investment Amendment Bill will prevent overseas investors from purchasing existing properties in New Zealand, but they will still be able to buy into new apartment complexes and certain other parts of the housing market.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern campaigned on a promise to clamp down on foreign buyers, blaming them for soaring prices that have left many New Zealanders unable to enter the property market.

"If you've got the right to live in New Zealand permanently, you've got the right to buy here," Trade Minister David Parker said during a final debate on the bill Wednesday. "We believe it's the birthright of New Zealanders to buy homes in New Zealand," he added.

Public policy firm Demographia regularly ranks Auckland, New Zealand's biggest city, as one of the world's least affordable places to buy a home.

House prices have almost doubled over the past decade, according to central bank data, and are up more than 5% so far this year. Home ownership rates among New Zealanders have also been falling in recent years.

Independence Day 2018

Priyanka Chopra, Malaika Arora, Deepika Padukone in saffron white and green dresses

15 more stylish celebrities wear saffron, green and white dresses in the most chic ways possible. Check out some Independence Day 2018 fashion inspiration ahead.

(Agencies) Priyanka over the top. Patriotic gear cool and chic celebrity Chopra, Malaika Arora is a prerequisite for looks from Katrina Kaif, and Deepika Independence Day Janhvi Kapoor, Manushi Padukone's cool white, dressing. That said, Chhillar, Dia Mirza, Disha saffron and green instead of reaching for Patani, Neha Dhupia, ensembles fit in with some combination of Shilpa Shetty Kundra and Independence Day's saffron, green and white, Sonam Kapoor Ahuja that theme without feeling it's time to get inspired by are festive but not cheesy.



From Deepika's casual white dress, check out 17 Independence Day 2018 trousers-and-tee combo saffron white and green spirit and help you stand out at any August 15 to Malaika's slightly celebrity looks that will get you into the event — and beyond.



Energy drinks mixed in alcohol could make you feel more drunk

Alcohol mixed with energy drinks could actually worsen the negative effects of binge drinking, says this new study.



(Agencies) If you like consuming alcohol with energy drinks, beware. A key ingredient found in energy drinks can worsen the negative effects of binge drinking, reveals a new study. Many people mix energy drinks with alcohol to neutralise the sedative nature of alcohol, tricking people into feeling more awake and less drunk than they really are.

Researchers from the University of Portsmouth and the Federal University of Santa Maria in Brazil examined the effects of taurine, which is a key ingredient in many energy drinks, and alcohol on social and fear responses in zebrafish. They found out that taurine seemed to increase the fear-reducing properties of alcohol, but it also affected social communication.

"The effects of mixing alcohol and energy drinks is yet to be established. This study is the first to show that the two together may be exacerbating some of the negative effects of binge drinking; that is reduction of fear and problems in

social communication while intoxicated, which collectively increase the risk of fighting, violence, and participation in risky behaviours," said the author Dr Matt Parker.

The researchers tested how taurine and alcohol (at volumes reflecting levels that would induce moderate human intoxication) affected the behaviour of 192 zebrafish. The fish were divided into shoals (four fish per shoal) and were exposed to just water, taurine and alcohol separately or taurine and alcohol for one hour. Their shoaling behaviours were analysed at different time intervals at 0-5 minutes, 30-35 minutes and 55-60 minutes. They were also tested for their fear-like responses to a predator by dividing the tank into four areas, with the furthest area used to mimic a predator fish. The fish that were exposed to both alcohol and taurine had fewer interactions with other fish in the shoal compared to those exposed to water alone or just alcohol. These fish also showed more risky behaviour than other groups. Dr Parker explained that binge drinking and general alcohol misuse is a key problem in the UK and across the world, with the numbers of hospital admissions resulting from illness or injury following intoxication costing the NHS millions per year.



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On Independence Day, here are the most successful Indian movies of every decade since 1947

Every decade, Bollywood climbs new heights of success and gives us bigger and better films. Here's a report card.



(Agencies) Ever since India got independent from the British Raj in 1947, a lot has changed. We have made a name for ourself on the world stage for things good and bad. The one thing among many that has left a big impression everywhere are our movies.

Bollywood, as the Hindi Film Industry is informally known, has accomplished a lot in the last 70 years. Year after year, new stories, new techniques in filmmaking and new talent on the big screen has

home as well. The 1957 movie, starring Nargis, Sunil Dutt and Rajendra Kumar, earned Rs 8 crore at the worldwide box office.

2. Aawara
Raj Kapoor's beautiful 1951 movie, again starring Nargis, made Rs 5.75 crore. The film was about a poor tramp who falls in love with a rich woman he cannot dream to have.

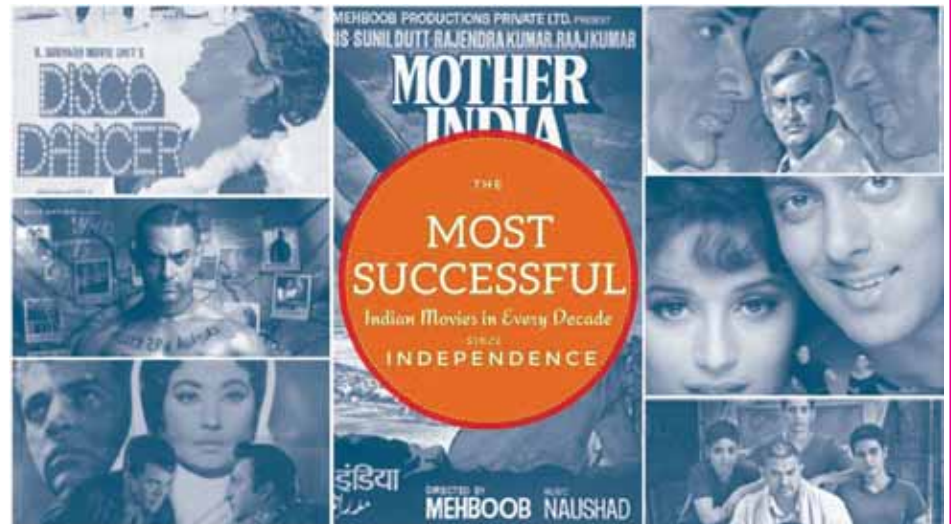
3. Shree 420
Raj Kapoor struck gold once again in 1955 with Shree 420. A dark and gritty mirror to the evils of a rotting society, the film

3. Ganga Jumna
Dilip Kumar and Vyjayanthimala's Ganga Jumna released in 1961 and made Rs 11 crore. It was a dacoit drama about two brothers.

1969-1978
1. Sholay
The iconic movie is the poster child of Bollywood even after several decades. The 1975 classic made Rs 35 crore and told the story of an unfortunate town plagued by dacoits until two heroes come to its rescue.

2. Bobby
The stunning love story starring Rishi Kapoor and Dimple Kapadia as two young kids in love released in 1973 and won hearts everywhere. It made Rs 30 crore at the box office.

3. Muqaddar Ka Siqandar
Amitabh Bachchan's big town drama made Rs 26



was the biggest hit of the year, even in Russia.

2. Kranti
Manoj Kumar's historical drama was the second biggest hit of the decade and made Rs 20 crore in 1981.

3. Ram Teri Ganga Maili
This 1985 film about an innocent woman harassed by the society made Rs 19 crore upon its release in 1985.

1989-1998
1. Hum Aapke Hain Koun!
Madhuri Dixit and Salman Khan's Hum Aapke Hain Koun! made Rs 135 crore, an unprecedented amount and no thanks to the Russian market. It released in 1994 and became of the most loved movies of all time.

2. Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayege
Yash Chopra redefined romance for an entire generation with this Shah Rukh Khan-Kajol movie. It released in 1995 and made Rs 126 crore.

3. Kuch Kuch Hota Hai

Shah Rukh and Kajol's magic continued through the rest of the decade as well when they worked together in Karan Johar's Kuch Kuch Hota Hai in 1998. The beautiful love story made Rs 106 crore.

1999-2008
1. Ghajini
Aamir Khan shook the box office to its core with this movie in 2008. It made Rs 233 crore, a figure out of everyone's wildest imaginations.

2. Dhoom 2
This Hrithik Roshan-Aishwarya Rai movie was high on action and box office collections. Released in 2006, it made

151 crore.

3. Om Shanti Om
Shah Rukh is back on the list and this one made 319 crore when it released in 2007.

2009-2018
1. Dangal
Aamir Khan delivered the biggest hit the country had ever seen and quite possibly, ever will. The 2016 sports drama made a whopping Rs 2,100 crore, thanks to a huge success in the China market.

2. Baahubali
2: The Conclusion
The only non-Hindi movie on this list, this SS Rajamouli movie was a phenomenon at the box office. The second part of the two-part series, it released in 2017 and made Rs 1790 crore.

3. Bajrangi Bhaijaan
Salman Khan's second entry on the list, Bajrangi Bhaijaan released in 2015 and made Rs 900 crore.



transported audiences to a world they different than their own. And with that, it has also registered an exponential success. To illustrate the same, here are the most successful movies of every decade since 1947, supplemented by two more top grossers from different years in the same decade. How many have you watched?

1947-1958
1. Mother India
India's big Oscar entry got a lot of love back

made Rs 4.94 crore.
1959-1968
1. Phool Aur Patthar
This 1966 movie starring Dharmendra and Meena Kumari made Rs 17 crore at the box office. The film told the story of a hardened criminal, brought back into light by a woman he shows care for.

2. Hamraaz
Hamraaz released in 1967 and made Rs 13.33 crore. It was a suspense thriller starring Raaj Kumar, Nanda and Sunil Dutt in the lead roles.

crore in 1978 and was the decade's third biggest release. It also starred Vinod Khanna and Parveen Babi.

1979-1988
1. Disco Dancer
Mithun Chakravarti's Disco Dancer was the biggest hit the country had ever seen and by quite a margin. In 1982, the film made a whopping Rs 100 crore and while Indian market contributed with only Rs 6 crore, the rest was made in the Russian markets. It

Satyameva Jayate movie review**John Abraham peddles discount patriotism, like a discount Akshay Kumar**

Satyameva Jayate
Director - Milap Milan Zaveri

Cast - John Abraham, Manoj Bajpayee, Aisha Sharma

Rating - 0.5/5

The actor Varun Dhawan recently said that patriotism needs to be felt, not said. It is an indication of our times that level-headed statements such as this are considered brave.

We have been conditioned - thanks to sycophantic social media accounts, the imposition of pointless laws and most forcefully, a torrent of nationalistic films - to believe that to prove ones patriotism one must have an image of the national flag as ones profile picture, and the words

'proud Indian' as ones bio. To be forced to stand for the national anthem in cinema halls - a secular, socialist, democratic venue if there ever was one - and to be expected to cheer every time a fictional character delivers a passionate speech about our country - that is what has become the new normal.

And what better way to publicise ones patriotism than to project poorly written propaganda on thousands of movie screens across the country?

So no, you should not watch Satyameva Jayate, the latest in this intolerable slew of films that seems to dismiss any form of

patriotism that isn't loud, crass and oddly defensive. It is a film in which there are more gloriously shot flags, fluttering in slow motion, than there are believable characters; more ridiculous plot twists than there are honest cops, and more spoken Sanskrit than you'd hear in Akshardham Temple. John Abraham plays Vir, a scud missile of a man who goes on a vigilante spree across Mumbai, ritualistically murdering crooked cops. Not only does he kill them, he subjects the doomed creatures to at least two minutes of poorly recited poetry before dousing them in kerosene (or alcohol, whichever's available) and flicking a lit match in their direction. Being burnt alive is bad enough, but imagine dying with John Abraham's couplets tossing about in your brain.

And DCP Shivansh, the man tasked with hunting him down, is no better. He's played by the great Manoj Bajpayee, who once again

proves that when enough money is dangled before ones eyes, no amount of embarrassment is bad enough. Every word out of his mouth is louder than the last, perhaps in an effort to hide the fact that were Shivansh's lines to be delivered in a softer tone, they could easily be passed off as song lyrics. So on the couple of occasions that Vir and Shivansh speak to each other on the phone, it sounds more like a poetry slam than a macho face-off. Shivansh is supposed to be the best man for the job - an honest policeman, a super-intelligent crime-buster, one of the rare few

that remains in Mumbai. However, at one point in the film, he suggests this strategy to stop Vir's cop-killing spree: "We need to catch the killer," he says, and after a pause for effect continues, "or hope that the entire police force turns over a new leaf." He then proceeds to laugh heartily at his excellent joke. The problem with films like Satyameva Jayate - whose title should be an indication as to its subtlety - is that they want to have their mithai and eat it too. Only the law can take the law into its own hands, says Shivansh, as if that explains

anything. It doesn't. In recent years, John Abraham has sort of turned into a discount Akshay Kumar, and his films have become a front for discount patriotism. Like Parmanu - his previous effort to keep his toe firmly in line - Satyameva Jayate is also borne out of a fundamentally flawed idea. While Parmanu seemed to suggest that nuclear annihilation was worth it if national pride could be restored, Satyameva Jayate thinks that killing bad policemen is justice - as if corruption is a fly, and not a reflection of systemic problems in our country.

**Gold movie review****On Independence Day, Akshay Kumar wins the game, and our**

Akshay Kumar and Mouni Roy's Independence Day offering is not all stirring action and winning streaks but it will keep you engrossed with its drama.

Gold
Director - Reema Kagit
Cast - Akshay Kumar, Mouni Roy, Amit Sadh, Kunal Kapoor, Vineet Singh

Rating - 3.5/5

Films become important for everything they say, and sometimes for what they don't. Before we sit down and thrash out a Gold movie review, it is important to list everything that Akshay Kumar's Independence Day offering is not. In these divisive times, when using the P-word can get you immediate claps and whistles, Gold shows them as our allies and

encourages a healthy relationship. Its Independence Day rhetoric can be schmaltzy but is never cloying, asking us, as citizens, to dream and achieve them, over decades and generations, because only that can make a country great.

Gold begins at 1936 Olympics in Berlin where Akshay Kumar is the general 'hey you' of the British India's national hockey team. Somewhere between not saluting Mein Fuhrer and carrying the Indian Flag next to his heart, he establishes his patriotism. A thrilling hockey match follows and the

action is equally engrossing on the bleachers (watch out for the Hitler lookalike). Whether Indians win or lose is immaterial, for standing on the podium would be slaves. There, in a country covered with swastikas, Akshay's Tapan Das vows with a hand on the Tricolour, to win the medal for a free India. The opening and the credits make for the most rousing 20 minutes of Gold. They tug at your heartstrings, appeal to your national pride and establish Tapan as our man in the Reema Kagit film. A song takes us through the most

defining moments in world history - World War 2, Olympics getting cancelled, India's Independence Day - as Tapan fills the hockey shaped hole in his heart with alcohol. Tapan's love for his country never wavers and neither does our faith in him. Today's alcoholic is tomorrow's patriot. Gold is inspired by India winning its first gold medal as a free country at the 1948 Olympics in Britain. Winning over our erstwhile colonial masters would have been sweet indeed and the story loses none of its strength as it is narrated in Gold. The fact that its span takes us



over one of the most tumultuous time in the history of world and India makes it even more stirring. Well done Akshay Kumar and Reema Kagit for choosing the right subject and delivering a crackling film. And then, extra marks to Akshay for delivering an engrossing performance. While walking into the theatre, I had misgivings about Akshay playing a Bengali but he has managed the act with finesse. He is also secure

in his space and lets others shine. Akshay is not the hockey captain, the coach or the manager; he is just a man with a dream. During the most important moments of the film, he is either outvoted or left behind. As the superstar in the film, he leads but gives space to others wherever needed. That perhaps is the biggest achievement of Gold - it fleshes out its characters, giving everybody a space to breathe.



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