



The South Asian

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STORY  
ON page  
27

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***US takes hard step, Pakistan listed as***

## "Safe Heaven for Terrorists"

Report cites Lack of sufficient action against terror groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad in 2016.



(SAI Bureau) Washington DC - US has listed Pakistan among the nations providing "safe havens" to terrorists, saying terror groups like the LeT and JeM continued to operate, train, organise and fundraise inside the country.

In its annual 'Country Report on Terrorism', as mandated by the Congress, the State Department said the Mumbai

attack mastermind and UN-designated terrorist Hafiz Saeed continued to address large rallies, although in February 2017 Pakistan proscribed him under relevant provisions of Anti-Terrorism Act.

"Although LeT is banned in Pakistan, LeT's wings Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FiF) were able to openly engage in

fundraising, including in the capital," it said.

"LeT's chief Saeed continued to address large rallies, although in February 2017, Pakistan proscribed him under relevant provisions of Schedule Four of the Anti-Terrorism Act, thus severely restricting his freedom of movement," it noted.

The 2015 ban on media coverage of Saeed, JuD, and FiF

continued and was generally followed by broadcast and print media, it said.

The report listed Pakistan as one of the safe havens of terrorism and said that numerous terrorist groups, including the Haqqani Network (HQN), the LeT and JeM continued to operate from Pakistani soil in 2016. It said Pakistan did not take substantial action against the Afghan Taliban or Haqqani, or substantially limit their ability to threaten US interests in Afghanistan, although Pakistan supported efforts to bring both groups into an Afghan-led peace

process. "Pakistan did not take sufficient action against other externally focused groups, such as LeT and JeM in 2016, which continued to operate, train, organise, and fundraise in Pakistan," the report said.

The Haqqani network has carried out a number of kidnappings and attacks against US interests in Afghanistan. The group is also blamed for several deadly attacks against Indian interests in Afghanistan, including the 2008 bombing of the Indian mission in Kabul that killed 58 people.

(Contd on page 22)



**George  
Maragos  
declares  
"Begining of  
a New Era" in  
Nassau  
County  
Politics**

(Contd on page 5)

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# FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, conferred with the “Zee Entertainment National Leadership Awards”



(Insider Bureau) Washington : Zee entertainment launched an annual program to identify and honor individuals and organizations who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in the media entertainment sector. Chairman Ajit Pai, was conferred with the inaugural “Zee Entertainment National Leadership Awards” at a special event on Capitol Hill this past week. He is the first Indian American to lead the Federal

Communications Commission (FCC) in the US. Zee Entertainment is the biggest multicultural programmer in the United States with 35 networks in 14 languages. Amit Goenka, CEO International Broadcast Business said, “The selection of our inaugural honoree was not a difficult choice as he demonstrated a great commitment to promoting and protecting consumer interests particularly in our case in the

areas of healthy living, wellness, news and entertainment.”

The exclusive, by invite-only event saw more than 200 people in attendance from Washington DC’s power corridors which included nearly 25 congressmen and other very notable dignitaries. The 44-year old Republican attorney, Ajit Pai came across as very affable, conscious of his humble beginnings and deeply appreciative of his meteoric rise to the top of the federal agency. At the event, Pai acknowledged Dr. Subhash Chandra’s incredible achievement in creating a company like Zee, quite literally from nothing into the multimedia conglomerate that entertains about a billion people worldwide, despite the many roadblocks. Where people did not have the option to watch Bollywood movies at home in the US, Zee pioneered and changed the way people had access to content from India accessible to the Indian diaspora across the world 20 years ago.

In continuation with Zee’s ethos; “Vasudhaiya

Kutumbakam” (The World is my Family), Zee speaks not only to the Indians here but also to millions of Americans via Z Living which is a Health & Wellness network. It is America’s fastest growing network and stands firm behind its mantra “Prevention is better than cure”. Zee also speaks to the millions of Latino audiences in the country through its unique Bollywood in Spanish channel; Zee Mundo. An extension to this core belief in Health and Wellness, Zee has a one of its kind Natural Wellness Center, YO1 which stands for Yoga and Oneness. The idea behind this Wellness Center which is spread over 1300 acres in upstate NY is to focus on bringing our mind, body and soul as one. Along with Entertainment, Zee strongly believes in giving back to the community with its initiatives like Sarthi, ZEE is Green, Ekal Vidyalaya and the DSC foundation which just donated 1 Billion dollars for social entrepreneurship causes. The Zee is Green

initiative was conferred a special Excellence award at IAA Olive Crown Awards 2016 for its leadership in various environmental projects. Also, Ekal Vidyalaya popularly known as A People’s Movement has been educating 1.5 million students across 54,000 free schools in India.

Since Zee Entertainment has become synonymous with the Indian culture and Indians globally, it was a natural choice for the republican party to engage and partner with Zee Network to engage the Indian diaspora during the Trump Presidential campaign, Zee not only effectively planned and executed a 360 degree campaign, but it also coined the winning phrase; Ab ki Baar Trump Sarkar (This time, A Trump Government). The Republicans were smart enough to understand Indian Americans influence on the larger canvas, said Sameer Targe. Efforts included a Bollywood gala in NJ which had Donald Trump as the keynote speaker and Zee’s own SRGMP singers who were the real crowd pullers.

## De Blasio Ally Didn’t Register as Lobbyist Despite Big Push for a Donor



(By WILLIAM NEUMAN) NY Times Frustrated by the pace of negotiations with a city agency over millions of dollars that were in dispute, a restaurateur decided to bring in a hired gun: Neal Kwatra, a political consultant and lobbyist with ties to Mayor Bill de Blasio. Mr. Kwatra ended up working so closely with top City Hall officials on behalf of the restaurant owner, Harendra Singh, that a city commissioner complained that officials were giving Mr. Kwatra confidential information during delicate negotiations to settle a lawsuit with Mr. Singh.

When one meeting with

city officials resulted in an unsatisfactory offer, Mr. Kwatra angrily responded, “I guess you didn’t get the memo from City Hall,” according to the city official in charge of the talks, Ricardo Morales, a former deputy commissioner of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, known as DCAS.

Yet none of Mr. Kwatra’s efforts on behalf of Mr. Singh, in 2015, were registered as lobbying work, even though Mr. Kwatra and his company, Metropolitan Public Strategies, have registered as lobbyists for other clients,

including United for Affordable NYC, a short-lived nonprofit group created by Mr. de Blasio to support his housing policies.

A search of the public record websites of the state’s Joint Commission on Public Ethics and the New York City Clerk’s Lobbying Bureau found no record that Mr. Kwatra or his company had registered as a lobbyist for Mr. Singh or his restaurant, Water’s Edge, in Queens, or any of Mr. Singh’s companies. Mr. de Blasio pushed city officials to help Mr. Singh, a mayoral campaign donor, and the case

became a focus of a federal investigation into what prosecutors viewed as a pattern of mayoral favors to campaign donors.

On Monday, Mr. de Blasio, appearing on “Road to City Hall” on NY1, dismissed the notion that Mr. Singh received special treatment because he was a campaign donor.

“It’s been looked at, and there’s just nothing there,” Mr. de Blasio said.

“I think it’s very clear how we run our government,” he said. “It’s an open and transparent government, where we help people bring forward legitimate issues and try to see them through to conclusion.”

Mr. Kwatra, whose mother, Pam Kwatra, is a donor and fund-raiser for the mayor, played a key role in Mr. Singh’s case, but his involvement was not revealed publicly until The New York Times reported it on Monday. Austin Shafran, a senior vice president of Metropolitan Public Strategies, said on Monday that Mr. Kwatra’s efforts on behalf of Mr. Singh did not meet the definition of lobbying under state and city law.

“Our firm consulted

experienced legal counsel, and was advised that we were not required to register as a lobbyist in this case because our work involved the renegotiation of an existing lease that was the subject of litigation, which is explicitly excluded from the lobbying law,” Mr. Shafran said by email. He would not identify the lawyer who advised his company, and said that Mr. Kwatra was unavailable to speak with a reporter. Mr. Shafran’s description of Mr. Kwatra’s activities was disputed by Mr. Morales, who was in charge of the talks with Mr. Singh. Mr. Morales, who was fired in February and has filed a notice of claim against the city in which he says he was fired for standing up to City Hall, said they did not involve a renegotiation of the lease.

A group of city documents and emails reviewed by The Times that describe the talks do not mention renegotiation of the lease. They focus instead on unpaid rent, money that the city said was owed by Mr. Singh to rebuild a pier near the restaurant, and lawsuits deriving from those disputes.

Despite all the problems, Mr. Singh was eager to start

negotiations on a new lease for the restaurant that would take effect when his existing lease was to expire in May 2017. And documents indicate that Mr. Kwatra was involved in pressing the case for a new lease with city officials. Officials at the administrative services agency had told Mr. Singh they could not discuss a new lease while he owed back rent and millions of dollars for the pier reconstruction. They made clear that even though Mr. Singh was already operating the restaurant, a new lease would require public hearings under city land use laws and would need to be offered for competitive bidding. Efforts to influence procurement decisions, including decisions regarding new leases on city properties, are frequently considered to meet the definition of lobbying. That did not stop Mr. Kwatra and Mr. Singh from continuing to push the issue of a new lease. Their efforts included discussions with Mr. de Blasio’s top political aide, Emma Wolfe, the director of intergovernmental affairs, who began participating in the negotiations in mid-2015.



# FIA hosts farewell reception in NJ for Ambassador Das



(Insider Bureau) NEW JERSEY: The Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut in collaboration with the Indian American community, hosted

a farewell reception July 18 for Riva Ganguly Das, India's Consul General in New York, at the Royal Albert's Palace in Fords, NJ. Ambassador Das, who assumed

charge in New York in March 2016, was recently named the new Director General of Indian Council for Cultural Relations by the Government of India, and is scheduled to leave for New

Delhi later this week.

The event, attended by more than 250 members of the Indian American community in New York and New Jersey, was hosted by FIA.

## The 2017 MoneyGram Cricket Bee Bay Area winners announced



(Insider Bureau) METUCHEN, NJ: Over 130 people registered for the Bay Area regional of the MoneyGram Cricket Bee held at Chabot College on July 9. The top two winners of the first regional, answered trivia questions on Cricket to solidify their position at the finals. Nithin Valentine of Santa Clara, CA was declared second runner up, Keshava Nuggehalli of Cupertino, CA was first runner up and the Regional champion was

Adil Khwaja of Santa Clara, CA. The competition allows cricket fans to compete for prizes while sharing their knowledge of the game in an effort to win a cash prize of \$10,000. Open to those 18 and older, the contest began with regional rounds in San Francisco, will continue its tour to Dallas, Chicago, New Jersey and will conclude in Toronto, each testing participants' general cricket knowledge.

## GOPIO-CT Honors Five Distinguished Indian American Achievers At Its 11th Annual Awards banquet

**"This country is the greatest nation in the history of the world because of our diversity," Sen. Richard Blumenthal**



(Insider Bureau) (Stamford, ) "This country is the greatest nation in the history of the world because of our diversity," Richard Blumenthal, the senior United States Senator from Connecticut, told a packed audience at the 11th annual Gala

and awards nite organized by The Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO)-Connecticut Chapter in the Ballroom at The Hilton Hotel in Stamford, CT on Saturday, July 8th, 2017. "We have become a great nation

because of your contributions. We have welcomed talent, energy and dedication. There is no greater example of this than our relationship with India; two great democracies on earth. Our nation faces biggest challenge to rule of law today

than ever before." The sold out and much anticipated event was attended by over 250 guests from across the state of Connecticut, including community leaders, elected officials, and honorees and their families. The gala included a

cocktail reception, dinner, music, live DJ and dances by participants, eloquent speeches, touching life-stories and inspiring narratives on the lives of the five distinguished honorees. The program was compered by Gayatri Mahesh.



# USCIS to Resume H-1B Premium processing for certain cap exempt petitions

(News Agencies)Washington — U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will resume premium processing for certain cap-exempt H-1B petitions effective immediately. The H-1B visa has an annual cap of 65,000 visas each fiscal year. Additionally, there is an annual "master's cap" of 20,000 petitions filed for beneficiaries with a U.S. master's degree or higher. Premium processing will resume for petitions that may be exempt from the cap if the H-1B petitioner is: An

institution of higher education; A nonprofit related to or affiliated with an institution of higher education; or A nonprofit research or governmental research organization. Premium processing will also resume for petitions that may also be exempt if the beneficiary will be employed at a qualifying cap-exempt institution, organization or entity.

Starting today, those cap-exempt petitioners who are eligible for premium processing can file Form I-

907, Request for Premium Processing Service for Form I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker. Form I-907 can be filed together with an H-1B petition or separately for a pending H-1B petition.

USCIS previously announced that premium processing resumed on June 26 for H-1B petitions filed on behalf of physicians under the Conrad 30 waiver program as well as interested government agency waivers.

USCIS plans to resume premium

processing of other H-1B petitions as workloads permit. USCIS will make additional announcements with specific details related to when we will begin accepting premium processing for those petitions. Until then, premium processing remains temporarily suspended for all other H-1B petitions. USCIS will reject any Form I-907 filed for those petitions, and if the petitioner submitted one check combining the Form I-907 and Form I-129 fees, USCIS will have to reject both forms.

# George Maragos declares "Begining of a New Era" in Nassau County Politics



(News Agencies)Nassau Democratic county executive candidate George Maragos, who had declared the "beginning of a new era in county politics, when he announced formation of a ticket to challenge candidates backed by the county Democratic Party is all set to give strong showing in the September 12 primary. A source very close to Maragos campaign claimed that "Ordinary residents are rising up to take back their government from the political bosses and the special interests".

Maragos; who is serving his second term as county comptroller, will battle out Nassau Democrats endorsed county

Legislature Laura Curran for democratic primary. Maragos had changed his party affiliation from GOP to Democrat last year.

"The rationale for my decision to embrace the platform of the Democratic Party is well documented. Establishment bosses are in total panic that their hand picked, unqualified puppet candidate has been rejected by the Nassau voters," Maragos campaign noted in a recent statement.

Recently Comptroller George Maragos far exceeded the number of signatures needed to get on the ballot, setting the stage for a primary in

September. Primary winner will go against Republican candidate Senator Jack Martins. Maragos said the "signatures clearly demonstrate that the Democratic voters in Nassau County are sick and tired of high property taxes and rampant government corruption on both sides of the aisle."

County Comptroller George Maragos, also has the largest war chest of the three candidates, leaving \$1,288,023 in the bank as of last week after spending \$235,274. Maragos previously loaned his campaign \$1.5 million and is not taking contributions from special-interest donors.

# Three Doctors, A Chiropractor, Three Therapists And Medical Company Owners Arrested In Brooklyn As Part Of National Health Care Fraud Takedown

## Alleged Fraudulent Billings in Brooklyn and Queens Exceed \$125 Million

(News Agencies)Ten individuals, including three doctors, a chiropractor, three licensed physical and occupational therapists and two medical company owners, have been charged for their alleged participation in multiple schemes that fraudulently billed the Medicare and Medicaid programs more than \$125 million. The charges filed in federal court in Brooklyn, New York are part of a nationwide health care fraud takedown led by the Medicare Fraud Strike Force, which resulted in criminal charges against 412 individuals for their alleged participation in health care fraud schemes involving approximately \$1.3 billion in fraudulent claims.

The Brooklyn and Queens cases were announced by Bridget M. Rohde, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, William F.

Sweeney, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), Special Agent in Charge Scott Lampert of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG), New York Regional Office, James D. Robnett, Special Agent-in-Charge, Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation, New York (IRS-CI), and Medicaid Inspector General Dennis Rosen

of New York State Office of Medicaid Inspector General (OMIG). The results of the nationwide takedown were announced today by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tom Price, M.D., Acting Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Blanco of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe, Acting Drug

Enforcement Administration (DEA) Administrator Chuck Rosenberg, Inspector General Daniel Levinson of the HHS Office of Inspector General (OIG), IRS-Criminal Investigations Chief Don Fort, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma, and Deputy Director Kelly P. Mayo of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS). "As alleged, the defendants charged

in the Eastern District of New York as part of this national takedown took advantage of programs designed to provide essential healthcare for the elderly and the needy. Doctors, medical professionals and others who defraud Medicare and Medicaid and pay illegal kickbacks to line their pockets at the taxpayers' expense are on notice that they will be investigated and prosecuted," stated Acting United States Attorney Rohde.

## CEO of Virginia Health Care Technology Company Sentenced to Almost 10 Years in Prison for \$49 Million Shareholder Fraud and \$7.5 Million Employment Tax Fraud

(News Agencies) A medical doctor and entrepreneur was sentenced to 119 months and 29 days in prison today for defrauding his former company's shareholders and for failing to account for and failing to pay employment taxes, announced Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Stuart M. Goldberg of the Justice Department's Tax Division, U.S. Attorney Dana J. Boente for the Eastern District of Virginia, Chief Don Fort of the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) and Assistant Director in Charge Andrew W. Vale of the FBI's Washington Field Office.

According to documents filed with the court, in or about September 2000, Sreedhar Potarazu, 51, of Potomac, Maryland, an ophthalmic surgeon licensed in Maryland and Virginia, founded VitalSpring Technologies Inc. (VitalSpring), a Delaware corporation. VitalSpring operated in McLean, Virginia and provided data analysis and services relating to health care expenditures. In or around the end of 2015, VitalSpring started



doing business as Enziime LLC, a Delaware corporation. From its inception, Potarazu was VitalSpring's Chief Executive Officer and President, and served on its Board of Directors.

From at least 2008, Potarazu provided materially false and misleading information to VitalSpring's shareholders to induce more than \$49 million in capital investments in the company. Potarazu represented on numerous occasions that

VitalSpring was a financially successful company and that the sale of VitalSpring was imminent, which would have resulted in profits for shareholders. Potarazu also admitted that he concealed from shareholders that VitalSpring failed to account for and pay over more than \$7.5 million in employment taxes to the IRS. For example, in 2014, Potarazu provided shareholders with a written summary of operating results that reflected VitalSpring's 2013 revenues to be approximately \$12.9 million when, in fact, the 2013 revenue was less than \$1 million.



# After ban on construction along Ganga, it can't be business as usual in UP

***Now with same parties ruling the Centre and state, there should be better coordination on protecting the Ganga. If the state is unable to do so, then it will be failing to execute a pet project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi***



(News Agencies) Last week, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) declared an area of 100 metres from the edge of Ganga between Haridwar (Uttarakhand) and Unnao (Uttar Pradesh) as a no-development zone. It also prohibited dumping of waste within 500 metres

from the river. The ban will remain in place until authorities complete the demarcation of the Ganga's floodplains and

identify all permissible and non-permissible activities, the NGT ruled. The observation was part of a raft of measures that a six-member NGT bench headed by Justice Swatanter Kumar, listed in a 543-page judgment on a petition by environmentalist MC Mehta. Sending out a signal that it won't be lenient with polluters any longer, the NGT also declared a fine of Rs 50,000 on anyone who dumps waste in the Ganga and said the UP government is "duty-bound" to shift tanneries from Jajmau to Unnao or any other place it considers appropriate within six weeks. Indicting the callous manner in which public money is

being spent, the bench noted that "even after spending Rs7,304.64 crore up to March by the Centre, state government and local authorities of the state of UP" the status of the Ganga has "not improved in terms of quality or otherwise and it continues to be a serious environmental issue". This is a damning indictment of the authorities involved in restoring/rejuvenating the river. However, as environmentalist Manoj Misra said in a recent tweet, mere pollution control is not rejuvenation. Much more needs to be done.

The Centre has allotted Rs 2,000 crore for the

Namami Gange project to clean up the river. Now the onus of ensuring that the polluting tanneries abide by the norms lies with the state government—its record on this is far from satisfactory. For years together, lax implementation has meant the government hasn't been able to restrain factories and people from polluting the Ganga. Ensuring that this happens won't be easy. But now with same party ruling the Centre and state, there should be better coordination. If the state is unable to do so, then it will be failing to execute a pet project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

# Indu Sarkar controversy: Why are political parties so thin-skinned?

***The multiple fronts at which Madhur Bhandarkar is being attacked is a good pointer as to why seldom Indian filmmakers, especially mainstream filmmakers, venture into making biographies or historical drama in a serious manner***

(News Agencies) We in India love our cinema and wear the film critic's hat with ease. That's a good sign of the freedom of speech and, at times, even reflects the maturity of the audience we are. The problem is when some take the job of the censor board upon themselves and judge whether one of the other film should be shown or whether a scenes or words should be deleted. Or indeed, whether the whole subject is unsuitable.

And this is one of the many problems Hindi filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar is facing these days. His film Indu Sarkar, based on the 21-month Emergency between 1975 and 1977 imposed by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, has run into opposition from the Congress, which is demanding that the film be screened first to

them before it is sent to the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). Party members are concerned about the depiction of their leaders in the film, and thus the disruption of the film's press conferences. So much for freedom of expression.

Why is it that organisations — cultural, religious, and especially political — and even governments are so sensitive when it comes to the depiction of its leaders? Why is it that they are so thin-skinned? India has had many tall leaders and yet why is it that a true depiction of them is missing from popular culture? Why is it that a culture of concealing or glossing over the shortcomings of our leaders is encouraged? Mahatma Gandhi, with his unquestionable contribution towards the



formation of modern India, was not a perfect human being. And, some argue, that it is those shortcomings that enhance his greatness. Why is it difficult for many to realise that their leaders are/were also human, with all the accompanying frailties? This hypersensitivity that

stymies true depictions of our leaders must stop. On the contrary, we often resort to hagiographies that give a distorted recollection of history.

Though Mr Bhandarkar has stressed that about 70% of his film is fiction, the multiple fronts at which the filmmaker is being

attacked is a good pointer as to why seldom Indian filmmakers, especially mainstream filmmakers, venture into making biographies or historical drama in a serious manner.

Movies are not necessarily accurate depictions of individuals and events — for that we have

documentaries. But where such movies become important is that they recreate events, and open leaders and events to discussions and debates. And it is through such debates that posterity attains a better understanding of history. We cannot, and must not, block any attempt that leads to it.



# Doklam will prompt new thinking on India-China relations

***While efforts to de-escalate the Doklam situation to mutual satisfaction should continue, national security concerns must henceforth predominate***

The ongoing flare-up at Doklam and China's actions and statements have far-reaching implications for the future of India-China relations. It has brought into sharp definition the thinking among China's senior leadership echelons about India and their intentions into the open. It will take long for the threats issued by China's official media to recede from public memory. India's foreign and security establishments will have taken cognisance of the articles published by China's state-owned media.

Note would certainly have been taken of the nearly 20 articles in the state-owned 'Global Times': warning India of a repeat of the 1962 war, that China will reverse its agreed position on Sikkim, start an international campaign questioning the close India-Bhutan ties, stir up trouble in the northeast and send People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops into Kashmir at Pakistan's ostensible behest. An image of a People's Daily edition of 1962 was also in circulation on the popular Chinese sites Weibo and WeChat on July 12, 2017. The articles and statements by official spokesmen would have been approved at a high level in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and reveal the thinking of the senior echelons of the CCP about India.

China's state-owned media is tightly controlled by the CCP's powerful propaganda department which often issues thrice daily 'advisories' on how and what to print and prominence to be given to any particular subject. Articles relating to neighbouring countries are especially vetted. Since the CCP central committee (CC)'s propaganda department issued Document No: 9 in August 2013, progressively stringent restrictions are being imposed on the media and social media. Document No: 9 unequivocally declares "that the power of leading the press and media is always controlled by the hands of those who are at one with the central committee of the Party with comrade Xi Jinping as general secretary".

The threat about China's intention to reverse its recognition of Sikkim as part of India, repeated by Chinese diplomats in New Delhi, underscores the remark by a Chinese vice-foreign minister to the visiting Indian external affairs minister in 2008 that the issue of Sikkim remains unsettled. The warning about promoting insurgency in the northeast, after Deng Xiaoping reversed Mao's policy of "exporting revolution" in 1979, has as backdrop the clandestine links maintained by Chinese Intelligence over the years with India's northeast insurgent groups. The warning can well impact on the proposed Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor. Incidentally, China was allowed a consulate in Kolkata though it has refused to permit India to reopen one in Lhasa.

The article attempting to draw a parallel between India's action in Doklam in support of Bhutan and a possible Chinese intrusion in Kashmir ostensibly at Pakistan's instance, brings into focus China's links with Kashmiri separatists and the growing collusion between China and Pakistan and the pronounced military content of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In the course of the ongoing face-off at Doklam, there can be little doubt that China is exploring various options including military.

The area of the face-off falls within the operational jurisdiction of the PLA's Shigatse (Xigaze) military sub-district subordinate to the western theatre command. The present commander of the western theatre command, 62-year old General Zhao Zongqi, is one of the few serving PLA generals with experience of battle, having fought in the Sino-Vietnam war in 1979, where he also operated under cover in enemy territory. He has two decades of service in Tibet and is familiar with the area and terrain. Fang Jianguo, the incumbent PLA commander in Shigatse, similarly has a promising career ahead. He has been described by the PLA headquarters as a "pacesetter and outstanding commanding officer of the PLA" while the Chengdu military region called him an "excellent commanding officer of the whole army". Both anticipate further promotions. The present political commissar of the Shigatse (Xigaze) military sub-district, PLA Colonel Xu Qingming is also familiar with the area having earlier served as political commissar of the Lingzhi Military subdistrict. All three would view the ongoing face-off as a setback to their operational plans and likely argue in favour of strong action to dissuade India. While efforts to de-escalate the situation to mutual satisfaction should continue, national security concerns must henceforth predominate. Throughout this face-off India has been sagacious in its comments while trying for a diplomatic resolution. The old Indian saying: 'words are sharper than arrows and once released cannot be taken back' is helpful in such cases.

# Give President Trump the chance that Ronald Reagan got

As a very young man barely rounding the corner on 30, I had the opportunity to witness and view the Reagan revolution by serving as an enthusiastic and blindly optimistic apprentice in his administration. Now at the opposite bookend of my life, I have the challenge and honor of providing tiny bits of advice and counsel to my friend, the President of the United States, Donald Trump.

Like President Reagan before him, President Trump is beginning a White House journey with a rocky and tumultuous introduction in the midst of great division, discontent and confusion among a very diverse and conflicted American and foreign constituency. I cannot help but reflect on the parallels of these two administrations as a compass for clarity and direction.

President Trump is not only changing the tapestry of policy but is maneuvering the manner in which it is woven and the threads of its composition. His campaign was unconventional and disruptive, and he is now tackling Washington in an unconventional and disruptive way. It was Reagan who famously responded to a question from a Washington veteran on doing things unconventionally, "Well, isn't that why we are here?"

The arrival of President Trump is causing many legacy institutions to feel challenged as they scramble with the change that he is stewarding. The inertia and momentum of the government does not naturally lend itself to new methods of communication, thinking and negotiation.

In fact, the stable, recurring patterns of the Washington bureaucracy are designed to be immune from a consistent changing of the deck chairs, and become agitated by the need to acclimate to new circumstances. President Trump is facing the same opposition that President Reagan did almost four decades ago from the fixtures of the Washington and the global geopolitical scene. The bureaucracy is not the enemy but an essential ingredient to our success.

Without an unwavering entrenched establishment providing bureaucratic stability, our democratic system would cease to function in the ever-changing winds of temporal political shifts. An entrenched establishment is a safeguard, not a terminal illness. However, the bureaucracy must be amended, adopted, nourished, realigned, incentivized and held accountable. If not, the machinery itself, not the people who run it, become corroded and corrupt. Without constant supervision and monitoring, the bureaucracy will both grow in size and diminish in efficacy.

The President's policies were clear and distinct in his campaign and continue to be his priorities into his second month of governing: tax policy, job growth, immigration reform, a reworked health care system, a renewed national security alignment, a strengthened military and a re-engineered trade practice and policy. If the President is able to take advantage of an aligned Congress and executive branch to enact even half of these policies within the first year of administration, he will accomplish more than any other president in history.



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# Hollow power: India is on a path to decline and that is why China is challenging it

***Not only is India militarily not in a position to challenge China now, the direction the BJP is taking the country undermines India's capabilities as a power and leaves it in no position to deter China's aggression for years to come.***



The India-China military standoff near Sikkim continues. The rhetoric from both sides is very revealing of their states of mind. India is adopting a conciliatory tone but China is uncompromising. India will be "patient and peaceful" in dealing with its neighbours, says the Narendra Modi government; commentators emphasise Delhi's moderation and maturity.

China insists that withdrawal of Indian troops from the disputed Doklam area is a precondition for dialogue. Chinese experts are not mincing words. Victor Gao, a former diplomat and once an interpreter for Deng Xiaoping, has said any other country in China's situation of seeing foreign (Indian) soldiers on its territory would send troops to drive them out. He says the longer India

keeps troops in Doklam the more likely a military confrontation is.

The reaction in Indian media to the standoff with China is markedly different from what tensions with Pakistan usually provoke. Television channels are not dishing out angry hashtags about Beijing as they usually do about Islamabad's misdemeanours. The Indian establishment clearly wants to avoid a confrontation. In Delhi's muted reaction and Beijing's belligerence there is perhaps a tacit acknowledgment in both capitals that the reason China is being aggressive is because India now is the weakest it has been for years.

China wants to symbolically establish dominance in Asia and it has chosen a moment when the contours of India's path to decline are fairly well-

established, three years into Modi's rule. This is the lesson that Delhi should take away from this standoff, that not only is India militarily not in a position to challenge China now (short of a nuclear exchange), the direction that the BJP is taking the country undermines India's capabilities as a power and leaves it in no position to deter China's aggression for years to come. This is the time to starkly assess India's situation, let go of the positive spin the BJP government puts out, and view India as how its adversaries would. This may be a counter-intuitive argument to make because India certainly has some impressive attributes: a large youthful population, a formidable military machine with nuclear weapons, a sizeable middle class and elite to keep foreign companies interested for years and, like any happening

power, it convenes several high-profile business and think-tank conferences. China is evidently not daunted by these because some indicators of India's power make for grim reading.

India's vulnerabilities are manifest in four areas. The first is in the economy, where India has recently endured a series of self-inflicted wounds. India has had a weak investment climate for years owing to regulatory bottlenecks and because banks are saddled with bad loans. Demonetisation was needlessly introduced in an already difficult situation and it brought cities to a standstill for weeks and compounded an agrarian distress by short-circuiting billions of transactions in rural India and disrupting supply chains. Growth slowed to 6.1% in the last quarter;

(Contd on page 21)

## Five essential elements to keep democracy alive and kicking in India

***What India needs is an objective media, independent judiciary, investigation agencies that inspire confidence, honest bureaucrats, and, a robust economy backed by sound banking practises***

Defining democracy is no easy task. The elements of democracy are contextual. In its nascent form it may not include all the elements found and tested over time in mature liberal democracies. The period between October 1951 and March 1952 was a curtain raiser with the holding of the first general elections to the Lok Sabha. With the festival of elections held thereafter, we celebrate the peaceful transfer of power. The closing of the electoral process after each election is the first step in embracing democracy. After 69 years of Independence, what are the essential institutional elements necessary for us to be satisfied that democracy is alive and kicking in India? First, we yearn for a media, objective on issues and fiercely independent in approach. Today, barring a few laudable exceptions, it has become a cheerleader of dispensations. Democracy loses much of its lustre in the absence of a vibrant fourth estate. Second, we all aspire for an independent judiciary which is incorruptible. In

the several tiers of the judicial system, some are perceived to have fallen apart. This is attributable not just to the quality of the manpower but to the appalling conditions under which it operates. At the highest level, haste, not studied reflection on issues, sours some outcomes. Retired judges of the Supreme Court have themselves lamented the state of the judiciary.

Third, investigation agencies must inspire confidence. The two elements required to instil confidence are quality manpower and absence of taint in investigation. Both elements are missing in the present investigation apparatus.

When investigating agencies do a U-turn, one limb of the investigation definitely stands tainted. The classic example of this U-turn was the 2008 Malegaon bomb blast case. The National Investigating Agency (NIA) having taken over the investigation in 2011 filed a supplementary chargesheet in 2016 which stated that prosecution against six of the

prime accused was not maintainable. This came after investigation had been completed and a 4,528-page chargesheet filed by the Maharashtra ATS. Such an obvious volte face defied logic. Such blatant partisan conduct erodes faith in investigating agencies. The investigation agencies seem to collaborate with government to target the allegedly corrupt in Opposition and protect their own. While students and teachers landed in jail, named politicians have not even been investigated in the Vyapam scam. Similarly, no investigation is underway against all those involved in public distribution system scams in Chhattisgarh.

On the other hand, we witness the alacrity with which certain NGO's are being harassed and persecuted by launching multiple investigations against them. Convenient leaks by agencies help facilitate government's desire to damage reputations. The latest being targeting journalists and television channels, who the government considers to have

been troublemakers in the past.

Fourth, spineless bureaucrats, committed to their own advancement, hesitant to speak their mind; coupled with an establishment that looks for hatchet men who will do their bidding. This has tarnished the bureaucrat's image. The honest bureaucrat hesitates to take decisions lest years later, courts hold that he be prosecuted for deciding contrary to public interest. Strange but true. At that stage there is none to defend him. Fifth, for a robust economy, merit-based arms-length lending is crucial. Today, over 17% of all bank loans are estimated to be non-performing. Erstwhile RBI governor Raghuram Rajan on August 11, 2014, stated: "The crooked politician needs the businessman to provide the funds....The crooked businessman needs the crooked politician to get public resources and contracts cheaply." That says it all. Ultimately, the taxpayer has to pay for the reckless lending by banks. Gross NPAs of public

sector banks as of 2014-2015 were about Rs 2.67 trillion. The situation has not improved since then. In fact, it has worsened as Gross NPAs stand at Rs 6.06 trillion as of December 2016. The present government is contemplating setting up a 'bad bank' to take over dud loans to clean up the balance sheets of lenders. If implemented properly it may work. Apart from these alarming institutional inadequacies, the situation is exacerbated by a government in which ministers await the nod of the all-powerful PMO and wherein secretaries of ministries, bypassing their ministers, deal directly with the PMO. We also witness the dilution of time-tested legislative processes by terming ordinary legislation as 'money bills' ensuring they are not debated in the Rajya Sabha. All this is very worrisome.

While the election commission needs to be cheered, our institutions, the building blocks of democracy are woefully wanting. In fact, we have miles to go before we sleep.



# Venkaiah Naidu's candidature for vice-president is a boost for the BJP's 'mission south'

*His is a name that is likely to be appealing to parties across the political spectrum.*



Muppavarapu Venkaiah Naidu's candidature for the post of vice-president makes it clear that the BJP and its parent organisation are deeply invested in expanding the base of the party into South India. Mr. Naidu has been a champion

of what is otherwise seen as a 'North Indian' party. That rare south Indian to support the cause of Hindi in a political milieu that sees the use of Hindi as an 'imposition', his elevation to vice-president would be another feather in the

cap of the Sangh loyalist.

He has been a two-time MLA of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly, a four-time member of the Rajya Sabha, and has held several important portfolios in government — having been the

minister for rural development, urban development, housing and poverty alleviation, parliamentary affairs, and information and broadcasting under two prime ministers. His being from the south of India is likely to have figured prominently in deliberations; given the BJP's 'Mission South' programme, part of BJP President Amit Shah's masterplan for the party. His long association with the RSS and the Sangh Parivar may also have been an important consideration. A member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), he has been involved with its student wing, the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) since his college days. He is certainly better known than the presidential candidate Ram Nath Kovind, who has risen from relative obscurity. And the two together would make it the

first time that the country would have both a president and vice-president from the Sangh Parivar. He has been a vocal supporter of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, even going so far as to say that 'Modi' stood for 'Making of Developed India'. Mr. Naidu has served as the spokesperson of his party for many years, coming across as a non-confrontational person; and someone with the management abilities and political acumen to handle the pressures of the post.

Known for his alliterations, witticisms and quips, Mr. Naidu is likely to be appealing to parties across the political spectrum. Should he be elected to the post, a scenario that seems highly likely, his experience as a four-time MP of the Rajya Sabha will be useful as he takes on the Chairpersonship of the House.

## Pahlaaj-ji, I Plan To Say "Cow" And "Gujarat"; Kya Kar Loge?

I am not going to pen an open letter to what's-his-name - Pahlaaj Nihalani. It's a total waste of effort. Let me just say I retain my right to use the words "Cow", "Riot", "Gujarat", "Hindutva", "Hindu Nation" as often as I feel like...in a combination of my choice...in situations I pick...and in a context that is appropriate. Kya karogey aap?

Indians love to argue. We argue all the time and over pretty stupid stuff at that. To argue is our birthright, and we shall have it. Samajh gaye na, Pahlaaj-ji? You also argue. Who stops you? The Argumentative Indian is a phenomenal creature - but an endangered species. When Amartya Sen wrote the provocative book, he expectedly generated a great deal of argument. That was the whole point! Of course, critics can call the honour a conspiracy: the usual rubbish about Western forces endorsing him and the book in order to discredit India and destabilise the nation. Dr Amartya Sen has been dubbed an enemy of the State, an anti-national, a Libtard and worse by the same bunch of cretins/critics. But that

still does not change facts, evidence and history. Whether you like it or not, the Indian narrative is not in anybody's hands. Especially not in Pahlaaj Nihalani's. And no matter what anyone wants muted in the documentary, the truth is impossible to mute. Truth is not an obedient servant, and it is out there for all to absorb, understand, judge.

Predictably, the BJP has taken the CBFC Board's side in the debate (Hallelujah! Are we surprised?) and said, "Being a Nobel Laureate does not give anybody the license to say whatever he wants." The BJP is absolutely right! You don't have to be a Nobel Laureate to possess this "license"! Every citizen has the same right as Amartya Sen. We can, in fact, say whatever the hell we want! The BJP also referred to a "lot of learned people on the Board." Name! Name! Who are these learned people? Which aspects have they considered before asking for changes? "All aspects" is the sweeping statement made. Name just two or three aspects, Sirji.

Filmmaker and economist



Image posted on Twitter by imbandarkar

Suman Ghosh, maker of the documentary, says he may seek legal help to deal with this impasse ("I will not mute even one word"). The one-hour-long documentary was scheduled to be launched tomorrow (July 14). As of now, the big stand-off over those "offensive" words is still on. Strange that Pahlaaj and his cronies find so many words incendiary and

difficult to handle. Mala Dutta Ghosh, advisory committee member of the CBFC Kolkata, refused to comment on the issue. "Please talk to higher officials...." was her taciturn reply when contacted by the media.

Supporters of Amartya Sen call this a proxy war against the public intellectual who has openly questioned Narendra Modi's

demonetisation initiative. Every administration has its favourite targets. Every administration practises politics of vendetta. The Congress spokespeople should butt out of this one, given what they are up to with Madhur Bhandarkar's Indu Sarkar. Next, we'll be told the ignominious Emergency never happened! Just like Godhra didn't.



# A cigarette within walking distance:?

## Marlboro's marketing strategies infuriate Indian health officials

**Marketing strategies by companies such as Philip Morris are using methods that flout the nation's tobacco-control regulations, government officials say.**

(News Agencies) SK Arora spent more than three years trudging through the Indian summer heat and monsoon rains to inspect tobacco kiosks across this sprawling megacity, tearing down cigarette advertisements and handing out fines to store owners for putting them up. But as fast as he removed the colourful ads, more appeared. The chief tobacco control officer at the Delhi government, Arora asked the major cigarette companies to put a stop to the cat-and-mouse routine. In official letters and face-to-face meetings, he told them India's tobacco control laws barred

such public advertising and promotion of cigarettes.

That included the Indian arm of Philip Morris International Inc, the world's largest publicly traded tobacco company. Early last year, Arora said, he met with a Philip Morris director for corporate affairs in India, a man named R. Venkatesh, and told him the signs were an unequivocal violation of Indian law.

Like other tobacco companies, Philip Morris kept up its ad blitz. Venkatesh says Philip Morris is doing nothing wrong. In response to questions from Reuters, he said the company's advertising

is "compliant with Indian law" and that Philip Morris has "fully cooperated with the enforcement authorities" on the matter. But government officials say Philip Morris is using methods that flout the nation's tobacco-control regulations. These include tobacco shop displays as well as the free distribution of Marlboro – the world's best-selling cigarette brand – at nightclubs and bars frequented by young people.

In internal documents, Philip Morris International is explicit about targeting the country's youth. A key goal is "winning the hearts and minds of LA-24," those between legal age, 18, and 24, according to one slide in a 2015 commercial review presentation.

As with the point-of-sale ads at kiosks, public health officials say that giving away cigarettes is a violation of India's Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act and its accompanying rules. Philip Morris' marketing strategy for India, which relies heavily on kiosk advertising and social events, is laid out in hundreds of pages of internal documents reviewed by Reuters that cover



the period from 2009 to 2016. In them, Philip Morris presents these promotions as key marketing activities. In recent years, they have helped to more than quadruple Marlboro's market share in India, where the company is battling to expand its reach in the face of an entrenched local giant. Reuters is publishing a selection of those documents in a searchable repository, The Philip Morris Files.

'Within walking distance'

The company's goal is to make sure that "every adult Indian smoker should be able to buy Marlboro within walking distance," according to another 2015 strategy document.

In targeting young adults, Philip Morris is deploying a promotional strategy that it and other tobacco companies used in the United States decades ago. A study published in the American

Journal of Public Health in 2002 found that during the 1990s, "tobacco industry sponsorship of bars and nightclubs increased dramatically, accompanied by cigarette brand paraphernalia, advertisements, and entertainment events in bars and clubs." With cigarette sales declining in many countries, Philip Morris has identified India, population 1.3 billion, as a market with opportunity for significant growth. "India remains a high potential market with huge upside with cigarette market still in infancy," says a 2014 internal document. According to government data, India has about 100 million smokers. Of those, about two-thirds smoke traditional hand-rolled cigarettes. Tobacco use kills more than 900,000 people a year in India, and the World Health Organization estimates that tobacco-related diseases cost the country about \$16 billion annually.



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# Stage Set For Election Of India's 14th President

## As RN Kovind Goes Up Against Meira Kumar

(Agencies) The stage is all set for the election of the 14th President of India today in a contest in which National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidate Ram Nath Kovind has a clear edge in the electoral college over the opposition nominee Meira Kumar.

The total value of votes of the electoral college is 10,98,903, and the NDA candidate is slated to cross the halfway-mark and get about 63 per cent votes.

Kovind, who belongs to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has the backing of all the party's allies besides several regional parties, while Kumar has been fielded by the Congress and some major opposition parties in what they call an "ideological battle" against the ruling party.

Both Kovind and Kumar are from the Dalit community and have canvassed hard by visiting states to seek support of legislators.

All arrangements have been completed for the presidential election, and polling will take place in Parliament House and respective state assemblies between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Elected members of both houses of Parliament and assemblies in states, including the National Capital Region of Delhi and the Union Territory of Puducherry, are eligible to vote.

Counting of votes in the election will be taken up on July 20 and the result will be known the same evening — four days before the end of the term of President Pranab Mukherjee. The new President is set to take over on July 25. Officials said that polling in Parliament House will take place in Room Number 62 and MPs will vote according to tables allocated to states they represent.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress President Sonia Gandhi and party Vice-President Rahul Gandhi would vote on table number 6 as they are all MPs from Uttar Pradesh, the officials said.

They added that there will be six tables. MLAs, who have chosen to vote in Delhi, would do so from table number one.

In the electoral arithmetic, Kovind, a former Bihar Governor,



has a distinct advantage over his rival, a former Lok Sabha Speaker, with parties like Janata Dal-United (JD-U) and Biju Janata Dal (BJD), who are not allied with BJP, deciding to vote for him.

The Janata Dal-United has about 1.91 per cent of electoral college votes, while the BJD of Odisha has 2.99 per cent. In addition, the ruling TRS in Telangana (two per cent), different factions of AIADMK (5.39 per cent), YSR Congress (1.53 per cent) have also announced their backing for Kovind.

The announcement of Kovind's candidature created some fissures in the opposition

with the JD-U announcing its support for him against the stand of its Bihar allies — Rashtriya Janata Dal and Congress.

Though the Aam Aadmi Party has declared its support to Kumar, its leader H.S. Phoolka, who has handled several 1984 anti-Sikh riots cases, has said he would abstain as he cannot vote with the Congress.

The electoral college for the election comprises elected members of the two houses of Parliament as also of legislative assemblies. Election will be by secret ballot and in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote.

There are no whips issued in the presidential election. Kumar has appealed to members of the electoral college to "heed the inner voice of conscience" while casting their vote.

Lok Sabha Secretary General Anoop Mishra is the Returning Officer for the election.

The value of vote of an MP is 708 while that of an MLA varies from state to state depending on the size of its population. Officials said that each polling station has been given a specified number of ballot papers. While MPs will be given green ballot paper, MLAs will be given one that is pink. The electors have to mark the ballot only with a particular pen given

to them at the polling station along with the ballot paper.

In the last presidential election in 2012, Pranab Mukherjee had defeated P.A. Sangma and got over 69 per cent votes.

Officials said that ballot papers have reached the polling stations and requests made by the members of the electoral college about their choice of exercising ballot had been taken into consideration.

The MPs have also been informed of their serial number in the electoral college. The officials said that after end of voting, ballot boxes will start arriving in Parliament House from Monday evening and will be kept in a strong room. The Assistant Returning Officers will also furnish an account of the total votes cast in their states. They said that the seal of ballot boxes will be opened on Aug 20 in the presence of representatives of the two candidates and the observers of the poll panel. The winning candidate will be given a certificate by the Returning Officer. Officials said that special security arrangements have been made to see that the ballot papers reach Parliament directly from the airport.

## Why The Congress Must Support Nitish Kumar For Prime Minister, 2019

(Agencies) When Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance did not have the numbers to elect whoever it likes as India's next president and vice president. The BJP-NDA's various election victories since then have given them the numbers to not care about the opposition.

The election result is a foregone conclusion, but that wasn't enough for the aggressive BJP. It has gone around trying to increase Ram Nath Kovind's victory margin. When the results are announced on Thursday, Kovind could be President with 70% votes.

The impact of the victory margin will be to further the perception that there's only one party in India today, the BJP, and only one leader, Narendra Modi. The opposition does not exist.

The Presidential elections thus present a fork in the road for all opposition parties, even all

non-NDA parties. It will be another nail in the coffin for the Congress party, the chances of whose rising from the ashes like the phoenix are increasingly remote.

With only two years to go for the 2019 general elections, opposition parties need to put a new fight for mere survival, leave alone defeating the BJP. This is a very important task. A one-party monopoly from panchayat to Parliament does not make for a healthy democracy. As the saying goes, Bihar shows the way.

Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar was completely on the mark when he said the Congress was failing to set the agenda and the narrative for the opposition. It was only being reactive, he said, announcing support for the NDA nominee. When the Congress announced support for Gopalkrishna Gandhi for vice president, well before the BJP could announce their candidate,

Nitish Kumar supported Gandhi.

That isn't proof the Congress party has pulled up its socks and is now on course to being a real opposition. As a rudderless, directionless Congress sorts out its leadership succession issues, it must acknowledge it is not in a position to lead the opposition. United or not, the opposition needs a credible face with an alternative narrative. Voters today don't even know what opposition parties stand for, what they are offering.

The only way for that to change is for the Congress to take a back seat, and announce Nitish Kumar as the joint opposition prime ministerial candidate for 2019. This must be done right away. This is very likely what Nitish Kumar wants, which is why he's been flexing his muscles and threatening to join Team Modi. Sonia Gandhi's track record shows she is successful in stitching together coalitions and alliances. Surely,



Mamata Banerjee may not be willing to back Nitish for PM, and the Aam Aadmi Party may not be willing to join a Congress-led coalition. These are the differences a Sonia Gandhi-led Congress could work to iron out.

Crucial to this is timing. If this is done six months before the 2019 elections, it won't have an impact. The ideal time to do it would be just after the vice presidential elections. The Congress will have to keep aside its ego to do this. Can it see the mirror? Can it read the writing on the wall?



# BJP calls Mayawati's resignation a 'drama', Lalu comes out in support of BSP chief



(Agencies) New Delhi : The BJP on Tuesday termed BSP chief Mayawati's stormy exit+ from Parliament and her subsequent resignation+ as member of the Rajya Sabha a calculated "drama to create confusion", even as support poured in for her from some

quarters. BJP general secretary Bhupender Yadav accused Mayawati of attempting to mislead people by making an emotional pitch. He further alleged that she did not follow the parliamentary decorum while raising issues in the Upper House today. "So the question is why did she do so? She has lost people's mandate. She is likely to be in frustration. Her tenure is anyway going to end in the next session. Some people are resorting to emotional pitch in politics by doing drama so as to create confusion. People will not be misled," Yadav said. RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav applauded Mayawati's move to

quit the Rajya Sabha and said he stood with her in opposing the BJP's divisive and anti-Dalit politics.

"We support Mayawati ji and firmly oppose BJP and its attempts to oppress the voice of the marginalised. This behaviour of BJP ministers against Mayawati ji proves that BJP is an anti-Dalit party," Lalu said.

He also invited Mayawati to contest the Rajya Sabha election from Bihar. "(I've) offered and requested her (Mayawati) to be Rajya Sabha MP from Bihar to fight against atrocities and divisive agenda of BJP," the former Bihar chief minister said in a tweet. BJP leader Shrikant

Sharma lashed out at the BSP chief and alleged that after failing to contribute to UP during her tenure as chief minister, Mayawati was now attempting to sow the seeds of discord in the state. "Mayawati ji has not contributed for the development of Uttar Pradesh. I would like to ask her not try to create unrest in the peaceful state," Sharma said. Hours after threatening to quit, Mayawati tendered her resignation to the Chairman of Rajya Sabha, alleging she was not allowed to speak on the subject of attacks on Dalits and backward classes. "I was not allowed to speak on problems being faced by the Dalits,

backward class, weaker sections including farmers and labourers in Uttar Pradesh. Since I was not allowed by the ruling party to raise these issues, I have decided to resign from Rajya Sabha," she told mediapersons earlier today. She raised the Saharanpur violence and criticised the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh for handling the matter poorly.

"Since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has come to power, there have been atrocities on Dalits and minorities starting from Rohith Vemula in Hyderabad, then the Gau Rakshaks," the BSP chief asserted.

## Haseena Parkar trailer out with Shraddha Kapoor as the Godmother of Nagpada

**The first trailer of Haseena Parkar is out and Shraddha Kapoor tries her best to step into the shoes of the Godmother of Nagpada.**

(Agencies) The trailer of Shraddha Kapoor-starrer Haseena Parkar is out. Shraddha Kapoor has stepped into the shoes of Haseena Parkar for the eponymous film. Based on the life of Bombay's fearful godmother Haseena Parkar, the sister of Dawood Ibrahim, the film will try and document the highs and lows of Parkar's life. Popularly addressed as 'Haseena Aapa', the 'Godmother of Nagpada' rose to power after her husband Ibrahim Parkar was



shot dead by Arun Gawli's gang. Dawood avenged his brother-in-law's death by masterminding 1991's

famous JJ Hospital shootout. Haseena got over her grief, and rose to rule the Bombay underworld.

She took charge of Dawood's business in India and kept hoodwinking the police into believing that she was not in touch with 'Bhai'. Shraddha Kapoor's own brother Siddhant Kapoor essays the role of 'Bhai' in Haseena Parkar and the trailer gives an insight into the kind of a bond this brother and sister had.

## No Beef Shortage In Goa, Assures Manohar Parrikar. Ironic, Says Congress

**Beef is commonly consumed in parts of the state popular among tourists and also by minorities, which account for more than 30 per cent of Goa's population.**

(Agencies) New Delhi : Manohar Parrikar, the Chief Minister of Goa, said on Tuesday that to avoid beef shortage in the popular holiday state, his government had kept open the option of importing it from Karnataka.

"We have not closed the option to start getting meat from Belgaum (in Karnataka) to ensure that there is no shortage," Mr Parrikar said in the state assembly. "I can assure you that inspection of beef from the neighbouring state will be done by a proper and authorised medical doctor, and not others," he said, responding to a question by a ruling BJP lawmaker, Nilesh Cabral.

Around 2,000 kg of beef, said Mr Parrikar, was slaughtered daily at the state's only legal abattoir, the Goa Meat Complex, at Ponda, around 40 km from state capital Panaji.

"The rest (of the beef demand) is met by Karnataka," said the Chief Minister, adding: "The government does not have



any intention to restrict bringing animals for slaughter at the Goa Meat Complex from the neighbouring state." Beef is commonly consumed in parts of the state popular among tourists and also by minorities, which account for more than 30 per cent of Goa's population. Amid mob violence in many states over beef and at a time the

Centre's restrictions on cattle trade for slaughter have raised protests in the south and northeast, Mr Parrikar's comments were mocked by the Congress.

"BJP CM of Goa saying there won't be shortage of beef in the state. This is hilarious and ironical," Congress leader Rajiv Shukla told the news agency

## SC asks Centre to frame scheme to promote widow remarriage

(Agencies) New Delhi: Expressing concern over the plight of widows who are forced to live a life of destitute after being abandoned by family



members, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Centre to frame scheme to promote their remarriage to bring them in mainstream society. A bench of Justices Madan B Lokur and Deepak Gupta said that although the government had framed many schemes over the years for rehabilitation of widows but it failed to uplift their life and they continued to live a miserable life after being dumped by their family in holy places like Vrindavan. It said that the Centre must take steps to remove the social stigma attached to widowhood and also to rehabilitate them by imparting skills so that they could lead an independent life.

"There is no proposal for remarriage of widows, particularly of young widows. Because of prevailing social ethos against widows, we have to encourage them to remarry. There is no such scheme framed by you in your various policies. It must be considered," the SC bench told the Centre. The number of widows in the country has increased tremendously between 2001 and 2011. As per census data, the number of widows in the country was only 18.5 lakh, which was 0.7% of the total population in 2001, but in 2011, it went up to 5.6 crore, which was 4.6% of the entire population. India is home to the largest number of widows in the world, followed by China with around five crore widows. As per census, 0.45% of total widows are child widows in the age group of 10-19 years. 9.0% are in the age group of 20-39 years, 32% in the age group of 40-59 years and 58% are above 60 years. Despite a law banning child marriages, there are still 1.94 lakh child widows in the country. The apex court, which has been monitoring implementation of government's schemes for relief and rehabilitation for widows for the last one decade, said that ground reality had not changed over the years. It said the essential things, like food and drinking water, were not being provided to them.



# A Bunch Of Bollywood's Entitled Star Kids Just Proved Kangana Ranaut Right At The IIFA Awards

(News Agencies) On Sunday night, at the IIFA Awards in New Jersey, three privileged men with enviable pedigree in India's film industry, took digs at a self-made woman actor for speaking out against nepotism, which still makes or breaks the careers of many in Bollywood. Saif Ali Khan, son of actor Sharmila Tagore, Karan Johar, son of Dharma Productions' founder Yash Johar, and Varun Dhawan, son of director David Dhawan, came together in admitting that the issue, which was raised by Kangana Ranaut in a public interview, is alive and kicking. When Dhawan went on the stage to collect his award for the Best Actor In A Comic Role in Dishoom, Khan 'joked' that the actor had made it big in the industry because of his father. To which Dhawan quipped, "And you're here because



of your mummy." And then Johar, the co-host of the show, added, "I am here because of my Papa." Following these admissions, the trio sang out in unison: "Nepotism to guess who their barbs were directed at, but if Kangana doesn't say anything at all, she speaks a lot.)" Shaming a woman for her opinion. Check. Asking her to shut up. Check. In February this year, Ranaut had called Johar 'intolerant' towards outsiders and a 'flag bearer of nepotism' on his chat show Koffee With Karan. Since then, Johar has not been exactly kindly disposed towards her. In interviews to different media outlets over the following few weeks, Johar made his displeasure clear. In an event in London sometime later, Johar said he was done with the 31-year-old actor playing the "woman and victim card". Responding to his insinuation, in an interview with Mumbai Mirror, Ranaut said, "I use every card possible. At the workplace, it's the badass card to fight cutthroat competition. With my family and loved ones, it's the love card. When fighting the world, it's the dignity card, and for a seat in a bus, it's the woman card." In another interview, speaking about nepotism, Dhawan added his two cents. "They (that industry) are acting if their father hasn't even bought a pencil box for them," he said. "After a point, it just becomes an excuse." Clearly, not for the first time, he didn't realise that his comment was insensitive, if not abominable. It seems Johar and his ilk are still unwilling to accept that nepotism exists within the industry — or that there is anything problematic with it. Instead, along with two leading Bollywood personalities, he decided to attack Ranaut at an event where she wasn't there to respond.



## NDA's vice presidential candidate Venkaiah Naidu is a man of many parts



(News Agencies) 1. Of all the vice presidential candidates the country has had so far, Naidu has the most Rajya Sabha experience. 2. If elected, Naidu will be the first vice president to have been parliamentary affairs minister. 3. A member of the Rajya Sabha since 1998, Naidu has represented Karnataka and Rajasthan, and thus represented both the north and the south in the Rajya Sabha. 4. The son of a farmer, Naidu is a self-made grassroots level politician. 5. Naidu has served as a member of a legislative assembly as well as Parliament. 6. He has also been national president of the BJP. Thus, he has political, legislative and administrative experience. 7. By nominating Naidu for the office of vice president, the BJP continues its tradition of nominating individuals who have either served in the states or who have been a voice of the states by serving in the Council of States. 8. In 1971, Naidu was president of the students union at his alma mater VR College which is located in Nellore in Andhra Pradesh. 9. During the Emergency, Naidu was arrested under the provisions of the Maintenance of Internal Security Act. 10. Naidu is said to be fond of one-sentence witticisms and alliteration.

So classy, dear privileged men of Bollywood. They had to take down Ranaut for speaking up, for calling out the dynamics of a system they are all products of. In case they didn't know it, this is exactly what privilege looked like. It's not exactly a secret that getting a leg up in Bollywood is an enormous uphill battle for an outsider. No matter the talent, the first break matters. Whether or not the remarks by Johar and others were insulting to Ranaut, they proved that Kangana was right all along. Nepotism exists in the industry and the people who refuse to acknowledge that the competition was never been on a level-playing field, only exhibit their blindness to the blessings of their class and family lineage. Many on Twitter pointed this out.





Sonakshi Sinha (above) caught the attention by pulling off a Beyoncé-inspired look (left).



Shahid Kapoor & Alia Bhatt (right) won the Best Actor & Best Actress awards.



# Bollywood's BIG NIGHT in New Jersey



Shilpa Shetty (above) and Taapsee Pannu (right) at the star-studded event. Pannu was named woman of the year.

**I**t was a big night for Shahid Kapoor and Alia Bhatt, who took home the top acting honours for their roles in drugs-themed drama *Udta Punjab* at Bollywood's awards night in New Jersey, which saw *Neerja* being named the best picture.

Film industry veterans Anupam Kher and Shabana Azmi won the best supporting actor and actress award for *M S Dhoni: The Untold Story* and *Neerja*, respectively.

Filmmaker Karan Johar's *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil* dominated the music categories. The best music director award went to Pritam, the best playback singer male award was given to Amit Mishra for Bulleya and Amitabh Bhattacharya won the best lyricist award for Channa mereya. The best playback singer female award was shared by Tulsi Kumar for Soch na sake (Airlift) and Kanika Kapoor for Da da dasse (*Udta Punjab*).

Disha Patani and Punjabi star Diljit Dosanjh won their first ever IIFA awards for their debut Hindi films *M S Dhoni* and *Udta Punjab*, respectively.

Actress Katrina Kaif took the stage and grooved on songs like Afghan jalebi, Galti se

mistake, Dhoom machale and Kaala chashma.

*Pink* actress Taapsee Pannu was named woman of the year. The hosts for the ceremony were Saif Ali Khan and Johar, who had the audience in splits with their funny one-liners and banter. However, it was not all smooth-sailing for the duo as the audience booed at them several times during the show at the jam-packed MetLife stadium.

Unlike previous editions, no international stars were part of the IIFA celebrations this year.

Agencies



West Indies cricket player Dwayne Bravo (above)

Katrina Kaif performs at the event.

Disha Patani (left) and Abhay Deol (right).





# The IIFA AWARDS Brought the best of Bollywood with a Star Studded Awards Show!



New York: The celebrated IIFA Awards took over the city of New York with a dazzling awards show bringing together the biggest names of Bollywood in celebration of Indian Cinema. Giving Indian cinema a global platform, the Awards was held at the iconic MetLife Stadium at New York, USA.

This year the IIFA Awards stage saw Bollywood's most dynamic duo- the talented stars Karan Johar and Saif Ali Khan - host India's most awaited awards ceremony. The pair amazed the crowd present with their quick wit and zingers as leaving them in splits with their amusing one-liners and on-stage chemistry.

The IIFA Awards, the finale of the IIFA Weekend saw a host of stellar performances and acts. The show kicked off with Alia Bhatt performing on the Awards stage for the very first time since her debut in Bollywood five years ago. The night featured spellbinding performances by Bollywood superstars- Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif, Shahid Kapoor, Sushant Singh Rajput and Kriti Sanon, to name a few.

Bollywood's Youth Icon, Varun Dhawan performed on the IIFA Awards stage with a stunning performance celebrating his father's legacy in Bollywood. This year, IIFA presented the Woman of the Year Award to actress Taapsee Pannu and The Myntra Style Icon to Alia Bhatt. The award night included legendary actor Anil Kapoor and Sudhanshu Vats, Group CEO - Viacom18 honoring A.R. Rahman for his illustrious career and work as they celebrated his 25 years in the industry.

The NEXA IIFA Awards Powered by VIVO to broadcast on COLORS today, Sunday, July 16th with the Green Carpet at 6pm followed by the Awards at 7pm

The NEXA IIFA Awards Powered by VIVO aired LIVE exclusively on Saturday, July 15, starting at 8:00 p.m.

ET/5:00 p.m. PT in North America and the Caribbean on cable, satellite and digital Pay Per View via in Demand, Vubiquity, DISH and DIRECTV in the USA, Bell, Rogers, SHAW, SaskTel and Telus in Canada, along with the Flippis App and web site [www.IIFAawardsppv.com](http://www.IIFAawardsppv.com) in both the USA and Canada. The suggested retail price is \$39.95. The live telecast is distributed exclusively via Integrated Sports Media.

Lycamobile – Presenting Sponsor, McDonalds - Associate Sponsor, NYC (Mayors office) - Host Destination, NewYorkBannerStands & Print Early – Printing Partner, Pierre Précieuse – Gifting Partner and Arya Dance Academy – Dance Company Partner.

The NEXA IIFA Awards will broadcast on COLORS – the Broadcast Partner, with the Title Sponsor NEXA, Weekend Title Sponsor – EROS NOW, Powered by VIVO, Cause Partner- WOOSH Washing Expert, Styled by Myntra, Official Airline Partner – AIR INDIA, Thought Leadership Partner – VEDANTA, Brand Partner – Closeup, Carnival and Ease My Trip and Franchise India, Jewelry Partner – Nakshatraworld.com, Outdoor partners – Bright Outdoor Media and JR Creations, Multiplex Partner –PVR

Adding to the excitement of the Awards night, International Indian Film Academy Awards launched its brand new line of Official IIFA Merchandise partnered with New York based Easy Partners, a boutique licensing and merchandising company. The eye-catching IIFA Merchandise featuring a diverse range of T-Shirts, Caps, Key Rings, Hooded Sweatshirts, Tote Bags, Magnet, Ticket Holders stylized with IIFA's logo and Mugs showcasing IIFA 2017 in New York were available at the famous MetLife Stadium during the show and also exclusively on the IIFA website on <https://www.jsrdirect.com/webstores/iifa>

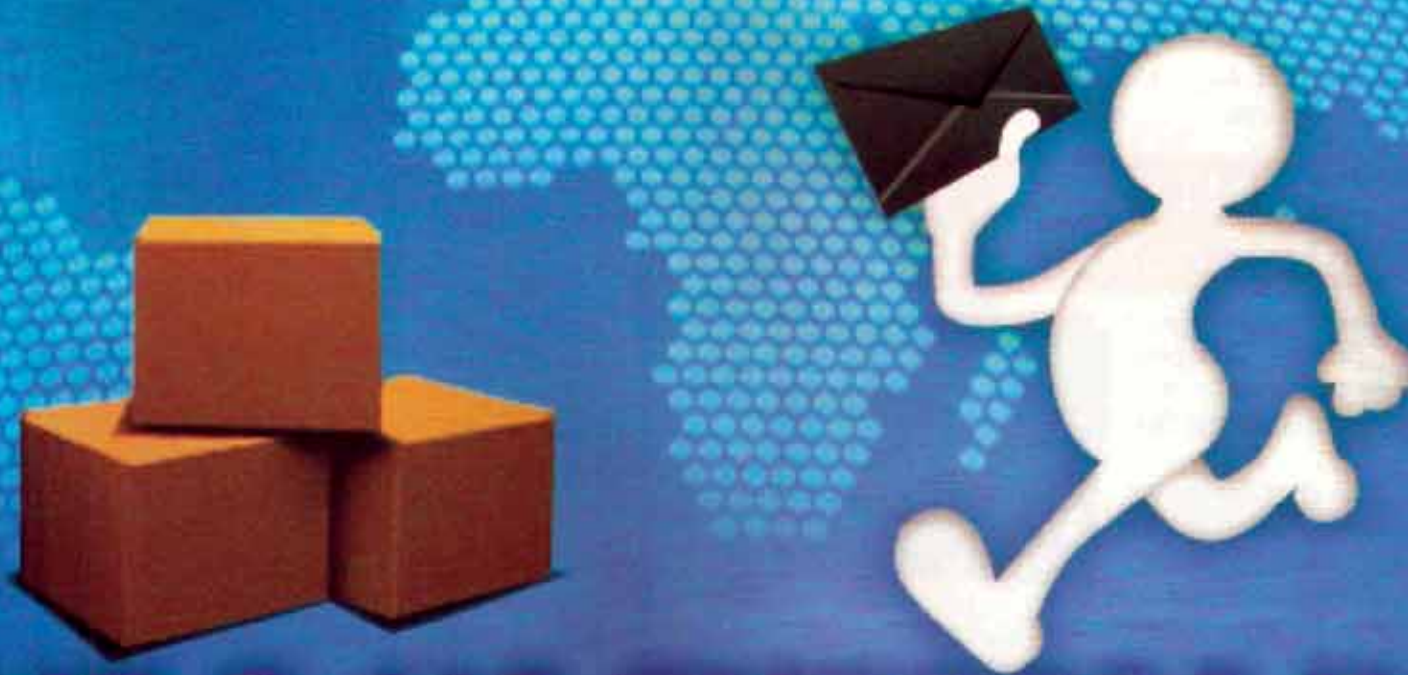


## The IIFA Awards Winners

**Best Picture- Neerja**  
**Best Story- Ayesha Devitre Dhillon, Shakun Batra (Kapoor & Sons)**  
**Best Performance in a comic role- Varun Dhawan (Dishoom)**  
**Best Direction- Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury (Pink)**  
**Best Actor in a leading role Female- Alia Bhatt (Udta Punjab)**  
**Best Actor in a leading role Male- Shahid Kapoor (Udta Punjab)**  
**Best Lyricist- Amitabh Bhattacharya (Channa Mereya)**  
**Best Music Director- Pritam (Ae Dil Hai Mushkil)**  
**Best Negative Role- Jim Sarbh (Neerja)**  
**Best Playback Singer Female- Kanika Kapoor (Udta Punjab- Da Da Dasse) and Tulsi Kumar (Airlift- Soch Na Sake)**  
**Best Playback singer Male- Amit Mishra (Ae Dil Hai Mushkil- Bulleya)**  
**Supporting Actor Female- Shabana Azmi (Neerja)**  
**Supporting Actor Male- Anupam Kher (M.S. Dhoni)**  
**Myntra Style Icon Award- Alia Bhatt**  
**Woman of the Year- Taapsee Pannu**  
**Best Debut Male- Diljit Dosanjh (Udta Punjab)**  
**Best Debut Female- Disha Patani (M.S. Dhoni)**



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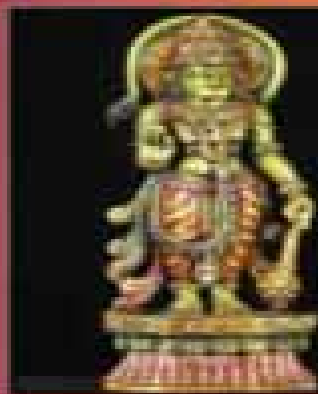
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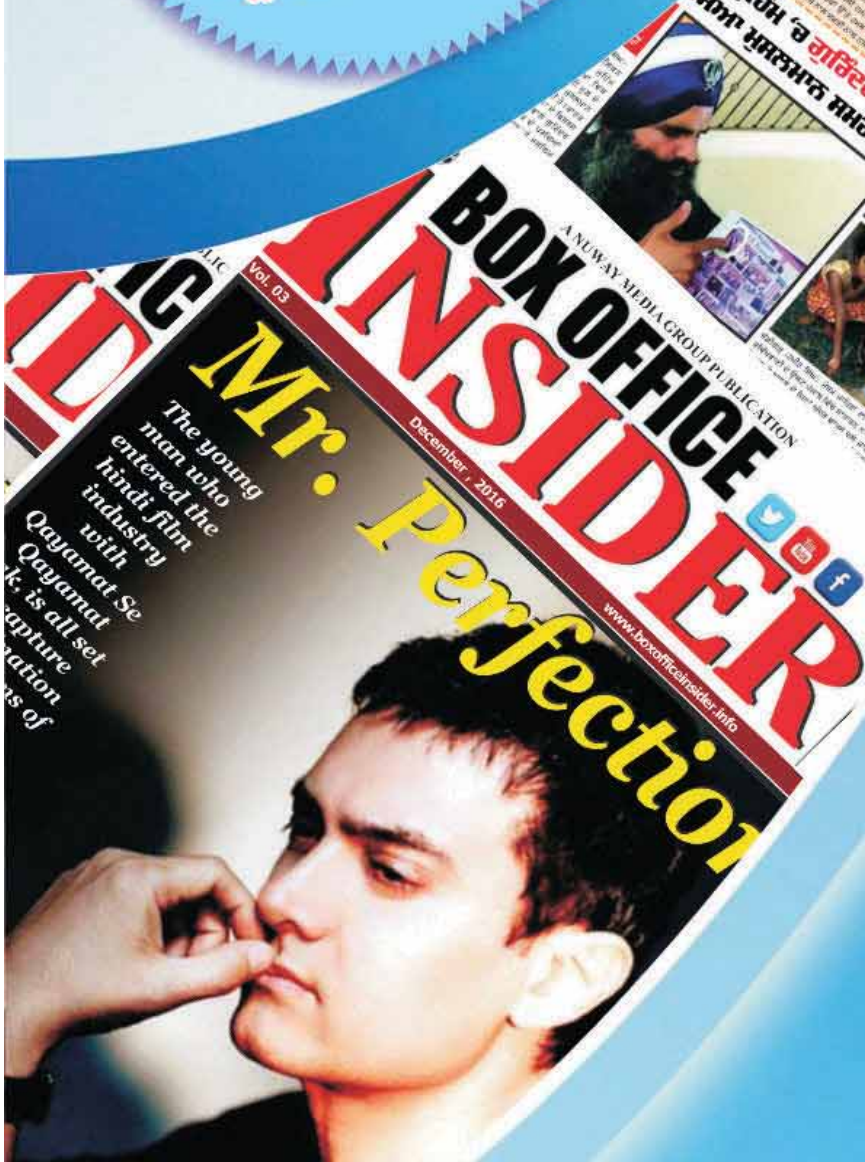
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# Modi's 'political masterstroke'?

## After being raised in a 'mud hut' new president Kovind promises to help India's poorest farmers and workers



(News Agencies) As the once ceremonial position, Ram Nath Kovind was elected by the Indian Parliament and state legislatures in voting held Monday, with the results announced Thursday. Kovind is a former governor of the eastern state of Bihar and a longtime associate of the

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or National Volunteer Corps, a Hindu group that has often been accused of stoking religious hatred against Muslims.

The group is the ideological parent of Prime Minister Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which controls enough seats in federal and state legislatures to push its favored candidate.

Kovind pledged to help poor farmers and workers as he recalled his childhood living in a mud hut in a northern Indian village.

'I never dreamed of this position. This was not the ambition of my life,' Kovind

said, thanking those who voted for him.

The president's role is mainly ceremonial. He is bound by the advice of the Cabinet led by the prime minister, who is the chief executive.

He will replace Pranab Mukherjee, a former senior member of the Congress party, on July 25.

He received 65.5 percent of votes against his opponent, Meira Kumar of the Congress party, a former speaker of the lower house of India's Parliament. Both Kovind and Kumar belong to the Dalit community, which is at the lowest end of the complex caste hierarchy in Hinduism.

For the first time, a right-wing man will enter the most auspicious office of Indian democracy and don its highest Constitutional position. During the last NDA regime under Atal Bihari Vajpayee, an illustrious and non-political luminary APJ Abdul Kalam had entered this office on NDA ticket. The choice then was underlined by political sagacity; this time, the choice was laden with political messages and muscle of the saffron brigade.

**1** Counting happened under the supervision of Lok Sabha secretary general Anoop Mishra, who is also the Returning Officer.

**2** Counting of votes started at 11 am in room number 62 on the first floor of the Parliament House.

**3** Total of 32 polling stations: one in Parliament House's room no 62; one each in state legislative assemblies.

**4** First ballot box to be opened was of Parliament House.

**5** Ballot boxes from states counted in alphabetical order.

**6** Total eight rounds of counting.

**7** There was cross voting in UP, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Assam and Goa.

UPA candidate Meira Kumar managed to get **34.35** per cent (**367,314** votes).

BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) nominee Ram Nath Kovind, former Bihar governor, won the presidential polls with **65.6** per cent or **702,044** electoral college votes (2/3rd votes).

Andhra did not cast a single vote for Meira Kumar (total votes: 175; cast: 174; Kovind got 171; three became invalid)

Gujarat, where the Congress has 57 MLAs, UPA nominee Kumar got only votes from only 49 legislators

**8** Ballot boxes opened in the presence of the representatives of the two candidates and observers from the Election Commission.

**9** Ram Nath Kovind, 14th President, will be the second Dalit President of India after KR Narayanan.

**10** In the last presidential polls in 2012, Pranab Mukherjee had defeated PA Sangma by over 69 per cent votes. Sangma was supported by BJP.

NEELAM SANJEEVA REDDY most one-sided as he got **100** per cent votes; closest race was VV Giri 48 per cent.

I never aspired to be the President. My win is a message to those discharging their duties with integrity. It's an evidence of the greatness of Indian democracy.



Congress has 24 MLAs in Rajasthan and Meira Kumar ji polled 34 votes. Clearly, even some BJP MLAs have an 'inner voice'. Time for Vasundhara ji to introspect.

— SACHIN PILOT, Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee president



Congratulations to Ram Nath Kovind. Our fight for a plural, harmonious, equitable and just India continues.

— SITARAM YECHURY, CPI-M general secretary

Congratulations Ram Nath Kovind ji. Wishing you a great term as President of India.

— NAHOL GANDHI, Congress vice-president



Congratulations to Sh. Ram Nath Kovind ji for becoming President of India.

— ARVIND KEJRIWAL, Aam Aadmi Party chief



Congratulations to Ram Nath Kovind ji, who will be our next President.

— MAMATA BANERJEE, Trinamool Congress chief

I congratulate Ram Nath Kovind ji for becoming the President of India. My best wishes are with Kovind ji as it has fallen upon him to behold the Constitution in letter and spirit in these challenging times. I want to thank all the members of the collegium, Sonia Gandhi ji and leaders of all the political parties who have supported me. My fight for secularism, the oppressed and the marginalised continues. I thank all my well-wishers for their support and good wishes.

— MEIRA KUMAR, Opposition presidential candidate

Heartfelt congratulations to Ram Nath Kovind ji for becoming President of India. Congratulations to Meira Kumar for the courage she has shown.

— LALU PRASAD YADAV, RJD chief





# Tapsee Pannu, Kangana Ranaut Incidents Show What Happens When Women Speak Up Against Powerful Men

Have Indian commercial films ever displayed an unhealthy obsession with a woman's midriff or her navel? Yes. Actually, make that a 'YES'. A shot that has the camera literally crawling over an actress' navel, like it is an important plot point that must be magnified lest the viewers missed it, is staple in every other film. With the advent of 'item songs', cameras zooming in and out of various parts of a woman's body became a ritual of sorts. Some of us have often wondered that if filmmakers paid as much attention to scripts as they do to capturing the fifty shades of the female navel, we'd probably have better films in the country.

So when Tapsee Pannu publicly pointed out how ridiculous this practice is, some of us dropped everything -- from coffee to Tinder dates -- to give her a virtual hug. And from there, things just went downhill -- for Pannu and anyone who cannot see what good a disembodied female abdomen on 70mm does except feed the male gaze.

Saying how all her roles in films in southern India required her to do nothing else other than look a certain way, Pannu had made a sarcastic observation on what women actors like her were expected to focus on. "If I knew about this in my research before I'd gone to the South I would've worked on my navel. I clearly didn't. The first day, they started with a song itself. And they are shooting a song which is [about] the obsession over midriff," Pannu said, in response to one panelist's question on south Indian films' obsession with the navel. The film she was referring to is Jhummandi Naadam, a 2010 Telugu film directed by K Raghavendra Rao. For the uninitiated, Rao is considered the wizard of commercial success in the Telugu film industry. He is credited with having made over 100 films across the 50 years he has spent in

the industry. Some sources say that at least 90 of those films were commercial successes. Rao was also the man behind a dozen campy Hindi films across late 80s, 90s and early 2000. Some of them -- like Himmatwala (1983), starring Jeetendra and Sridevi -- were runaway hits. Rao, who has retired from film-making now, was pretty much the man who film industries had to turn to if they wanted to set the cash registers ringing -- or go berserk.

Now, if that man decided that a coconut must be thrown at a woman's midriff -- and the faceless midriff be caught in action with the coconut for cinematic success -- just who has to the right to question that? Not many people who are a part of the industry he ruled and especially not a woman he launched in a film.

According to reports, that's what legions on Rao fans told Pannu in the comments section of the video and elsewhere on social media. And then, she hurried to tender an apology. "I didn't intend to hurt anyone. I wanted to make fun of myself and how my debut film happened to me. It took me a little while to understand that what I said was wrong. So I really want to apologise, if I hurt anyone's sentiment. But trust me, I didn't intend to and just wanted to make fun of myself," she said in a video she posted on social media.

Now, go over Pannu's comments and try finding the bit she should have apologised for. Chances are, you'll spot a dinosaur more readily than finding factual inconsistency in Pannu's comments. The actor was merely stating facts. Yet, she was called a 'backstabber', 'hypocrite' and Bollywood upstart, for calling out Rao.

Film buff and reviewer Manju Latha Kalanidhi, who works with The New Indian Express, confirms that everything that Pannu said was true. While some chose to call Raghavendra

Rao's tropes for what they were -- that is, sleazy -- others preferred to garb it as his 'style'. "His signature scenes include ... mandatorily, a bare midriff, a decorated navel, fruits and flowers being hurled at it ... in slow motion," says Kalanidhi.

"In a movie called Pandurangadu, which stars Tabu, actor Balakrishna throws an orange at her midriff/chest. And then grapes at her navel. Again in Pellisandadi ... a parrot throws a guava on Ravali," Kalanidhi adds, directing me to Google "Raghavendra Rao fruit songs." Surprise, surprise, the said category is one that is searched widely on YouTube if the auto-fills are anything to go by.

were's a song from Allari Mogudu, where actor Ramya Krishna makes an orgasmic face as Mohan Babu, her male co-star, hurls an orange at her midriff (!).

To be fair, Pannu's comment that films in south India required her to look pretty and nothing else, while Bollywood presented her with challenging roles that tested her acting holds good only in the context of her personal experience. The Hindi film industry, as opposed to what Pannu made it out to be, has been following exactly the same formula of success -- by treating heroines as pretty props -- for ages. The number of movies in the Hindi film industry that require women to not behave like actual human beings with brains far outnumber the ones that treat actresses with the same respect as actors. Exactly what Pannu's allegation against Rao seems to be.

There's also the question of agency. Pannu, most likely, had chosen to do those films and one can argue that if they reviled her, she could have chosen to not do them. However, that doesn't take away her right to look back and be critical of what she had been party to. And it doesn't at all alter the reality that women are



relentlessly objectified in Indian film industries.

But it is clear that there's a price to be paid for having an opinion in the film industry, especially if you're a woman. Pannu's 'clarification' -- which she posted on Facebook -- has her say sorry several times over. She wonders if she has hurt anyone's 'feelings', in which case, she says repeatedly, it was unintentional.

So why is Pannu apologetic about stating facts? Kalanidhi points out that the hero-worship that male stars enjoy in south Indian film industries can be intimidating, especially when you are not a highly-billed male actor yourself. In fact, some of Rao's fans would expect that Pannu treat the fact that she starred in one of his films and got hit by a fruit on the navel as an accomplishment. Now that sentence may make no logical sense to some of us, but fandom is not known to have much regard for logic. Just see what happened to Sona Mohapatra or Twinkle Khanna because they called out or joked about Salman Khan in Bollywood.

An expert on Telugu cinema, who categorically asked to be not named, said that he feared Pannu's career in Telugu films, and

perhaps in south Indian popular films, could well be over if she had not apologised. "No one will touch her. No actor, director, producer will want her in a project. What she said was absolutely right. Raghavendra Rao's movies are, in fact, popular, for these aspects. But nobody dares speak against the likes of Rao here. Things could go really downhill for her in the industry," he said.

Incidentally, Rao's son-in-law is Shobu Yarlagadda, the man who produced the Baahubali movies and, according to sources, is the biggest producer in the Telugu film industry right now.

Though there have been no reports of repercussions from the film industry yet - neither Rao nor any important film personality has come out in criticism of Pannu -- the pattern of how such industries work is enough to suggest that Pannu could be in trouble, sources say. One can only hope that these assumptions are proven wrong.

Just look at Bollywood for reference. Kangana Ranaut, several weeks back, had in jest, suggested Karan Johar indulges in nepotism. It started a war of words in the media and social media. Among other

things, Johar accused Ranaut of using the 'woman card', and then, wrote an editorial defending 'nepotism'. One would have expected it to have stopped there. But no, Johar, along with two other products of film families -- Saif Ali Khan and Varun Dhawan -- mocked Ranaut on stage at the IIFA awards.

Ranaut is facing a serious allegation of demanding writing credits for Simran, when, her opponents say, she deserves none. In her defence, she told HuffPost India that it is difficult to be a woman in the film industry, especially one who demands her due and calls out malpractices. While it is not fair to take sides on this particular case, Ranaut's statements ring true in regard with the Johar episode. Even after facing a barrage of insinuations and comments from Johar and others, Ranaut didn't back off, but held her own, never apologising for what she had said. For hundreds of Indian women trying to negotiate patriarchal spaces every day, Ranaut's confidence comes across as a flicker of hope. In the same spirit, one must appreciate Pannu's candour and hope that women like her have the strength to call out traditions of sexism that have gone unchallenged till now.



# Arun Jaitley is too busy with finance ministry, Narendra Modi must find a full-time defence minister

so a rejigged council of ministers will have enough time to deliver on critical reforms in all spheres, especially economic and defence.

File image of Narendra Modi and Arun Jaitley. PTI File image of Narendra Modi and Arun Jaitley. On the economic front, the Modi government has far more battles left to fight. Beyond the introduction of two of its most critical reforms – roll out of Goods and Services Tax (GST) and bankruptcy code and a series of incremental reforms such as taking ahead the Aadhar-linked Direct benefit Transfer (DBT) programme and

subsidy rationalisation – the Modi government needs to resolve bad debts in the banking sector, push ahead the privatisation agenda of ailing PSUs and banks and see through reforms in land and labour.

In the finance ministry, Arun Jaitley has done a fairly good job in taking the lead to generate consensus for making the GST happen. His initiative to make the bankruptcy code a reality too has been a crucial fillip to the economy. However, there hasn't been much luck in addressing the banking sector problems so far. Economic growth remains anaemic. Jaitley, as finance

minister, has all along been struggling to impart the kind of confidence in private investors to resume the investment cycle. Bad loans remain a major challenge and the accompanying capital burden has the potential to disrupt the government's budget calculations in a big way. This year and next are crucial for the economy which warrants his undivided attention in the finance ministry. Similarly, new challenges are emerging for the defence ministry, with China upping its ante on the Sikkim border and Pakistan continuing to escalate tensions. Defence of the country has always been a

full-time job, more so now with the situation on western and eastern borders as volatile as it is. One can't be too sure if relying on a part-time defence minister would suffice. The Modi government has managed to bring the reform momentum back to the economy in its initial three years of rule after a decade long policy paralysis and corruption. The victory on GST roll out has offered hopes of more reforms happening in the remaining two years. The signals given by the cabinet to privatise Air India suggest this positive outlook of the government. The remaining two years is the time to give a final

push to the rest of the reform agenda. Privatisation of state-run banks and other ailing PSUs, bad loan resolution, creating the right framework for small entrepreneurs and pursuing fresh private investments should remain the top of the agenda. At the same time, the government will have to ready the security establishment to face the emerging challenges from across the borders.

A minister over-burdened with part-finance, part-defence may have worked so far but may not be ideal to face the challenges ahead. Modi needs full time ministers for both these critical ministries.

## *Air India's debt pile* **Let Obamacare fail - Trump's new plan**

It has reported a three-fold jump in operational profit for FY17, largely on the back of benign fuel prices, with other costs remaining nearly the same.

In the last few weeks, a lot of chatter and public discourse around Air India has been about its potential disinvestment and who are the interested private players likely to board the Maharaja. The biggest hurdle for any potential buyer of Air India continues to be its debt pile – in fact, it is the inability of the government to lighten Air India's debt burden which is pushing it to consider divestment in the first place. So what does Air India have to pay each year to service this debt? As per Sinha's reply, this figure is about Rs 6,000 crore. This means Air India has to pay about Rs 500 crore each month in interest or about Rs 16.5 crore each day of the year as interest outgo. The total debt on the airline's books as of March this year is Rs 48,876.81 crore. No wonder then that IndiGo, which has already expressed interest in bidding for the overseas operations of the airline, has clearly said it does not plan to take on the airline's debt.

When three Rajya Sabha MPs wanted to

know the reasons for Air India facing financial pressure and earning less profit despite having more resources compared to private airlines, MoS Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha said in the reply today "Air India is facing financial pressure and earning less profit due to high debt burden as an offshoot of past accumulated losses. The debt servicing is at around Rs 6,000 crore per annum."

That debt is killing Air India is evident also from an analysis done by ICICI Securities' Anshuman Deb, who said in a note to clients some days back that the operational cost structure of Air India (ex-debt servicing and depreciation) has already seen a turnaround. He based his observations on lower fuel costs in the fiscal year ending March 2017. From 43 percent of the total cost in FY15, fuel expenses fell to just 23 percent of the total cost structure of Air India in FY17. Or to put this in perspective, from nearly half the cost structure comprising fuel expenses, Air India's fuel costs were around just a fourth of the total cost structure in FY17. This single factor has helped the airline generate an EBITDAR of anywhere between 15-20 percent in FY17 versus a

measly 2 percent in FY15. But since the debt pile refuses has not been reduced at all during this period, the interest portion continues to bog down Air India.

Global aviation consultancy CAPA had said recently that the government will have take close to Rs 58,000 crore (non-aircraft debt, equity invested till date) haircut to make AI divestment viable and feasible for Investors. It also said that once the balance sheet has been cleaned up, CAPA expects significant interest in AI.

In another reply, Jayant Sinha said the airline posted a provisional operating profit of Rs 300 crore in FY17, three times the number it claimed in the previous fiscal. Air India has seen a substantial increase in revenue for the first time in four years last fiscal at Rs 22,146 crore versus Rs 20,524.56 crore in FY16 or about eight percent higher. Net loss was the lowest in four years at Rs 3,643 crore, 42 percent down from the figure in 2013-14 at Rs 6,279.6 crore. The total accumulated losses of Air India as per the audited accounts on 31st March 2016 were Rs 41,380.45 crore.

Late last month, the

Union Cabinet gave an in-principle nod to strategic disinvestment of government's stake in Air India but it is long road to privatisation of the national carrier, where government is the sole owner and has yet not taken a call on how much equity to offer to a potential strategic investor. The entire disinvestment process could take anywhere up to 18 months.

The Cabinet decided to form a Group of Ministers (GoM) to decide, among other things, the quantum of equity to be offered, ways to deal with Air India's "unsustainable" debt and housing some of the airline's assets into a shell company. This group will also decide whether to demerge three of the airline's profitable subsidiaries and do a strategic sale of these. Also, a very crucial piece of the Air India jigsaw will fall in place when this group decides if foreign investors and/or foreign airlines can also bid for the national carrier. The group is headed by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and also comprise the minister of civil aviation besides others. It is slated to hold its first meeting this evening.

So will the government bite the bullet and

completely exit the Maharaja? This is one possibility and perhaps the only sensible thing to do. The three options on the table are a 100 percent sell-off, a 74 percent stake sale or a 51 percent stake sale. This means in any scenario, the government will cease to be a majority owner of the airline.

An official close to developments had told Firstpost earlier that it is possible to break up the airline into two distinct parts. One is the airline itself with aircraft and related assets. The second part comprises Air India's subsidiaries and the real estate. This official had said that the sensible way to get maximum value in this disinvestment process would be to sell off just the airline to a prospective buyer. The government could then simultaneously dispose off the subsidiaries and real estate for a total consideration of close to Rs 20,000-21,000 crore. This official had said that the sale of standalone Air India can happen only when any prospective buyer agrees to bear about Rs 20,000 crore of aircraft loans and another Rs 6,000-7,000 crore of working capital loans.

Explaining how your dastardly plan will go down seldom works for cartoon villains, however, and it may not be the best strategy for presidents either. By telling Americans he's going to let the US healthcare system collapse in order to rally support for an eventual fix, he's essentially taking responsibility for anything bad that happens in the coming days. Despite his protestations that he won't "own" what happens next, he just stuffed the receipt in his pocket. Premiums go up? Insurance providers pull out of state individual markets? Democrats can say it's part of the president's plan to sabotage the system. All the while Mr Trump's opponents can point to the Congressional Budget Office's findings that, without White House meddling, the insurance markets would be relatively stable. Then again, at this point, the president has few good options. His promises to eventually work with Democrats are undermined by his pledges to defeat them at the ballot box next year. He clearly can't move forward with Republicans alone. All that's left is to walk away and hope for the worst.



# Sikkim standoff

*China's rapid escalation is limiting India's diplomatic options; can New Delhi hold its nerve?*

Such an eventuality will send a larger message to the world that crossing swords against Xi Jinping's China will draw severe consequences. The underlying declaration is that if an aspiring major power like India can be subdued, smaller nations in the South Asian Indian Ocean region should just shut their trap.

Curiously, India's firm refusal to withdraw the troops coupled with its reticence and focus on finding a diplomatic solution seems to have hardened Chinese resolve. There are two ways of looking at this.

One, China was well aware of the consequences of its action in trying to build a road and altering the status quo at the contested Doka La tri-junction, and has mapped its and India's responses down to the last detail. In this scenario, chances of a military conflict are comparatively less because it assumes a degree of premeditation. Viewed from this spectrum, China's muscle flexing is more sound than bite and is part of a psychological warfare designed to intimidate India.

Two, China miscalculated New Delhi's resolve to secure the tri-junction area that leads to India's greatest strategic vulnerability in Siliguri Corridor. Viewed from this spectrum, Chinese policymakers may have underestimated India's growing assertiveness and confidence in facing up to China. The series of actions Beijing has been taking since would then assume a greater degree of lethality, because it wouldn't like to have been surprised. It is easy to contextualise Chinese action, aimed at achieving the twin objectives of addressing its own strategic vulnerability by widening Chumbi Valley while targeting India's weakest spot.

Chinese actions at the Sino-Indian border is guided by three clear principles. One, it wants to sustain its power differential with India. Two, it wants to be recognized as the more dominant force. Three (arising out of the first two) it believes that altering the status quo is its exclusive right, and lesser powers must be accommodating. There are many reasons behind China's doctrinal approach to border disputes, not the least among those is its penchant for reinterpreting history to define its present.

It is easy to see why it feels

outraged at India's resolve, and is going out of its way to preserve the first two principles. As previously noted, the buttons of escalation are being rapidly pressed. Latest media reports indicate that China conducted a 'live fire-drill' on the Tibet plateau near the Arunchal Pradesh border and the 11-hour exercise involving howitzers, anti-tank grenades, anti-aircraft artillery and mobile communication systems was carried out by one of its two mountain brigades.

A more worrying signal emerged on Tuesday with The Indian Express' Shubhajit Roy reporting that China last week conducted a closed-door meeting with foreign diplomats in Beijing to convey a message that "PLA troops have been waiting patiently at the plateau but will not wait for an indefinite period." According to the report, the

## Hollow power: India is on a path to decline and that is why China is challenging it

one economist believes it may have permanently damaged the country's informal sector. After demonetisation came changed rules for cattle slaughter which essentially constitute a form of trade war against Muslims, Dalits and the meat export industry at large. The subsequent introduction of GST has bred widespread confusion; one businessman simply warns that "small traders will die".

Alongside the effects of recent decision-making, India has a jobs crisis, an education crisis and a skills crisis. PM Modi claimed his leadership would yield 100 million manufacturing jobs by 2022; around 135,000 materialised in eight sectors in 2015 – far shorter than the 12 million that reportedly enter the workforce each year. The government has simply abandoned the goal of training 500 million Indians as part of its Skill India plans.

The education sector looks almost irredeemable. A committee appointed by the ministry of human resource development has conceded that "large segments of the education sector...face a serious crisis of credibility in terms of the quality of education which they provide, as well as the worth of the degrees which they confer on students." There are simply too many bad teachers in government schools, many of whom get their jobs through patronage or corruption. Students are not failed in schools and colleges for

envoys have relayed the memo to their Indian and Bhutanese counterparts. Simultaneously, Chinese state-controlled media has been keeping up the rhetoric with the latest Global Times editorial declaring that China isn't afraid of war. Under the circumstances, what are India's options? While New Delhi would like nothing more than to revert to pre-June 2017 status at the zone, the levers of escalation are not in its hands. NSAAjit Doval's visit to Beijing for BRICS Summit

political reasons – since parents would be angry if governments provided their children bad education to begin with and then failed them. India thus has millions of youth with college degrees often lacking foundational skills let alone employable ones. That's the reason why, as Rajesh Mahapatra writes, "no one any longer speaks of India's youth bulge as a demographic dividend. It is, as we speak, fast turning out to be a liability of monstrous consequences in the time to come."

If challenges in the economy, education and skills weren't enough there is now an active attack on India's social cohesion, the one thing that held the country together despite all its problems. The BJP's rule has seen a spike in hate speech directed at Muslims, leading to their targeting and lynching. The Indian Muslim is being constantly represented as a hate figure, with a view to snap the associational life between Hindus and Muslims. All this corrodes social life and undermines economic productivity – a divided and fear-ridden country is hardly in a position to pool its energies and talents to tackle present and future challenges.

Several other fissures have come to the surface since 2014. In addition to intensifying Hindu-Muslim strife, there is the North-South divide which we are increasingly seeing because of

later this month would be crucial and he would look to engage his Chinese counterpart. Other diplomatic channels are still available but it isn't clear whether India possesses the wherewithal to engage with China while not acceding to Beijing's precondition. India doesn't have a treaty with the US, and a transactional Washington under Donald Trump is unlikely to come to its aid in the event of a war. Moreover, China's considerable geopolitical

the NDA's attempts to impose the Hindi language. There is continuing conflict in Kashmir and great restiveness among different social groups elsewhere: Patels and Dalits in Gujarat, Rajputs in Rajasthan, and farmers in various states, including Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

Not only is society polarised by identity politics, the Modi government is also instinctively anti-intellectual and waging a war against knowledge, particularly targeting the liberal arts and social sciences. There is not a single form of independent intellectual endeavour that is potentially not under threat in India now, either by regulation, censorship or physical intimidation – be it a play, film, comedy sketches, documentaries, political discussions in universities or academic publications.

This is a disturbing trend with real implications because the Modi government is letting its antipathy toward liberal intellectuals undermine the transmission of social science knowledge in India – which is indispensable for a society to understand itself and the world. The problem here is two-fold. Progressive intellectuals dominate the social science scene in India, perhaps not in number but in the standing they have in their disciplines. On the contrary, there is no credible right-wing intellectual ecosystem in India – in that one

A look at the territorial disputes in the Himalayas



influence arising out of massive economic investments in nearly every corner of the globe would force many nations to stay neutral in the case of a Sino-Indian military conflict. Foreign policy is not a matter of principle. Therefore, for New Delhi, it will ultimately boil down to a battle of nerves. Will it give in, or manage to persuade China against using force? This question may be answered sooner than many in India are ready to admit.

can scarcely find historians or sociologists sympathetic to the BJP who are capable of being published by university presses, the gold standard of academic publishing. Rather than treat progressive intellectuals as a national resource, the BJP government is hell bent on marginalising them, thereby threatening to snuff out forms of knowledge that have developed with some difficulty over the decades. If India is struggling with its quality of education to begin with, it makes little sense to undercut whatever little intellectual capital it has. The Modi government may well note that in the US, a few years ago, around 58-66 percent of social science professors identified themselves as liberals, only 5-8 percent as conservative. Liberal intellectuals are often critical of America and yet its governments do not interfere in academic life as universities advance knowledge and ultimately America's cultural power.

The real source of India's weakness at the moment is that the Modi government is concentrating its energies on achieving political and ideological dominance, rather than addressing the country's glaring deficits. Politics of polarisation has taken precedence over governmental efforts to facilitate cooperation among citizens that can yield productive outcomes.



# US President Trump Takes Hard Step, Lists Pakistan Among Countries That Provide 'Safe Haven' To Terrorists

India, it said, continued to experience attacks, "including by Maoist insurgents and Pakistan-based terrorists".

Indian authorities continued to blame Pakistan for cross-border attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, it said.

"In January, India experienced a terrorist attack against an Indian military facility in Pathankot, Punjab, which was blamed by authorities on JeM. Over the course of 2016, the Government of India sought to deepen counterterrorism cooperation and information sharing with the United States," the State Department said.

The Indian government continued to closely monitor the domestic threat from transnational terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), which

made threats against India in their terrorist propaganda. A number of individuals were arrested for ISIS-affiliated recruitment and attack plotting within India, the report said.

According to the State Department, the Pakistani government did not publicly reverse its December 2015 declaration that neither JuD nor FiF is banned in Pakistan, despite their listing under UN sanctions regimes, although in January 2017, Pakistan placed both organisations "under observation" pursuant to Schedule Two of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

While not a ban, keeping the outfits under observation allows the government to closely scrutinise the activities of both organisations.

On November 11, Pakistan's National Counterterrorism Authority published its own list of banned

organisations that placed JuD in a separate section for groups that are "under observation" but not banned.

Pakistan continued military operations to eradicate terrorist safe havens in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, although their impact on all terrorist groups was uneven, it said.

In its report, the State Department said in 2016, India and the US pledged to strengthen cooperation against terrorist threats from groups including al-Qaeda, the ISIS, JeM, LeT and D-Company (Dawood Ibrahim's group), including through greater collaboration on designations at the UN.

Indian and US leaders directed officials to identify new areas of

collaboration through the July US-India Counterterrorism Joint Working Group, applauded finalisation of a bilateral arrangement to facilitate the sharing of terrorism screening information, and called upon Pakistan to bring the perpetrators of terrorist attacks against India to justice, the report said.

The United States and India worked together to designate JeM leader Maulana Masood Azhar, although the listing was blocked in the UN 1267 Committee, the State Department said.

Other areas mentioned in the report as safe havens are Afghanistan, Somalia, the Trans-Sahara, Sulu/Sulawesi Seas Littoral, Southern Philippines, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Yemen, Columbia and Venezuela.

## China Joined Hands With Pakistan, Ready To Attack India, Says Mulayam In Lok Sabha

Samajwadi Party leader and former defence minister Mulayam Singh Yadav on Wednesday claimed that China was ready to attack India in collaboration with Pakistan and asked the government to reverse its stand on the Tibet issue by supporting its independence.

Raising the matter in the Lok Sabha against the backdrop of tension between India and China, he asked the government to inform Parliament what it has done to meet any likely challenge from the neighbouring country. He also claimed that

Chinese military personnel have been seen in Pakistani military facilities in the Pak-occupied Kashmir and China was also building roads there. It must be opposed at the diplomatic level, Yadav said.

"India is today facing a big danger from China. I have been cautioning central governments for many years. None of them paid adequate attention. China has joined hands with Pakistan. It has made full preparation to attack India.

"China is India's biggest opponent. What has the government done? In

Kashmir, the Chinese army has allied with the Pak army," Yadav, known for his tough stand on China, said during the Zero Hour.

He also claimed that China had buried nuclear weapons in Pakistan to target India, adding that Indian intelligence agencies "would know better".

Without naming then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, he said the Congress stalwart made a "big mistake" on the Tibet issue and added that he had even then spoken against it. Tibetan leaders like

Dalai Lama had always supported India, he said.

Time had come to support the independence of Tibet as it had been a traditional buffer between the two big nations and India should give maximum support to the Dalai Lama. "China is our enemy, not Pakistan. Pakistan can do us no damage," he said. It was India's responsibility to protect Bhutan and China was eyeing Nepal, he said. He also spoke against massive amounts of Chinese goods finding a market in India.

## Now China's Foreign Minister steps in: India must pull back from Doklam

**India-China standoff in Sikkim: Ajit Doval's scheduled visit has evoked a mixed response from state-run media in China. While Global Times dubbed Doval a "main schemer" of the current standoff, the government-run China Daily suggested India and China should explore ways to avoid confrontation and settle the issue peacefully.**



A day before National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval leaves for Beijing to attend the BRICS NSAs' meeting on July 27-28, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stepped into the border standoff at Doklam, saying that India should "conscientiously withdraw" its troops. Though Doval's counterpart, Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi, outranks Wang in China's official establishment, the Foreign Minister's remarks is being seen in New Delhi as an "escalation in messaging".

This comes a day after the Chinese Defence Ministry

ratcheted up the rhetoric as it urged India to "abandon this issue is very simple: impractical illusions" and warned that it would step up troop deployment and training at the India-China border if Indian troops were not withdrawn immediately.

Interestingly, Wang's comments were posted in Mandarin on the Chinese language website of China's Foreign Ministry, and not on the English language website. "The rights and wrongs are very clear and even senior Indian officials have openly stated that Chinese troops did not step into Indian territory," Wang said in Bangkok, commenting for the first time on the standoff at the trijunction point, where Indian troops have been facing off with People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops for over a month now.

"To make it brief, India has admitted that they have entered

Chinese territory. The solution to this issue is very simple: conscientiously withdraw," he said in a brief quote posted on the Chinese Foreign Ministry's website on Tuesday.

Read: Two perspectives on Doklam standoff. Click here.

Last week, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had proposed that the two sides should withdraw their armies and engage in a conversation. Ruling out unilateral withdrawal by Indian troops, Swaraj — while answering questions in Rajya Sabha last Thursday — had said, "If China unilaterally changes the status quo of the trijunction point, then that is a direct challenge to our security. Their demand is that we should withdraw our troops from there.

We want that, if we are having a conversation, if we want to have

talks, then both should withdraw their armies. From our side, there is no unreasonable demand."

That was the first time the government publicly articulated its demand for mutual withdrawal.

Doval, who is likely to leave for Beijing on Wednesday, will meet Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi. Both sides have not ruled out the possibility of a bilateral meeting so far, although there has been no public announcement of a scheduled meeting.

The Indian side, which has maintained that New Delhi is committed to working with Beijing to find a peaceful resolution through dialogue, is willing to have a conversation — if China wants. Sources said the attempt will be to resolve the situation through bilateral talks, and not let the issue cast a shadow on the

upcoming BRICS summit.

Doval's scheduled visit has evoked a mixed response from state-run media in China. While the Communist Party of China-controlled Global Times dubbed Doval a "main schemer" of the current standoff, the government-run China Daily suggested India and China should explore ways to avoid confrontation and settle the issue peacefully.

In a related development, China has taken objection to Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's comments that this is a "long-term dispute" and territorial disputes should be resolved peacefully. The Chinese Foreign Ministry is learnt to have conveyed its position to the Australian government through diplomatic channels.



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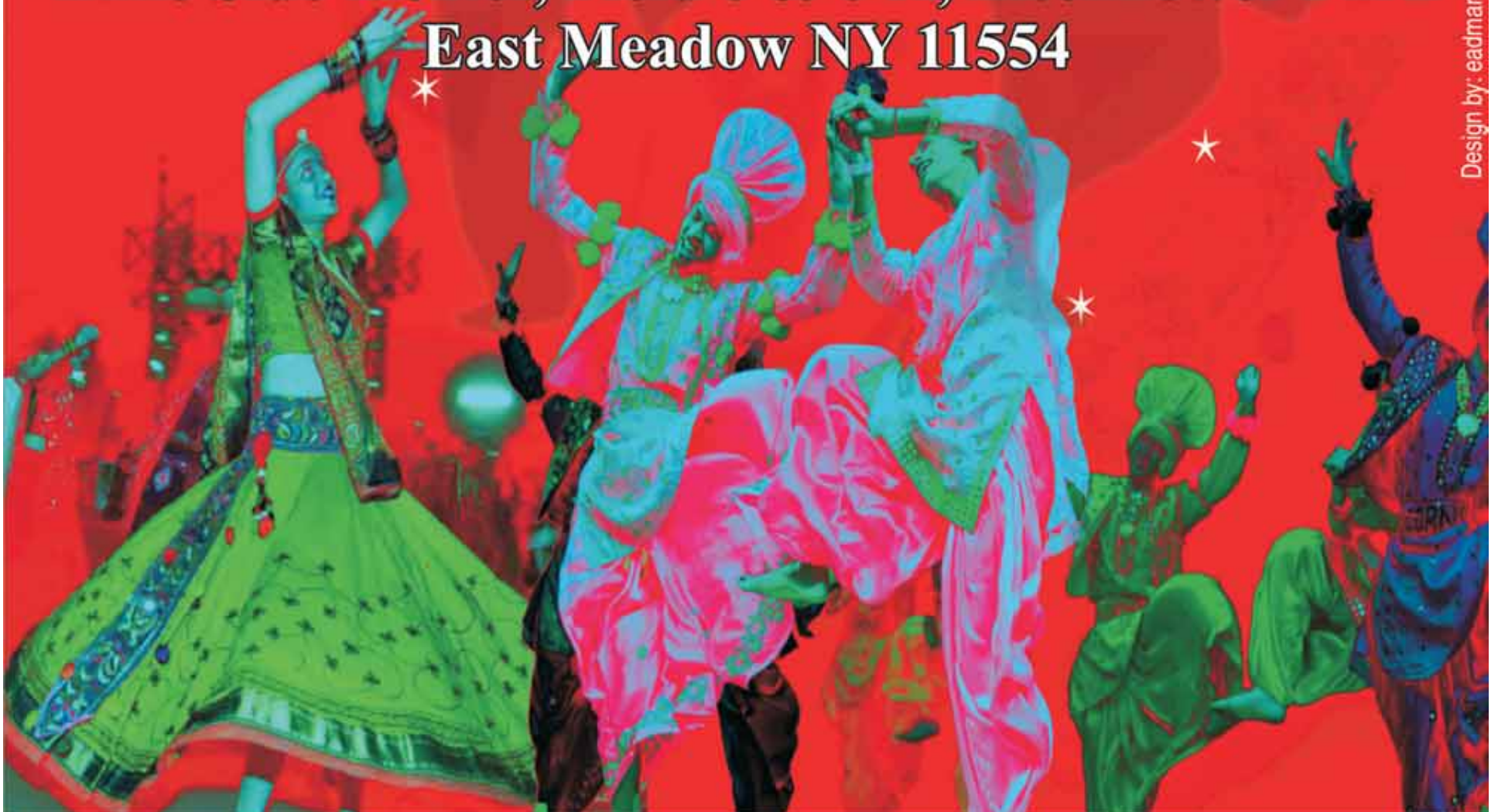
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*Island holidays are emerging as a trend among Indian travellers, especially with cruising getting extremely popular*

# ISLAND ON MY MIND

By Adila Matra

**V**ACATIONING on islands is emerging as a trend among Indian travelers, especially the city dwellers. The deep azure waters, sand under your feet, sea breeze and above all, peace and tranquility lure travellers. "In the last few years the popularity of island getaways has soared amongst the travellers," says Sharat Dhall, COO, B2C, Yatra.com. "Many domestic and international islands have become a preferred alternative to common beach destinations," he adds.

Domestic destinations like Andaman, Diu islands, Divar island (Goa), Lakshadweep island and Ross island are on the top of every island lover's list. Bali, Bahamas, Maldives, Seychelles and Fiji are among the favourite international holiday escapes.

Kapil Goswamy, CMD of Big-Breaks.com, says the Greek islands are also a big pull. "For nights and eight days, the package starts from ₹42,499 per person. The natural landscape is the most

attractive part of the Greek islands. From Balos Beach in the Gramvousa Peninsula to Shipwreck Bay in Zakynthos Island, there is not one dull spot in this seaside destination," he says.

Easy connectives for flights and respective designation airlines showing interest in Indian market and launching direct flights have boosted islands as a preferred destination. "Also, Indian travellers enjoy visa on arrival at some island destinations like Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles and Reunion Island," says Manheer

Singh Sethi, co-founder of Travkart, the only online platform for fixed departures.

"Cruising is another reason for increasing demand as international cruise liners have many island destinations included in their itinerary. Varun Chadha, COO at TIRUN, says, "Caribbean islands are quite popular and have done very well with a 50 per cent increase in guests visiting them in 2017 in comparison to last year. Some popular islands here include St Maarten, St Kitts, Barbados, St Thomas and San

Juan. The attractions are the beaches, water and adventure sports and duty-free shopping."

Another island on the itinerary of TIRUN is Palma de Mallorca, part of the western Mediterranean itinerary in Royal Caribbean International. "Our prices on a per person basis for the Caribbean in Sep 2017 start from about ₹44,998 (including taxes)," says Chadha.

So, next vacation, pack your bags and head to an island far, far away before global warming takes them away forever.

Bali (inset), Bahamas, Seychelles (in pic) and Fiji are among the favourite international holiday destinations.



Maldives is very close, with a flight from Thiruvananthapuram taking an hour-and-a-half.



## BY THE BEACH

■ **FIJI ISLANDS:** Fiji Islands, known as the 'Soft Coral Capital of the World', is popular for its white sand beaches, palm trees and promise of seclusion. It consists of 332 islands that face severe floods every year. These islands will soon go under sea level. Prices start from ₹1,31,000 per person.

■ **COCOS KEELING ISLAND:** Located approximately midway between Sri Lanka and Australia, Cocos Islands consist of 27 coral islands and two atolls. It is one of Australia's last unspoiled paradises that offers spectacular views, world-class snorkelling and diving experience. Prices start from ₹1,20,000 per person.

■ **PULAU UBIN:** Located northeast of Singapore, Pulau Ubin gives travellers a glimpse of Singapore of the 1960s and the simpler pleasures of life. A perfect serene retreat, Pulau offers a lot of nature activities, fresh air and wholesome food. Prices start from ₹55,000 per person.



(Left) Islands of New Zealand are for couples who want to spent some quality time together; (above) Andaman.



Source: izigo.com



# China must admit India is a force to be reckoned with: Former US diplomat Biswal

(News Agencies) WASHINGTON: Amid the ongoing standoff between Indian and Chinese troops at the Doklam area in the Sikkim sector, a former US diplomat has said that China needs to acknowledge that India is "a force to be reckoned with" and countries in the region are unsettled by Beijing's behaviour.

"China, I think, needs to acknowledge the fact that there is growing strategic and security capability across Asia, and certainly India is a force to be reckoned with," former US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Nisha Desai Biswal told PTI in an interview.

Biswal, who was Obama Administration's point person for South and Central Asia in its second term, said that there has

been a fair degree of assertive actions and signals being sent from China across many different border points, maritime and land, across its geography.

"While I understand that sentiment within China, that I think seeks to try to assert China as a dominant player across the Asia-Pacific, I think China has to content with the fact that across its geography, throughout the Asia-Pacific region, countries are unsettled by its behaviour and by its unilateral actions," she said.

"China has more to gain through diplomacy and dialogue than it does through these kinds of actions, which create a great deal of unease and uncertainty," Biswal said responding to questions on India-China border stand-off. Biswal said across Asia, nations are stepping forward to assert their interests

and their rights. "So now is an important time to create some greater codification of the rules and, to create more channels for dialogue and diplomacy to address some of these areas of tension and differences on how various boundary and maritime claims are resolved," she said.

She exuded confidence that the leaders of the two countries would be able to prevent further escalation of the situation.

"China is a very mature and calibrated power. It's not a rogue actor, in any sense of the word. And certainly I think that the Indian side has also acted with a great deal of resolve and a great deal of restraint," she said.

"While there are tensions afoot, I do believe that both countries have it within themselves to resolve those tensions, to defuse those

tensions. It is in the interest of both countries, in their security interest and in their economic interest, to manage these tensions and to ensure that there are avenues for peaceful and amicable resolution," she added.

The US, she noted, certainly has a role to play in it by ensuring that the international rules are followed. "Certainly, I think that the US, by standing firm on its commitment towards the rules-based international order and the importance of dialogue and dispute resolution, can signal its own strong preference for these kinds of mechanisms to de-escalate and to resolve differences," she said. "The US has stood very firmly against the kinds of unilateral actions to settle disputed claims, which we have done very strongly with respect to maritime claims, and



which we continue to stand behind with respect to land boundary claims," Biswal said. "India has proven itself to be willing and be able to resolve issues through arbitration, through negotiation, through dialogue and diplomacy, and, we would hope and expect that China would show itself capable of doing the same," she said. Implications, of any further escalation, are grave, she warned in response to a question.

## Study finds caste-based diseases in South Asia



(News Agencies) Hyderabad: Most South Asian linguistic races and caste groups have a high vulnerability for 'population-specific' diseases. A CCMB study published in Nature Genetics on Monday found that out of 263 unique South Asian groups studied, around 81 have a large number of recessive diseases. A recessive disease is one that can be passed down through families. The interesting study led by CCMB scientist Dr Kumarasamy Thangaraj revealed that the Vaishya community have a 100-fold higher rate of butyrylcholinesterase deficiency, a condition of not being able to assimilate the anaesthetic drug than other groups. Rajus (Andhra Khsatriyas) have high risk of cardiomyopathy and Reddys in specific geographic location in the state suffer arthritis. Likewise Gujjars of Rajasthan, Baniyas of UP and Pattapu Kapus of AP have got high IBD (Identity-by-descent) score that shows they carry certain gene mutations responsible for diseases to future generations.

Scientists say that due to Endogamy and marriage in the same caste groups, for instance for the past 108 generations in Vaishya, and in general in the past 2,000 years due to development of castes the

disease causing mutations are carried forward to future generations. Out of 80 groups identified for having high IBD score around 14 groups have an estimated size of over 10 lakh population. CCMB senior principal scientist K. Thangaraj said, "Every person in the world not only in South Asia carries several mutations that if they occurred in two copies would lead to serious recessive diseases." "In South Asia 'founder events' (loss of genetic variation where small numbers of ancestors carrying mutations give rise to large number of descendants) combined with endogamy (marriage within groups) cause the mutations to often be carried

in two copies. In South Asia as due to these two factors it lead to far higher rate of population specific diseases than elsewhere in the world." Dr David Reich of Harvard Medical School and Broad Institute in US along with other collaborative authors devised an algorithm to quantify the measure of the found events in each group based on Identity-By-Descent segments, large stretches of DNA shared from a common founder in the last one hundred generations. Researchers highlighted the case of Vaishya who are around 30 lakh in population has a founder event that is 1.2 fold stronger than that in Finnish population. "Vaishya ancestry is

a known counter-indication for the use of muscle relaxants such as succinylcholine or mivacurium that are given prior to surgery for anaesthesia purpose. This disease is likely to occur at a higher rate due the lesser genetic variation over generations in the history of Vaishya. The genes that are responsible for production of enzymes which metabolises these anaesthesia drugs are produced low in Vaishya. That is why they are given altered anaesthetic drugs," he said. He added, "We haven't studies in all castes what type of recessive diseases are prevalent but we have analysed the groups that have identity-by-descent factors."

## India welcomes US move to list Pakistan among nations providing 'safe havens' to terrorists

### India says US State Department's Country Report on Terrorism vindicated India's long-held view that Pakistan was providing safe havens for terrorists on its soil

(News Agencies) New Delhi: India has welcomed US action listing Pakistan among the nations and regions providing "safe havens" to terrorists, saying US State Department's Country Report on Terrorism vindicated India's long-held view that Pakistan was providing safe havens for terrorists on its soil.

"The segments in the South And Central Asia section in the US State Department's Country reports on Terrorism in 2016 vindicate India's long standing position on the menace of cross border terrorism in our region," a person familiar with the development said. In a

blow to Pakistan late Wednesday, the US State Department's Country Report said that terror groups like the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) continued to operate, train, organise and raise resources inside Pakistan in 2016.

The report uses language like "safe havens" used in previous reports but it does boost India's diplomatic claims that Pakistan is turning a blind eye to terror groups based on its soil that are targeting India. India has seen three major attacks on its military installations in Pathakot, Uri and Nagrota last year—all blamed on

the LeT and the JeM—and New Delhi has been pushing Pakistan to take action against these groups operating from its soil. It comes after a meeting between US president Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House last month. The Trump administration had designated Syed Salahuddin as a terrorist coinciding with the visit. The annual report, which is mandated by the US Congress, also said that Pakistani military and security forces cracked down on terrorist groups that carried out attacks within Pakistan such as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan.



# Now, China's state-backed media threatens standoffs beyond Doklam

(News Agencies) New Delhi : China's state-backed media has taken warmongering to the next level and is now threatening confrontation in not just Doklam but in other areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as well.

China's hardline Global Times declared that Beijing "doesn't recognize the land under the actual control of India is Indian territory" and indicated that China could take "further countermeasures" along the LAC.

In fact, Beijing has already signalled its intentions toward a

multi-front show of strength.

On Friday, the Chinese military conducted live-fire exercises in Southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, state-run China Central Television (CCTV) reported. The brigade that conducted the drills was from the PLA's Tibet Military Command, which guards the LAC along several sections connecting the mountainous Tibetan region.

This latest India-China standoff though began in Doklam, in the Sikkim sector, after China violated the border into the area, which is in Bhutanese territory,

and started building a road there in mid-June. And far from backing down, Global Times is urging Beijing to go full steam ahead with construction there, in addition to the "countermeasures" along the LAC.

"China must continue strengthening border construction and speed up troop deployment and construction in the Doklam area. These are legitimate actions of a sovereign country," said a Global Times article. The publication - run by the country's Communist Party

- then said Beijing "doesn't fear going to war to safeguard sovereignty either, and will make itself ready for a long-term confrontation." China can take further countermeasures along the Line of Actual Control. If India stirs up conflicts in several spots, it must face the consequence of an all-out confrontation with China along the entire LAC," it said. The Chinese state-backed publication also said deploying resources in remote border areas will lead to the economic growth of these regions, "as well as to safeguarding integration of



China's territory".

Already, "...road and rail in the Tibetan area have been extended close to the border area with India, Nepal and Bhutan", the article said.

## '1.5 bn people of South Asia vulnerable to rare genetic diseases'



(News Agencies) Hyderabad : Not too long ago, when a person went in for a surgery in Indian hospitals, it was not uncommon to hear doctors ask him or her two questions -- whether the patient was from the Vaishya community and if he/ she was allergic to Sulpha drugs.

While the second issue of allergy to drugs has been sorted out, the problem Vaishyas, a trading and business community, face when administered anaesthesia still persists. Numbering around three million, this community is predominantly based in the South and is known to have a troublesome response to muscle relaxants such as Succinylcholine and Mivacurium, which are injected prior to surgery as anaesthesia.

The reason for this response, according to scientists, is that the genes responsible for producing enzymes which metabolise these anaesthesia drugs are hardly produced in the people of this community. Therefore, they have to be administered a different set of drugs to facilitate surgery. Thankfully, modern medicine has developed enough options to ensure that this genetic problem

is not a major issue for the Vaishyas today.

The occurrence of such rare

problems is attributed to the fact that very little genetic variation has taken place in these communities for centuries. Terming them 'recessive diseases' (which are passed down families through generations), a study published on July 17 in Nature Genetics goes on to describe how the 1.5 billion people of South Asia are particularly vulnerable to such rare genetic diseases.

The study was led by co-senior authors Scientist Kumarasamy Thangaraj of the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and

Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad and David Reich of Harvard Medical School and the Broad Institute, Boston and Cambridge, USA, in collaboration with colleagues from many other institutes. In India, which is a milieu of hundreds of caste groups and communities that are close-knit and which have inward looking cultural practices and traditions, the prevalence or a pre-disposition to rare genetic diseases is significant. South Asia is inhabited by about 5,000 anthropologically well-

defined populations, many of which are endogamous (marrying within a population) communities with significant barriers to gene flow due to sociological, linguistic and cultural factors that restrict inter-population marriage. Several diseases that are specific to these populations have been identified in the past. However, the genetic causes for the vast majority of population-specific disease are largely unknown and has been the subject of intense research.

### *In South Asian Social Castes, a Living Lab for Genetic Disease*

(News Agencies) In certain states in southern India, anesthesiologists know to ask anyone undergoing surgery whether they belong to the Vysya, a regional group traditionally associated with traders and businesspeople.

Anecdotally, medical workers know that some people with Vysya ancestry — who live primarily in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana — have had fatal responses to common muscle relaxants, so doctors will use a different combination of drugs.

The Vysya may have other medical predispositions that have yet to be characterized — as may hundreds of other subpopulations across South Asia, according to a study published in Nature Genetics on Monday. The researchers suspect that many such medical conditions are related to how these groups have stayed genetically separate while living side by side for thousands of years.

South Asians should be viewed not as a single population but as thousands of distinct groups reinforced by cultural practices that promote marrying within one's community. Although recent changes to cultural norms have resulted

in more marriages between members of different groups like castes or subcastes, especially in some urban areas, gene flow between populations was restricted for



millenniums, the authors report.

Marriage within a limited group, or endogamy, has created millions of people who are susceptible to recessive diseases, which develop only when a child inherits a disease-carrying gene from both parents, said Kumarasamy Thangaraj, an author of the study and a senior scientist at the Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad.

Along with David Reich, a geneticist at Harvard Medical School, Dr. Thangaraj led

an effort to analyze data from more than 2,800 individuals belonging to more than 260 distinct South Asian groups organized around caste, geography, family ties, language, religion and other factors. Of these, 81 groups had losses of genetic variation more extreme than those found in Ashkenazi Jews and Finns, groups with high rates of recessive disease because of genetic isolation.

In previous studies, Dr. Reich, Dr. Thangaraj and colleagues found that social groups in South Asia mixed between around 4,000 and 2,000 years ago. After that, the solidification of India's caste system

resulted in a shift toward endogamy. "You can see writ in the genome the effects of this intense endogamy," Dr. Reich said. Today, South Asia consists of around 5,000 anthropologically well-defined groups. Over 15 years, the researchers collected DNA from people belonging to a broad swath of these groups, resulting in a rich set of genetic data that pushes beyond the field's focus on individuals of European ancestry, Dr. Reich said.



# Between the sheets: This is the age women have the best sex of their lives

**A survey commissioned by the contraceptive app Natural Cycles revealed that women have the best sex of their lives at the age of 36.**

(News Agencies) Most of us believe that we have the best sex of our lives when in our 20s. However, if new research is to be believed women say that they have the best sex of their lives at the age of 36.

The research was commissioned by the contraceptive app Natural Cycles, and they asked 2,600 women about orgasms, how attractive they felt and how much satisfaction they derived from sex.

The answers were studied according to the different age groups, younger (below 23), middle (23-35) and older (36 and above). As far as attractiveness was concerned, women aged 36 felt the most confident in their



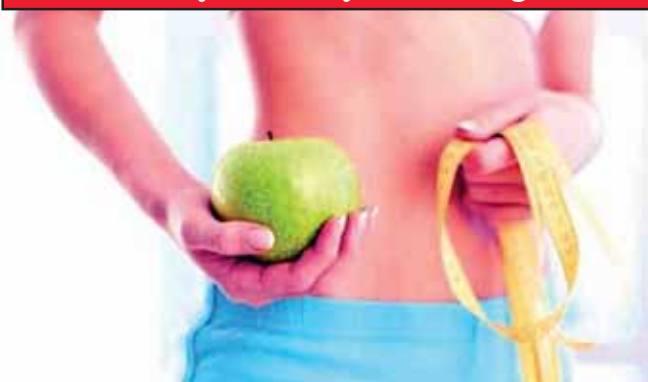
skin and 8 out of 10 said that they felt sexy.

On the other hand, only four out of 10 women in the middle range said they were satisfied with the way they looked while in the 'younger' group seven out of 10 women said the same.

Even as far as climaxing was confirmed, older women scored the highest, as six out of 10 said they had more regular and improved orgasms. Again, from the older group, 86 % said that the sex they had over the last month had been great while 76 % from the middle group admitted to great sex, and only 56 % from the youngest group said they had great sex. According to the results, one in three of these women wanted the sex to last longer and one in ten wanted it to be over faster!

## Best weight-loss tip Stop believing these 5 myths before going on a diet

*Carbohydrates are not your enemies and a low-fat diet may not always be such a good idea.*



(News Agencies) Food trends often come and go, and with them a lot of confusion about what we should and shouldn't eat for a healthy, balanced diet. Nutritional epidemiologist Karin Michels, professor and chair of the epidemiology department in the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, USA, gives her views on the latest diet crazes, and whether one should try the popular Paleo diet, cut out carbs, add in fat, and even have that morning cup of coffee.

**Myth: Cut the carbs**

Low-carb diets have seen a surge in popularity in recent years, however instead of cutting carbs out of your diet Michels advises you replace refined carbohydrates and sugars with whole grain carbs such as quinoa, oats, rice and pasta. She also adds that there is no good reason to avoid gluten unless you're intolerant, and by avoiding gluten you will also miss out on important nutrients and fibre that come from grain.

**Myth: A low-fat diet is best**

Fat has long been seen as the enemy to a healthy diet, with many believing that a low-fat diet is good for the heart. However Michels disagrees. Instead she says most people need to change the type of fat in the diet, avoiding saturated and trans fats and adding in unsaturated fats. Unsaturated fats found in olive and canola oils and fish, nuts and avocados raise the body's HDL ("good") cholesterol, while saturated fats from animal and dairy products and the artificial trans fats found in margarines and cookies will raise the LDL ("bad") cholesterol. In line with recent reports she also cautions against coconut oil, which although was once assumed to be healthy, is full of saturated fat.

**Myth: We should eat like our ancestors**

Although the popular Paleo diet advocates following the diet of our hunter-gatherer ancestors – eating lots of energy-dense red meats and excluding grains – Michels points out, "We are nothing like our ancestors – instead of running around all day, most of us sit in front of our computers."

## Between the sheets: Having sex once a week can slow down ageing in women

Now, there is one more reason to have sex. Research shows that women who had sex during the course of the week had a slower ageing cycle, lower stress levels and better immune response.



(News Agencies) Women, you may want to start being active between the sheets as a recent study has revealed that having sex at least once a week slows down ageing. Researchers from the University of California in San Francisco analysed physical intimacy, as well as partner support or conflict, overall relationship satisfaction and stress in 129 mothers in long-term relationships. Blood samples were taken from the study's participants to determine their telomere length. Earlier research also indicated that a good sex life was an essential for good health. The preliminary study found that women who

reported having sex with their partner during the course of the week tended to have significantly longer telomeres, the protective end caps on our DNA. Relationship satisfaction, stress and partner support or conflict had no impact on telomere length. Lead researcher Tomas Cabeza de Baca said that over time, shortened telomeres may contribute to chronic degenerative diseases and premature mortality. He added, "Sexual intimacy may dampen the effects of stress by down-regulating stress response systems and up-regulating immune response. Over time, these patterns of stress function should result in longer telomere length," PsyPost reported. The findings were published in the journal Psychoneuroendocrinology.

## Want to help dementia patients? Just spend an hour a week interacting with them

**Spending one hour each week interacting with dementia patients about their interests can help improve their quality of life and reduce agitation, says a new study.**

(News Agencies) If your grandparents are suffering from dementia, then you can help them by interacting with them about their interests for an hour a week and improve their quality life. Earlier research showed that exercising the mind by playing puzzles can keep dementia away. Dementia is a group of thinking and social symptoms that interferes with daily functioning. Researchers at the University of Exeter, King's College London and Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust led the study. The team analysed more than 800 people with dementia across 69 care homes in South London, North London and Buckinghamshire.

Two 'care staff champions' at each home were trained over four day-long sessions, to take simple measures that involve talking to residents about their interests and decisions around their own care. When combined with just one hour



a week of social interaction, it improved quality of life and reduced agitation. Lead researcher Clive Ballard said, "People with dementia, who are living in care homes are among the most vulnerable in our society." "Incredibly, of 170 carer training manuals available on the market, only four are based on evidence that they really work.



# SO HOT SHE COULD START A FIRE!

SHE IS a connoisseur of the saucy selfies.

But Kylie Jenner let someone else shoot the risque photos as she looked ravishing in a photo spread for GQ Mexico.

The 19-year-old left little to the imagination in a skimpy grey bikini as she posed flawlessly next to a pile of rustic wood logs.

Daring to impress, the youngest of the Kardashian clan gave all her fans a charge as she revealed her sultry figure in the strappy ensemble.

The Lip Kit mogul put all her storied years of experience as an Instagram model to good use as she flaunted her bountiful curves.

While shifting her hip to the side and throwing her arm over her head, the essence of demure looked every inch the cover girl.

Her raven black tresses were kept long and loose as they cascaded over one shoulder allowing her ample cleavage to take center stage.

Sophistication and class were no match for the young vixen as she pouted her

berry kissed lips and flashed her toned tummy.

In a startling turn of events, Kylie let her natural beauty shine as she wore minimal makeup and even less clothing.

Not one to let her physical beauty be her only asset, Kylie recently launched a sock line with her brother Rob Kardashian under the Arthur George brand.

## Kylie posed for a GQ Mexico spread

The new line features socks with Kylie's cartoon likeness and ones that have hilarious, untoward images of a fist giving the middle finger.

Kylie debuted her latest fashion venture on Snapchat, including the sleek packaging baring the names of her and Rob's brands.

The duo first collaborated on a sock line in November.

—Daily Mail



Kylie wore a grey bikini and posed flawlessly next to a pile of rustic wood logs.

## Ed sings his GoT cameo at show's premiere

Ed Sheeran's highly-anticipated appearance on Game of Thrones came during the HBO show's season seven premiere on Sunday.

The 26-year-old singer was well-cast on the program, as the script called for him to do what he's most famous for, singing.

The Thinking Out Loud artist appeared onscreen in a sequence in which Arya, played by Maisie Williams, rode horseback through a forest.

He sang the lyrics (taken from the George R.R. Martin book A Dance with Dragons),

Arya told Ed's character, "It's a pretty song, I've never heard it before," to which he responded, "It's a new one."

The Shape of You singer, who's previously showed off his acting chops on The Bastard Executioner in 2015, was a major get for the show, whose



Ed Sheeran (left) was featured in a forest sequence with Arya (right).

creators David Benioff and DB Weiss said they had been trying to get him to appear 'for years,' as Williams is a huge fan of the red-headed Grammy-winner.

"We tried to get Ed Sheeran on the show to surprise Maisie, and this year we finally did it," Benioff said in March while appearing at the festival South By Southwest in Austin, Texas.

Social media was popping after the Castle on the Hill crooner's cameo on the medieval-themed program, which has past welcomed musicians Gary Lightbody (Snow Patrol) and Will Champion (Coldplay) in front of its cameras.

David Beckham, shared a screengrab of his pal on social media and simply wrote, "Yes Ed" across the top of the picture.

—Daily Mail

# Miranda gushes about her Dior wedding gown

MIRANDA Kerr's backyard wedding to Snapchat founder Evan Spiegel was tasteful and intimate - with just 45 friends and family watching as the couple exchanged their vows.

But the pared back guest list didn't stop Miranda Kerr from creating the day of her dreams — with the Australian model opening up about her May nuptials in the new edition of U.S. Vogue.

For her big day the bride wore a breathtakingly beautiful custom Dior haute couture gown, painstakingly created for her by the brand's new artistic director Maria Grazia Chiuri.

Speaking to Vogue about her dress, the new Mrs Spiegel explained simply, "Honestly, I couldn't have imagined a more beautiful wedding dress."

The gown was inspired by the iconic Grace Kelly, and the gown she wore back in 1956 for her wedding to Prince Rainier of Monaco.

## 'I couldn't have imagined a more beautiful dress'

Said former Victoria's Secret Angel Miranda, "I've had a lot of fun with fashion, and I used to be more wild, free, bohemian."

"But in this period of my life,

my style is more pulled back. My greatest sources of inspiration have always been Grace, Audrey Hepburn, and my grandmother, who at 80 has an effortless chic: a nice pant, a white blouse, a scarf, a little heel."

That inspiration was clear in the photos Miranda published by Vogue, which show the 34-year-old wearing the long-sleeved high-necked satin gown as she kisses her husband under a flower decked altar.

The delicate dress was appliqued with lilies of the valley, and worn with a long flowing veil. Miranda wore it with a pearl-encrusted head-dress designed by milliner Stephen Jones.



Miranda Kerr looked like one of Hollywood's beauty icons at her May wedding to Snapchat CEO Evan Spiegel.



# Shab movie review: Raveena Tandon in Onir's darkest film on love and betrayal

***This is a complicated story with numerous sub-plots that seem rather overwhelming. Onir's expertise at handling the darkest subjects with sensitivity and the actors' impressive performances ensure you have a sinfully extravagant film at hand.***

(News Agencies)

Shab  
Director: Onir

Cast: Raveena Tandon, Ashish Bisht, Simon Frenay  
Rating: 3/5

Onir explored various shades of issues that have forever been sidelined by the society — people in homosexual relationships or suffering at the hands of AIDS — in his previous ventures. This time, the National Award-winning filmmaker delves into the murky world of Delhi and the unconventional relationships that take wing in the shadow of the city's high-class lifestyle, with Shab. With his brilliant understanding of human emotions, Onir takes a leap into the "forbidden" love stories of the society with his latest venture.

Shab traces the lives of four characters - their personal struggles and love

lives. Mohan (Ashish Bisht) is a small-towner who travels from Dhanaulti to Delhi with the hope of becoming a successful model. He is rejected at a talent hunt after being mocked for his "lack of fineness" and is ridiculed for his broken English. One of the judges, however, finds her fantasy in this young man and there starts our first love story. She is Sonal Modi (Raveena Tandon), a rich trophy wife whose husband has no interest in her life. She decides to make Mohan her boy-toy. Meanwhile, Mohan meets Raina (Arpita Chatterjee) and Neel (Areesz Gandii) who appear to be caring, helpful and hard-working people and offer him all the help he needs.

While Neel is recovering from a broken relationship, Raina appears to be mostly

concerned about her younger sister's well-being even as she nurtures some darker secrets.

Onir's expertise is seen in the way he handles these characters and their stories - his sensible filmmaking is written all over the frames. Even when showing stereotypical mindsets in our society, he makes it a point to balance out the narrow-minded comments by placing sane-minded characters nearby, giving them at least one or two jibes to throw at the prejudiced characters.

Shab is the darkest film Onir has made till date. With the film, he explores the "morally wrong" shades of human relationship without letting the audience hold any judgments - he shows us the emotional turmoils of people in these

relationships. Though the reason behind such endeavours is revealed much later in the film, what we get to witness, are the everyday struggles. Of the four main characters, Onir seems to give a bigger window into the hearts of Mohan and Sonal.

Raveena Tandon has given one of her most sensual, brilliant performances in Shab. She manages to bring out every single element of a rich and lonely trophy wife who does not shy away from paying up for the love she desires. She is authoritative, demanding and dominant when Mohan but becomes a loyal, caring wife when sitting beside her husband (Sanjay Suri) in a party. Her last scene, where she is told that her credit card is blocked, is something you will appreciate the most. When



asked to pay up later at a hotel, she takes off her jewelry, places them at the counter and tells the man behind the cash counter, "Tell my husband that her wife has kept all this for guarantee". And the masterstroke comes when she places her heels at the counter as well.

Ashish has an air of

innocence about his presence that adds to the credibility of his character and makes his efforts shine through.

Shab is a dark, haunting film about human emotions, relationships, love and betrayal that thrive in a rather opportunistic and materialistic world of Delhi's elite society.

## Jagga Jasoos movie review

# It's a beautiful Bollywood musical we were waiting for

***Ranbir Kapoor and Katrina Kaif's Jagga Jasoos isn't satisfied only with being an incredible adventure saga. It desires to become a comment on social evils. Here's our movie review. Rating 3.5/5.***

(News Agencies)

Jagga Jasoos

Cast: Ranbir Kapoor, Katrina Kaif, Saswata Chatterjee

Director: Anurag Basu  
Rating: 3.5/5

Anurag Basu has a trustworthy lieutenant in cinematographer Ravi Varman. His camera entices you to enter the world of Jagga and once you're there, Basu ensures your stay for a longer period. Jagga Jasoos is poster perfect, beautiful and soothing.

It all begins in Darjeeling where a deduction expert man-child Jagga (Ranbir Kapoor) lives in a school hostel and applies his theories on friends. It's a terrific opening as you get to know about his ideas, loneliness and ever

wandering mind.

Basu goes for a musical which, in a way, provides Jagga a chance to ditch his stammering and go for some vividly penned ballads. Always longing for his missing father Tooti Footi (Saswata Chatterjee), Jagga is someone who you can immediately like. For all his Tintin-inspired adventures, he is fighting inner demons like most of us. A chance meeting with a Kolkata-based journalist Shruti (Katrina Kaif) pushes him to go for the journey of his life that crosses through Thailand's beaches and Moroccan deserts.

Basu's handling of the backdrop intrigues from the very beginning, his human formations and musical beats create a rhythm we

rarely see in Bollywood. His dreamland is mostly composed with moving props. It could be anything from a giraffe to an ostrich. Be it Jagga's specially designed bike or a decorated elephant crossing an empty street, every frame gives you something to hook on. After a few minutes, you willingly glide through his world.

You remember how it felt while reading Roald Dahl or Harry Potter? The same happens while watching Jagga Jasoos. You are watching the visuals projected at you, but you're also imagining a different world inspired from them.

Then there are stories that hold their ground. After all, here's a detective whose introduction song

mentions Sherlock and Feluda. The aspirations are indeed high. Jagga passes the initial test as he solves a few local cases.

This makes Basu ambitious and prompts him to talk about the serious issues plaguing the world. What initially appears like another open and shut case snowballs into a world-wide conspiracy. This is where Basu begins to waver. Larger canvas presents bigger challenges.

Thankfully, he goes for more interesting formations than relying on dialogues. Action sequences keep getting better structured and amazingly synchronized. Coupled with Pritam's soulful tunes, they bring in a unique look and feel to



Jagga Jasoos.

But extra focus on amusing the audience leaves the chemistry between the leads ignored. It's hard to find anything sparkling there.

Though the writers have taken care of explaining Shruti's English accent, which they do in almost every film featuring Katrina Kaif, she couldn't strike an immediate connect with the audiences the way Jagga does. It's a fantasy film that takes away the

spotlight pressure from Ranbir Kapoor. This also gives him the breather to float around the theme. Basu also lets Kapoor interpret the narrative as per his will. As a result, he makes his overgrown amateurish detective believable. Saswata Chatterjee, better known as Bob Biswas of Kahaani, is the cushion around Ranbir's Jagga. As an accident-prone father, he can make you teary-eyed at times.



# War for the Planet of the Apes movie review: A roaring success of Biblical proportions

**War for the Planet of the Apes movie review: One of the finest blockbuster trilogies comes to a thrilling, sombre conclusion, thanks to Matt Reeves direction, and Andy Serkis' great performance.**

(News Agencies) War for the Planet of the Apes  
Director - Matt Reeves  
Cast - Andy Serkis, Woody Harrelson, Steve Zahn, Amiah Miller  
Rating - 4.5/5

Fifteen years ago, a virus called the Simian Flu all but wiped out humanity. It was because we interfered in matters we did not understand, and our arrogant belief that we could alter nature and escape unpunished.

But the virus had a side-effect. It made Simians – apes, chimps, monkeys of all sorts – evolve quicker than they were meant to. Soon, like most oppressed beings suddenly empowered, they fought back. They were led in that first battle by an ape named Caesar, who had seen the compassion mankind was capable of, but also the cruelty.

It's been fifteen years since

the fight on the Golden Gate Bridge, a fight the apes won, but after which they were forced to leave the dangerous cities. Caesar, battle-worn and scarred, has taken his apes, and his family, into the woods, where they lay in hiding, one eye always glancing over their shoulder for the last remnants of humanity to attack.

Word has travelled over the snowy mountains that a violent militia has been formed by a cruel man, a man who calls himself The Colonel, like Apocalypse Now's Kurtz, utterly consumed by insanity. He has imprisoned hundreds of apes at his large compound, which lies at the foot of snowy, forested mountains. He makes them work, under his boot-heels, tamed to the sound of his whip. He has madness in his eyes, they say. A torn, tattered

American flag hangs limply off his balcony, from where, like Schindler's List's Amon Göth, he surveys his kingdom through a lens. He wants them to build a wall.

War for the Planet of the Apes is the rare blockbuster that arrives once, maybe twice every year. In 2017, we haven't seen a better one since Logan, a film with which it shares several similarities – a hero driven by duty, a mute young girl whom he must protect, and a sombre tone that will surely test the patience of some audience members. But that's what made me like it more.

With this, Matt Reeves has made his fourth, unquestionably great movie. His grip on the war movie tone, aided by stunning, almost biblically grand visuals and music by two Michaels, Seresin and

Giacchino, firmly establish him as one of the finest directors working within the studio system today.

It might even be the first great post-human movie – for more reasons than one. Technically, because it signals the arrival of an era in cinema where human actors could quite possibly be made obsolete, and thematically, because it suggests that human beings are a scourge that needs to be destroyed.

Over the three films that span several decades, the Planet of the Apes reboot series tells an epic story of one creature's rise, but it is also a Shakespearean tragedy – a cautionary tale that chronicles the slow death of an entire species: Mankind.

Our hubris, it suggests, is the reason behind our downfall. We have been led to believe, ever since we were little children, ignorant

and malleable, that we are the apex predators, that we occupy the throne at the top of the food chain. This is a lie. We are simply at that stage in the evolution of our planet at which we happen to be the most intelligent life forms living on it. Faced with the prospect of billions of more years' worth of evolution,

we could easily be overtaken by an even more intelligent species – perhaps one of our own making.

Like Bong Joon-ho's terrific Okja, a film that could very easily be its close cousin, War for the Planet of the Apes harbours an unshakable contempt for humanity. And along with its immediate predecessor, the quietly brilliant Dawn for the Planet of the Apes, it firmly believes that we are beyond redemption, and that the only thing to do is for us to gracefully die out. But what are we without our fighting spirit? What are we without our silly delusions and false confidence? It's what makes us human, dammit! So foolishly, we fight, even in the face of inevitable defeat, without realising – and this is crucial – that more often than not, we are the villains. In this particular situation, that face of inevitable defeat looks like an angry ape's.

And what an intricate work of art it is. Crafted by hundreds of immensely talented people, sculpted around a flawless central performance by Andy Serkis, a maverick and a maven. If this doesn't get him an Academy Award nomination, then we must rally the troops, and like a bunch of apes, protest till they start firing arrows at our sides, yelling 'Apes, together, strong,' till we die.



## Sonakshi Sinha was my first choice for Haseena Parkar: Apoorva Lakhia

**In a startling statement, director Apoorva Lakhia has said that Shraddha Kapoor was "totally second choice" for the lead role in Haseena Parker. He said he approached Sonakshi Sinha but it did not work out.**



(News Agencies) It is quite rare for a filmmaker to admit he wanted a different star for his film, and rarer if the revelation is made before the film's release. Director Apoorva Lakhia said on Tuesday that he had first approached Sonakshi Sinha to play the titular role of Haseena Parker.

"We had first approached Sonakshi. Our shoot kept on getting postponed. She was doing Force 2 at that time and John was injured. Shraddha (Kapoor) was totally my second choice. I knew she could play a 17-year-old and a 45-year-old too," Apoorva said at the trailer launch of the film

. Shraddha Kapoor's brother Siddhanth Kapoor, who is portraying the role of Haseena's brother Dawood Ibrahim, was also present for the trailer launch event. Speaking about his experience of working with Shraddha for the first time, Siddhanth said: "I was cast with Sonakshi Sinha but she could not do the film so my sister came on board which was the best that happened to my life and my career. She has been working so hard to pull it off."

The ABCD 2 actress was asked if she ever gets bored of the girl next door characters, Shraddha said:

"I would always take up an interesting romantic script, and I think being an actor can never be boring. We get to be so many characters; I cannot remember one instance when I was bored. Being an actor and being in films is a real privilege."

This film will also mark Shraddha Kapoor's first female protagonist film. She was last seen in Half Girlfriend with Arjun Kapoor. Haseena Parkar is a biographical crime film directed by Apoorva Lakhia. The film is based on Dawood Ibrahim's sister Haseena Parkar's life. It was initially named Haseena: Queen of Mumbai.





# Bernie Madoff's Ponzi scheme ignited a \$363 billion exodus from investment funds



(News Agencies)Bernie Madoff's first conviction for financial crimes nearly a decade ago rattled the financial-services industry.

Researchers at Cornell University set out

to quantify just how much of an impact the largest Ponzi scheme in history had on the industry. They found that people who knew victims of Madoff's fraud or lived in areas where they were concentrated pulled \$363 billion from investment funds. "The withdrawals were so hefty in some areas that some investment firms ended up shutting their doors and going out of business," said Scott Yonker, an assistant professor at Cornell and co-author of the report, in a statement. Madoff, 79, was sentenced in 2009 to 150 years in prison for an elaborate scheme that involved falsifying

his firm's returns and clients' account statements. He is incarcerated in Butner, North Carolina. The withdrawals boiled down to trust, and whether clients were suspicious that their investment advisors were also fraudulent. The study found that firms with clients in areas most affected by Madoff's scheme were 40% more likely to close shop than those in a control group. The researchers used court documents to identify over 10,000 victims who lived mostly in parts of California and Miami. They found that the loss of trust spread through the social networks of people who Madoff's scheme

targeted, notably elderly and wealthy Jews. "Advisers who provided services that can build trust, such as financial planning advice, experienced fewer withdrawals," the study said. "Taken together, our results show that trust plays a critical role in the financial intermediation industry." Most of the money withdrawn was deposited in less risky places including banks, the study, published in The Review of Financial Studies, showed. Irving Picard, the trustee who is recovering funds for Madoff's victims, has recouped about \$12 billion, according to a Reuters report in late-June.

# U.S., China Fail to Agree on Trade Issues, Casting Doubt on Other Issues

(News Agencies) Washington — The United States and China failed on Wednesday to agree on major new steps to reduce the U.S. trade deficit with China, casting doubt over President Donald Trump's economic and security relations with Beijing. The annual economic dialogue session in Washington ended with canceled news conferences, no joint statement and no new announcements on U.S. market access to China. The two sides had a "frank exchange" but failed to agree on most major bilateral trade and economic issues that were important to the United States, a senior U.S. official

said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly. These included U.S. demands for access to China's financial services markets, reducing excess Chinese steel capacity, reductions in auto tariffs, cutting subsidies for state-owned enterprises, ending Chinese requirements for data localization and lifting ownership caps for foreign firms in China, the official said. "China acknowledged our shared objective to reduce the trade deficit which both sides will work cooperatively to achieve," U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and U.S. Commerce

Secretary Wilbur Ross said in a brief statement, highlighting a rare point of consensus. The Chinese embassy in Washington cast the talks in a positive light, saying in a statement that both sides had acknowledged "significant progress" on the 100-day talks and would to work together to reduce the trade deficit. "The two sides will expand areas of cooperation in services and increase trade in services; expand mutual investment, and create a more open, equitable, transparent and convenient investment environment," the embassy said. The session had been billed

as a follow-up to Trump's first meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping at his Mar-A-Lago, Florida, estate in April when Trump hailed Xi's cooperation in curbing the threat from North Korea. Trump said that this would lead to better trade terms for China. The two leaders launched a 100-day economic plan that has produced some industry-specific announcements, including the resumption of American beef sales in China and pledged to grant limited U.S. access to some financial services sectors. But there have been no new initiatives since, and

Trump has grown increasingly frustrated with China's lack of pressure on North Korea. His administration has threatened new sanctions on small Chinese banks and other firms doing business with Pyongyang. Ross and Mnuchin said the U.S. position on the China trade relationship would be guided by "the principles of balance, fairness, and reciprocity on matters of trade will continue to guide the American position so we can give American workers and businesses an opportunity to compete on a level playing field."

# GST's real effect could be felt in 3 months: Jaitley



(News Agencies)NEW DELHI: Calling GST a win-win deal, finance minister Arun Jaitley on Wednesday said the new tax regime will smoothen business operations, augment revenue and end 'inspector raj' while eventually bringing down prices for the common man.

Speaking at the BJP parliamentary party meeting, Jaitley said prices of goods had come down between 4-8% since the rollout of GST from July 1. He said the real effect could be felt after three months. The FM said there was no longer 'tax on tax' and transport of goods across the country has been going on unhindered now. "More than one crore firms will be migrating to the new tax regime against around 80 lakh companies earlier," he said. Jaitley allayed fears of the MPs saying the new tax regime will be more beneficial for the states. External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj separately briefed party MPs on recent foreign visits of PM Narendra Modi and said no Indian PM had ever received the kind of welcome in the US like Modi did (from President

Donald Trump). Swaraj gave a detailed presentation on recent visit of Modi to the US and Israel as she termed the visits as

one of the most successful since heads of both the countries offered a warm welcome to the visiting PM.

# India largest provider of 'online labour'

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: India is the largest supplier of online labour, says a recent report, analysing data from e-platforms connecting freelancers with employers.

India is followed by Bangladesh, US, Pakistan, Philippines and the UK in what is being termed "digital gig work" or freelance work offered online. Over half of the online work supplied out of India is dominated by software development and technology sector.

Oxford Internet Institute of the University of Oxford published the report last week. It hosts the "iLabour project" as part of which the Online Labour Index is produced. This report analysed data for the first week of July.

"The largest overall supplier of online labour according to the data is the traditional outsourcing destination India, which is home to 24% of the workers observed. India is followed by Bangladesh

(16%) and US (12%). Different countries' workers focus on different occupations. The software development and technology category is dominated by workers from the Indian subcontinent, who command a 55% market share. The professional



services category, which consists of services such as accounting, legal services, and business consulting, is led by UK-based workers with a 22% market share."

While software and technology services was the top sector for India, creative and multimedia services came second, and sales and marketing support was the third most popular online labour sector for the country. The report analyses data from four online platforms - Fiverr, Freelancer, Guru, and PeoplePerHour. "Based on traffic statistics, we can estimate that these four sites represent at least 40% of the global market for platform-based online work," says senior OII research fellow Vili Lehdonvirta.

# Sexual harassment at Fox News

# Murdochs overhaul culture with eyes on Sky

(News Agencies) Is this really a brand new Fox News? In the past several months, dogged by a growing pile of legal suits and paying out more than \$45 million in settlements over sexual harassment and discrimination charges, Fox News has shaken up its executive roster, ousting section heads and top on-air talent, as it vows to live up to the Murdoch family's pledge to eradicate an oppressive work environment. It's got incentive: parent company 21st Century Fox, controlled and run by Rupert Murdoch and his sons Lachlan and James, wants regulators to approve its purchase of U.K.-based TV and Internet provider Sky, and corporate culture is a factor. Fox News, the crown jewel of the company's cable TV enterprise, wants to maintain its standing as the top cable news network, which it has held for more than 15 years. But questions remain as to whether the recent changes can transform a work environment into one where sexual harassment, retaliation and racial discrimination — all claims made by employees over the last year — are no longer condoned. Recent revelations about some employees suggest that the culture, cultivated by late Fox News CEO Roger Ailes, may run deep.



# Arun Jaitley is too busy with finance ministry, Narendra Modi must find a full-time defence minister



attention of a full-time minister each. Currently, finance minister Arun Jaitley doubles up as defence minister.

The time is ripe right now. NDA's vice-presidential candidate Venkaiah Naidu has just vacated two ministries, adding to the list of ministries being looked after by part-time ministers. General elections are 20 months away, so a rejigged council of ministers will have enough time to deliver on critical reforms in all spheres, especially economic and defence. On the economic front, the Modi government has far more battles left to fight. Beyond

the introduction of two of its most critical reforms – roll out of Goods and Services Tax (GST) and bankruptcy code and a series of incremental reforms such as taking ahead the Aadhar-linked Direct benefit Transfer (DBT) programme and subsidy rationalisation – the Modi government needs to resolve bad debts in the banking sector, push ahead the privatisation agenda of ailing PSUs and banks and see through reforms in land and labour.

full-time defence minister IndiaDinesh UnnikrishnanJul, 18 2017 19:54:03 IST Comment 2 It's high time Prime Minister

Narendra Modi appointed a full-time defence minister. As his government enters the last two years of its term, there is massive work in both defence and finance ministries, requiring the undivided attention of a full-time minister each. Currently, finance minister Arun Jaitley doubles up as defence minister. The time is ripe right now. NDA's vice-presidential candidate Venkaiah Naidu has just vacated two ministries, adding to the list of ministries being looked after by part-time ministers. General elections are 20 months away,

(Contd on page 23)

(News Agencies)It's high time enters the last two years of its Prime Minister Narendra Modi term, there is massive work in both defence and finance ministries, requiring the undivided

## Sikkim standoff

*China's rapid escalation is limiting India's diplomatic options; can New Delhi hold its nerve?*



(News Agencies) The Sikkim standoff is turning into a grim battle of nerves. While the trajectory is on expected lines, the escalation timeline is not. China seems to be either fast running out of patience, or wants to convey that impression to India. Either way, the message out of Beijing is that New Delhi's options are limited. It must either accept Chinese supremacy and fall in line, or pay a heavy price.

There is a subtext to the message, and it reflects the larger Chinese annoyance with the Narendra Modi government. Beijing feels that the Modi government is growing bigger than its boots and its assertiveness is not underwritten by soaring economic growth or military supremacy as China's is.

The impasse at the tri-junction might be an immediate spark but to China, it is an opportune issue at an opportune time to puncture holes in Modi's 'tough guy' image and freeze once and for all the power differential so that New Delhi may be adequately chastised against future 'misadventures'.

(Contd on page 24)

## Let Obamacare fail - Trump's new plan



(News Agencies) President Donald Trump has said the new Republican healthcare policy should be to allow the current law to collapse. "I'm not going to own it," Mr Trump told reporters of

Obamacare, "I can tell you the new Republicans are not going to own it." Support for the Republican Senate bill fell apart on Monday when two more senators said they could not back it.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Mr Trump was "playing a dangerous game" with the US healthcare system. "He is actively, actively trying to undermine the healthcare system in this country using millions of Americans as political pawns in a cynical game", Mr Schumer said on Tuesday. Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell said the chamber would vote early next week on a motion for repealing Obamacare only. But with at least three Republicans against the plan B, it is probably doomed, too. Call it Mr Trump's "Joker" option for Obamacare repeal. Do nothing, and watch the world burn.

(Contd on page 24)

## Air India's debt pile

*At Rs 6,000 cr interest outgo, balance sheet cleanup crucial for co's sale*



(News Agencies)New Delhi: Almost Rs 10 crore daily net loss and Rs 16.5 crore in daily debt servicing. This is what Air India's balance sheet looked like as of March this year, according to data presented by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha in Rajya Sabha today. The airline has about Rs 6,000 crore debt servicing obligation on its books which is 50 percent more than previously thought. And despite historic low fuel prices in FY17 helping it significantly improve its margins, Air India's balance sheet continues to be splashed in red. (Contd on page 23)



# Meet & Greet and Fundraiser held in New York for 1st Hindu US Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard

*(By a Staff Reporter) Long Island-Tulsi Gabbard , United States Representative for Hawaii's congressional district recently visited New York. She met a core group of supporters for a fundraiser and appearances. Congresswoman Tulsi is an American politician and member of the Democratic Party . Congresswoman Tulsi's meet & greet, and fundraiser was held at the residence of Dr. Syed Akhtar. Event coordination was done by noted south Asian community leader Ali Mirza in Woodbury long Island.*



*(Seen in Pictures) : (1) (From left) Ali Mirza and his wife with Congresswoman Tulsi (2) Sonny Sharanjit S Thind , Publisher of South Asian Insider, Congresswoman Tulsi and Jay Jasbir singh, Publisher of Hum hindustani Hindi weekly (3) Shridhar Shanmugam, President of Shani Temple of New York with Congresswoman Tulsi (4) Congresswoman Tulsi was presented with a Plaq and a Shwal by Shridhar Shanmugam, President of Shani Temple of New York*



**A Meet and Great with Republican Nassau County Candidate Senator Jack Martin was recently held in a Restaurant in Hicksville by South Asian community leaders and activists. Event was also attended by Republican Nassau County Comptroller Candidate Steve Labriola. Community leaders and attendees asked questions, and were given answers by both candidates. (Pictures by Ruth Jhadav)**

