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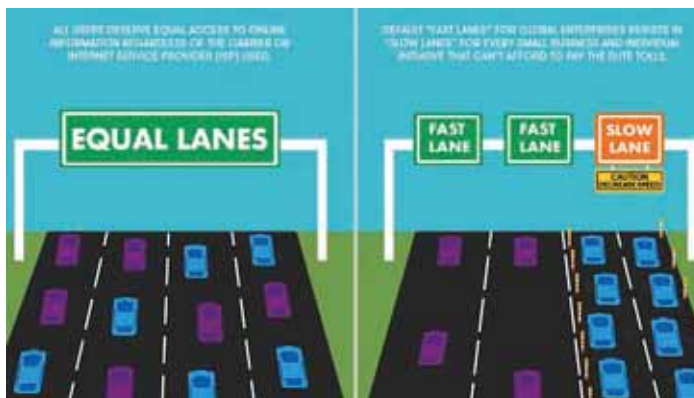


(News Agencies)WASHINGTON: India is Afghanistan's "most reliable regional partner", the Pentagon told the US Congress on Friday as it welcomed additional economic, medical, and civic support from New Delhi to the war-torn country. "India is Afghanistan's most reliable regional partner and the largest contributor of development assistance in the region," said the Pentagon in its report to the Congress titled 'Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan'.

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## "End of the Internet as we know it"

(News Agencies)A CNN breaking news headline declared the "end of the Internet as we know it" after the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted Thursday afternoon to repeal its landmark net neutrality rules. "End of the internet as we know it," the lead CNN.com headline read briefly after the FCC voted 3-2 along party lines to do away with its 2015 Open Internet Order that was implemented during the Obama administration. "Trump's FCC repeals Obama-era net neutrality regulations intended to keep the web open and fair," read the CNN sub-headline on its home page. Critics of the decision had been warning the rollback signaled the end in the weeks leading up to the vote, a charge FCC Chairman Ajit



Pai denies. "It is not going to destroy the internet. It is not going to end the internet as we know it. It is not going to kill democracy. It is not going to stifle free expression online," Pai said at the Thursday hearing. The CNN headline was mirrored by a statement from Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who tweeted a video to his more than 7 million followers that "we must fight back" after the vote came down. "This is

the end of the internet as we know it. In Congress and in the courts we must fight back." Democrats, technology companies and consumer groups have all argued that the rules under the 2015 Open Internet Order are crucial in helping to stop providers such as Cablevision, Comcast and Verizon from having too much control as internet gatekeepers.

"They will have the power to block websites, throttle services and censor online content. They will have the right to discriminate and favor the internet traffic of those companies with whom they have pay-for-play arrangements and the right to consign all others to a slow and bumpy road," said Jessica Rosenworcel, one of two Democrats on the FCC who voted against the repeal.

## Bergen County Prosecutor Gurbir Grewal to be Attorney General of New Jersey

(News Agencies)Gov.-elect Phil Murphy on Tuesday announced the Bergen County prosecutor as his nominee for state attorney general and vowed that his pick will lead the fight against the Trump administration on issues ranging from health care to voting rights and the environment. Gurbir S. Grewal, an Indian-American Sikh, is Murphy's first high-level nomination —

and a historic one — as the Democrat works to fill out an administration set to take office on Jan. 16. If Grewal is confirmed by the state Senate, which seems all but certain, Murphy said he would become the first South Asian attorney general in New Jersey and the first Sikh to hold the position in any state. "The American dream is alive and well in New Jersey," Grewal said at a news

conference in Trenton where Murphy made the announcement. Attorney general is one of the most powerful positions in New Jersey government, serving as the state's top cop and top lawyer. The person in that role leads the 7,200-employee Department of Law and Public Safety, which includes the state police, civil rights enforcement, consumer affairs and civil litigation.





# Twenty Individuals Charged with Enterprise Corruption in Massive \$146 Million Health Care Fraud

***Defendants Allegedly Recruited Patients from Homeless and Low-Income Population; Ordered Unnecessary Medical Tests and Procedures, Then Billed Insurers***

(SAI Bureau) Acting Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, together with United States Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General New York region recently announced that four doctors are among 34 defendants – 20 individuals and 14 corporations – named in an 878-count indictment that alleges that they participated in a massive scheme to defraud Medicaid, Medicare and other publicly-funded insurance providers of approximately \$146 million over three years.

Acting District Attorney Gonzalez said, “These defendants allegedly exploited the poorest among us to divert millions of dollars from publicly-funded insurance programs these same vulnerable people rely on. Some of the defendants then used the stolen funds to maintain a lavish lifestyle consisting of multi-million dollar homes, expensive handbags and luxury travel. This massive scheme, which provided no patient care at all, wasted millions of taxpayer dollars dedicated to Medicaid and Medicare, which serve as a lifeline for so many Americans – our families, our friends, our neighbors. I cannot and will not allow this type of corruption and fraud to take place in Brooklyn and will



spend every resource to stop it.” Special Agent in Charge Lampert said, “Yet another fraudulent scheme involving doctors and other providers charged with fleecing vital government health programs serving vulnerable individuals. Criminals who place personal greed over patient care will be held accountable and prosecuted. Together, with our law enforcement partners, we will ensure that justice is done.” Commissioner Banks said, “To prey on those most in need of help by pocketing the funds desperately needed for their medical care is a betrayal of everything that social services and medical professions stand for. I am grateful for the hard work of everyone at the Kings County District Attorney’s Office, our partners in the State and Federal government, and our own Office of Medicaid Provider Fraud and Abuse Investigations for their diligent work investigating these



serious allegations.”

Inspector General Rosen said, “This collaborative investigation and resulting indictment send an



unmistakable message to those who seek personal gain by preying upon vulnerable New Yorkers and exploiting the Medicaid program: ‘you

will be identified and held fully accountable.’ My office will continue to work closely with our partners in the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office, U.S. Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General, NYC Human Resources Administration, NYS Department of Health, and other state and federal agencies to protect Medicaid recipients and save taxpayer dollars by rooting out fraud, waste and abuse in the Medicaid program.”

## Punjab man dies under mysterious condition while trying to enter US illegally

***Gurbachan Singh said his son had paid Rs 6 lakh out of Rs 25 lakh demanded by a travel agent for a tourist visa and was supposed to board a flight from Colombia to reach the US***



A retired Punjab Police inspector has claimed that his son has died under mysterious circumstances in Colombia while going to the US through “donkey flights”, which is an illegal and backdoor way to reach the destination country. On Tuesday, Gurbachan Singh appealed to the government to help him bring back the body of his son, Palwinder Singh.

The 39-year-old, who hailed from Bains Awan village in Tanda from Hoshiarpur district, had left for the US on December 4. Gurbachan Singh said his son had paid Rs 6 lakh out of Rs 25 lakh demanded by a travel agent for a tourist visa. He added that Palwinder took a flight to Ecuador from Delhi and from there he reached Colombia to board the connecting flight.

## Bombing Suspect, in Hospital Bed, Is Ordered Held Without Bail

In a brief court appearance held via videoconference from a hospital room, the Brooklyn man accused of detonating a homemade pipe bomb inside a crowded subway tunnel in Manhattan was ordered held without bail on Wednesday by a federal magistrate judge.

The defendant, Akayed Ullah, lying in a bed with his head elevated slightly so that he could look into the camera, was subdued but appeared to be listening attentively as the judge asked whether he could see her. “Yes, ma’am, I can see you,” he said.

Mr. Ullah, 27, an immigrant from Bangladesh, was charged on Tuesday with five charges, including use of weapons of mass destruction, providing material support to the Islamic State

and bombing a place of public use. As the judge, Katharine H. Parker of Federal District Court in Manhattan, advised Mr. Ullah of his rights and summarized the charges, he nodded occasionally, his face looking dour but otherwise expressionless. At times, he seemed to close his eyes briefly.

Mr. Ullah was being held at Bellevue Hospital Center while he recovers from injuries suffered when he set off the crude explosive device, which was made with screws, Christmas tree lights and a nine-volt battery, and was

affixed to his torso with plastic zip ties.

Mr. Ullah had no visible injuries as he lay in the bed, although almost his entire body was hidden beneath a white covering. According to a criminal complaint filed against Mr. Ullah, he admitted after his arrest that he had built the pipe bomb and carried out the attack “for the Islamic State.”

He told investigators that he had hoped “to terrorize as many people as possible,” and timed the attack for a workday “because he believed that there would be more people,” the complaint said.

The complaint said Mr. Ullah had for

several years viewed ISIS propaganda online, including a video that instructed followers, if they could not travel overseas to join ISIS, to carry out attacks “in their homelands.”

About a year ago, Mr. Ullah began researching how to build explosives and in recent weeks, he began to collect the materials needed to construct the bomb, the complaint noted. It said he built the pipe bomb about a week ago in his apartment in Brooklyn.

During the videoconference hearing, two lawyers stood by Mr. Ullah’s bedside, while two assistant United States attorneys and Judge Parker remained in the courtroom.

On the issue of bail, one prosecutor, Shawn G. Crowley, declared, “The government seeks detention.”





# Diwali Foundation USA's "Power of One" Awards, held at The United Nations bestowed on 6 Diplomats



(By Our Staff Reporter) United Nations, New York- On December 11, 2017, Belarus, Georgia and India joined with Diwali Foundation USA, as Co-Organizers, to bestow "Power of One" Awards - essentially the "Oscars of Diplomacy":

upon six exceptional diplomats: Amb. Maged Abdelaziz, Amb. Ion Botnaru, Amb. Lakshmi Puri, Amb. Matthew Rycroft, Amb. Nawaf Salam, & Amb. Yuriy Sergeyev. This historic event was co-sponsored by Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Botswana, Cyprus, France, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Malta, Morocco, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Permanent Observer State of Palestine, and International Atomic Energy Agency-NY.

Belarus' Amb. Rybakov, Master of Ceremonies invited Georgia's Amb. Kaha Imnadze, India's Amb. Syed Akbaruddin, Diwali Foundation's chair Ranju Batra, National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs Chair Ravi Batra along with Amb. Frantisek Ruzicka,

Chef de Cabinet to President of the 72nd General Assembly, H.E. Miroslav Lajcak, to light the Diya.

He expressed gratitude to all nations who agreed to Co-Sponsor the Award Ceremony, and named each of them individually. He said, "Having Diwali event held already second year in a row is hopefully becoming a regular tradition here in the United Nations. Being a symbol of charity, kindness and peace, Diwali is in lockstep with the goals and ideals of the United Nations. After a very successful launch of the Diwali stamp in 2016, this is now transformed into the "the power of one" awards acknowledging the role a person can play in the International community. We all hope that the "power of one" award will illuminate the way forward towards a more peaceful, safe and secure world in the United Nations and beyond."

India's Amb. Akbaruddin said: "Thank you Valentin and thank you Kaha for taking the initiative to launch - what started off last time as the "power of one" by Ranju, and

then Ravi actually made it a "2 for 1" - and that's with the "power of one" is: that you always carry your better-half with you. "It is a pleasure and an honor to join all of you here at this special Diwali Stamp 'Power of One' event. I want to start by thanking Permanent Representative H.E. Valentin Rybakov for the key role played by him in bringing this initiative to the United Nations. I also want to thank the co-organizer - Georgia and the over 20 co-sponsoring States, Observers and the IAEA for their support and collaboration to make this event possible.

It is also my pleasure to commend the leadership and hard work of Ms. Ranju Batra, Chair of Diwali Foundation USA Inc. and Mr. Ravi Batra, Chair National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs, in institutionalizing the legacy and message of the Diwali Forever Stamp through the 'Power of One' award.

Diwali Foundation USA Chair Ranju Batra's in her remarks, said:

"Thank you Amb. Valentin Rybakov for your warm

introduction. Indeed, I thank every Speaker - Ambassadors Ruzicka, Akbaruddin, Imnadze, Boukadoum, Umarov and Yelchenko for your national, and personal, support and kindness.

As you know, I was determined to succeed in my goal to get the USPS to issue a Diwali Stamp, despite knowing many others had tried and given up. I spent nearly 7 years chasing it peacefully, and using only inclusive and respectful means. Along the way, I got a lot of help from a lot of people. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney accepted my invitation and provided national political leadership. I was happy that there were stamps for Hanukkah, Christmas, Eid, and Kwanza; but I also wanted one for Diwali. In October 2016, we won and got our Forever Diwali Stamp. I personally sold over 170,000 stamps to make the Diwali Stamp the USPS' #1 Bestseller for Day One in its over 200 year existence. Among many who were of great

support were Shiv Dass, now a Director of Diwali Foundation USA, Neeta Jain, Surinder Kathuria, Neeta Bhasin, Air India's Vandana Sharma, Amb. Dnyaneshwar Mulay, and each of you who signed our petitions - which included many in the UN family - such as Palestine's Ambassador's daughter Reem Mansour. Aside from my Grassroot efforts, I also secured support from India's Prime Minister Modi and America's President Obama.

Days after the Official Dedication, we attended a dinner hosted by Georgia's Ambassador Imnadze, and I told my story. Next day, Belarus' Ambassador Dapkiunas called Ravi to tell him that he had booked this historic Chamber to celebrate the Diwali Stamp and honor my journey at the UN.

At that celebration last year, Minister Rybakov spoke of my determined efforts as "The Power of One," and now-Minister Dapkiunas spoke of the Diwali Stamp's journey being consistent with the highest ideals of the UN Charter, and that Diwali was Global. That event, like a seed, with added prompting, grew this year into the Diwali Foundation USA. In turn, that resulted in today's inauguration of the "Power of One" Awards being bestowed upon globally exceptional people - who have toiled selflessly "to help form a more perfect," peaceful and secure world for all of us.





# Why India needs to protect its technology companies



***India has an advantage over China: its engineers are building Silicon Valley's most advanced technologies and leading many of its companies. And with the protectionist sentiments of the Trump administration and constant anti-immigrant rants, foreign-born people are getting a clear message: Go home; we don't want you. This is a gift to India and China, because the immigrant exodus is boosting their innovation capabilities.***

Ever since the Chinese Government banned Facebook in 2009, Mark Zuckerberg has been making annual trips there attempting to persuade its leaders to let his company back in. He learned Mandarin and jogged through the smog-filled streets of Beijing to show how much he loved the country. Facebook even created new tools to allow China to do something that goes against its founding principles: to censor and suppress content.

The Chinese haven't obliged. They realised the dangers of letting a foreign company dominate their technology industry. China also blocked Google, Twitter, and Netflix and raised enough obstacles to force Uber out.

Chinese technology companies are now amongst the most valuable (and innovative) in the world. Facebook's Chinese competitor Tencent eclipsed it in market capitalisation in November, crossing the \$500 billion mark. Tencent's social

media platform WeChat enables bill payment, taxi ordering, and hotel booking while chatting with friends; it is so far ahead in innovation that Facebook may be copying its features. Other Chinese companies such as Alibaba, Baidu, and DJI are racing ahead in e-commerce and logistics; artificial intelligence and self-driving cars; and drone technologies. These companies are gearing up to challenge Silicon Valley itself.

The protectionism that economists have long decried, favouring domestic supplies of physical goods and services, limits both opportunity and incentive to innovate and evolve, and so stifles a country's competitiveness and productivity. When India imposed heavy tariffs on imported cars and electronics, for example, it created monopolies. The companies thus protected from all competition became lethargic, lagged in innovation, and began to offer substandard products and services at high

prices, hobbling India's economy.

Chinese technology protectionism has reaped huge rewards because it creates a fertile ground for local startups without any barriers to ideas and innovations from across its borders, which travel freely by electronic communication.

Over the Internet, knowledge and ideas spread instantaneously. Entrepreneurs in one country can easily learn about the innovations and business models of another country and duplicate them. Technologies are advancing on exponential curves and becoming faster and cheaper. Any technology company, in any country, that does not innovate risks going out of business, because local startups are constantly emerging that have the ability to challenge them.

Even the companies that China has protected face constant threats to their existence; they have to keep

innovating and improving services to survive. Their competition comes from within China.

Silicon Valley is also not the role model for free trade and openness. Its moguls openly tout the need to build monopolies and gain unfair competitive advantage by dumping capital. They take pride in having an economy in which money is the ultimate weapon and winners take all. If tech companies cannot copy a technology, they buy the competitor.

Amazon, for example, has been losing money or earning razor-thin margins for more than two decades. But because it was gaining market share and killing off its brick-and-mortar competition, investors rewarded it with a high stock price. With this inflated capitalisation, Amazon raised money at below market interest rates and used it to increase its market share. Uber has used the same strategy to raise billions of

dollars to put potential global competitors out of business.

Since losing the China market, both Amazon and Uber have had their eyes set on the consolation prize: India. Facebook has also tried every trick in the book to dominate India's mobile markets, including offering Free Basics, an Internet walled garden, which would have allowed it to control everything that the user saw.

Just as it stopped Free Basics, India must stop the unfair competition using its best weapon: regulation and taxes. Doing so will not stifle innovation but boost it, because Indian startups will be able to copy what they need to and compete on a level playing field.

This may sound strange, but copying is good for innovation. This is how Chinese technology companies got started: by adapting Silicon Valley's technologies for Chinese use and improving on them. And that is how Silicon Valley works too.

**(Contd on page 22)**

## A meeting, a conspiracy

### BJP's fear and foreboding about the Gujarat outcome leads to a bizarre theory

Politicians are usually very careful about what they say in public. They know it can be used against them. Consequently they have a knack of speaking at length but not saying very much. This is not eloquence but self-protection.

So it's particularly surprising when one of them puts his foot firmly in his mouth and does so not once but repeatedly. When that individual happens to be the prime minister, a man who's known for carefully thinking through what he says, you have to ask why he's doing this?

On Sunday, Narendra Modi deliberately and maliciously misconstrued an innocent

meeting at Mani Shankar Aiyar's residence on December 6 and presented it as a conspiracy by Pakistan to interfere in the Gujarat polls. I was invited to that meeting — a one-hour discussion with Pakistan's former foreign minister Khurshid Kasuri followed by dinner — although, at the last moment, I was unable to make it. The other guests included former high commissioners to Pakistan, former foreign secretaries and foreign ministers, a former vice president and a former army chief and a few journalists.

The intention was to talk about the India-Pakistan situation, obviously with specific

reference to Kashmir and terror. Kasuri is a confirmed and passionate dove devoted to improving relations and seeking creative solutions to our problems.

This transparent and irreproachable meeting was presented by the prime minister as "a secret meeting". With heavy insinuation, he said: "Pakistan's high commissioner, former foreign minister, India's former vice-president and India's former PM Manmohan Singh all met at Aiyar's house for three hours and then, the next day, Mani Shankar calls Modi neech. This is a serious and sensitive issue... what is the reason for



such a secret meeting amidst Gujarat elections?"

The prime minister then proceeded to draw two connections, one ludicrous and the other factually incorrect. First, he claimed "after the meeting, people of Gujarat, backward communities, poor people and Modi were insulted, don't you think such events raise doubts here?" This was the ridiculous part.

Speaking at Sanand, he claimed the meeting was held a

day after "a former chief of the Pakistan army", Arshad Rafiq, had called for Ahmed Patel to be made chief minister of Gujarat. "Why is Pakistan's senior retired army officer exercising his brain in the Gujarat elections?", he asked. Rafiq, however, is not a former Pakistani army chief but just a former D.G. This was the inaccurate bit. It also has no connection with the meeting held at Aiyar's house.

**(Contd on page 22)**

# Yes, the Truth Still Matters

Of all the questions that the ascendancy of Donald Trump has raised — on the value of political experience in governing, on the fitness of business executives as government executives or the profile of the Republicans as defenders of the rich and the Democrats as the sentinels of the poor — none is as perplexing as perhaps the central question of the age:

Does the truth still matter?

It emerged again recently when reports surfaced that the president, who had previously acknowledged his presence on the "Access Hollywood" videotape, has suggested that he did not make the comments on the tape. He also resumed questioning whether Barack Obama was born in the United States — despite having said he accepted it as true last year. In a speech, Mr. Trump, contradicting almost every analysis of the tax bill, said the measure would hurt wealthy people, including himself.

For nearly a half-century in journalism, from hometown cub reporter to national political correspondent to metro daily executive editor, I've navigated with the aid of a newspaperman's North Star: the conviction that there is such a thing as objective truth that can be discovered and delivered through dispassionate hard work and passionate good faith, and that the product of that effort, if thoroughly documented, would be accepted as the truth.

Mr. Trump has turned that accepted truth on its head, sowing doubts about the veracity of news reporting by promoting the notion that the mainstream media spews "fake news." Employing an evocative, sinister phrase dating to the French Revolution and embraced by Lenin and his Soviet successors, he has declared that great portions of the press are the "enemy of the people."

Much of the Trump rhetoric on the press, to be sure, is less statecraft than stagecraft, designed to dismiss negative stories — as if the media had been never critical of past presidents instead of the equal-opportunity pugilists who bedeviled Bill Clinton (in the Monica Lewinsky episode) and George W. Bush (in the aftermath of the Iraq war).

Even so, Mr. Trump can be credited with prompting, however inadvertently, the most profound period of press self-assessment in decades — and it comes at a period of unusual financial peril for the mainstream media. All around are sad affirmations of the diminishing credibility of the press, disheartening reminders that at least a third of the country, and perhaps more, regards our work as meaningless, biased or untruthful. In newsrooms, as at newsstands across the country, difficult but vital questions about the methods and motives of the press are being raised, forcing newsmongers and consumers of news to question long-held assumptions.

There are "alternative facts." For example, this article states the earth is 93 million miles from the sun. No it's not. Alternative fact...

Earlier this year, Representative Tim Murphy, a Republican whose district includes the southern suburbs of Pittsburgh, told a closed-door fund-raiser in the tony Duquesne Club that our newspaper, the Post-Gazette, specialized in "fake news." One of my sources called me while the session was underway, and when it ended, I telephoned the astonished Mr. Murphy and demanded an apology, which he granted only reluctantly. Eight months later our paper reported that the congressman, ardently anti-abortion, had sought to persuade his mistress to undergo the procedure. He later resigned under pressure.

This has become routine. The most prominent public-relations officer in Pittsburgh told us that a perfectly benign, and completely accurate, report on his institution's activities was another example of fake news. Our police reporter repeatedly gets emails accusing her of producing fake news. Readers have called our high-tech writer charging she had produced fake news. I speak in the community all the time, and in the past year the question of whether The Post-Gazette is a purveyor of fake news never fails to come up. It's almost always the first question. My answer: In the 15 years I have been executive editor, we have not knowingly published one story, or one paragraph, or one sentence, or one syllable that was not true. It's not that these questions never emerged before. It was possible to assemble established facts to argue, for example, that the 906 bills passed by Congress from 1947 to 1949 — including the Taft-Hartley Act and the major reorganization of the armed services and the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency — meant that Congress was productive in that period. But it also was possible to arrange the same facts, or to pick some facts and to omit others, to argue quite the opposite, as Harry Truman did in the 1948 presidential election when, in politically potent rhetoric, he spoke of the "do-nothing 80th Congress."

During Watergate, Vice President Spiro Agnew spoke of "nattering nabobs of negativism" to attack the press that bit by bit was uncovering the truth of President Richard Nixon's lies. This year we had Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president, introducing the notion of "alternative facts."

# Madness!

*If we want to be called a civilised society, a progressive polity and a constitutional democracy, we need to put an end to these 'communal' murders.*

There is a deep gash in my nation's soul and it has split into two: left and right, and right and wrong. There is no middle ground any longer; no meeting place. If you are neutral, you will not get any funding, a young friend tells me. Everybody, that is, everyone who knows the English alphabet, is spouting Reverend Niemoller. The videos are horrific: people getting lynched or hacked to death over cows and at times women. As if these are interchangeable commodities in a patriarchal marketplace. Murder has replaced dialogue. The latest video from Rajasthan is unbearable, a Muslim man crying out for mercy—babu, babu, babu, please don't kill me—while being hit repeatedly with a pickaxe and then set on fire. It is impossible to even watch the video.

Will this madness ever stop? The dusty loose soil of the Ganga-Jamuna plains seems to have an insatiable thirst for blood. How much longer will the Muslim, Christian and Hindu rulers take turns in subjugating the other? Truth and reconciliation, what Mandela learned from Gandhi, seem to be two empty, desperate words flapping their wings against the cage of hatred. The shrieks of the murdered rend the air, which has turned toxic with hatred. Has our world become an asylum or have we gone mad in this new world? Hat-red for votes, hatred for money and hatred for fame. Everybody loves to hate someone. The bhakts hate liberal elites, the liberal elites hate Modi and both hate people trying to find some middle space. Yes, there is no middle space in a murder scene nor is there any logic to religion. The worst acts of brutality seem to be unleashed by the local thugs on powerless, meek people in Rajasthan. From Pehlu Khan's murder on the streets of Alwar to the latest video from Rajsamand, something has gone seriously wrong in Rajasthan. If this video is true, we seem to be staring at a gaping black hole called law and order, and administration. In the latest instance, the killing seems to be over love jihad, not that the psychotic murderers need a reason to kill. Jihad, not in the canonical sense but in its translation into everyday violence by Islamist fundamentalists, doesn't have anything to do with love. Whoever coined the term love jihad ought to be deranged. The essence of the term is a Muslim man (or even a woman) luring a Hindu woman and then getting her converted in a communally or often foreign-funded seminary as in the case of Sathya Sarani in Kerala, which is suspected by the police to be linked to the Islamist People's Front of India. There is no reason why an Islamist organisation like PFI, which is accused of links with the Islamic State, would want its activists to fall in love. Their agenda is conversion and there is no love in conversion. Who would insist on the conversion of his partner other than a bigot? It is the job of the law-enforcing agencies to investigate and establish the agenda and practices of such communal outfits. Till then, if we want to be called a civilised society, a progressive polity and a constitutional democracy, we need to put an end to these murders. All claims to vegetarianism, cow worship and piety get drowned in the cries for mercy of the man in the video. He is not just a Muslim, he is also a poor labourer, getting ritually butchered probably by his employer. Here is caste, class, communal and feudal biases in full play. Will this madness end? Will there be redemption?



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# Banning condom ads like throwing baby out with bathwater

*The advertisement industry itself is no stranger to innuendo and double entendre – and it is a blatant hypocrisy to make advertisements for condoms the scapegoat in this issue.*



of it through online media. Deep-set social norms that prevent open and honest discussions and sharing correct information on sexual and reproductive health at appropriate ages underlines the burning issue of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rampant misinformation that has partly to mental health issues and toxic relationships.

The other contentious issue is “indecent, vulgar, suggestive, repulsive or offensive themes or treatment” in ads. The advertisement industry itself is no stranger to innuendo and double entendre – and it is a blatant hypocrisy to make advertisements for condoms the scapegoat in this issue. Are condoms indecent? No. Condoms are one of the earliest and safest contraceptives, that not only prevent unwanted pregnancies, but also act as a barrier to HIV AIDS, urinary tract

infections, and other sexually transmitted diseases. Given that almost half of India's 48.1 million pregnancies are unwanted, and we have a high number of abortions, an estimated 15.6 million as observed by a recent Guttmacher Study, it makes a compelling reason for people to know about condoms and to be reminded to use them.

In the basket of contraceptive choices in India, condoms are the only spacing method for men, enabling male involvement in family planning. It is also one of the few short term methods of contraception that is still not being used widely enough. Just 5.6 per cent of the male population use condoms, while the burden of contraception is borne unequally by women. What we need is more awareness and promotion, and if advertisements are a way to create the demand for safe sex and family planning,

then we need to ensure that it is not stifled by restrictions. That would in effect throw the baby out with the bath water, undoing decades of effort that has gone into advocating for sexual and reproductive rights and prevention of HIV AIDS.

It is also important to note that advertisements for condoms have evolved with the social and cultural norms of the country, starting from the first ad for Nirodh in 1966, onto the recent consumer-centric ads. The I&B Ministry and the Advertising Standards Council are overlooking the real issue, which is to review the content of specific advertisements in terms of standards of decency. We must agree on a sensitive approach that does not compromise on putting out adequate information and advocating for sexual health and reproductive choice.

India's reproductive health is the unsuspecting casualty in the recent tussle on the appropriateness of condom advertisements. The advisory issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Monday, December 11, directs television channels to restrict the broadcast of condom ads between 10 pm and 6 am. By banishing the promotion of condoms to the shadows of after-sunset ‘adult’ content, we run the hazard of killing a public health necessity in a country of over 1.3 billion. The I&B ministry has cited the Cable Network Rules of 1994 that bars advertisements that “create in them [children] any interest in unhealthy practices”. Children today encounter and engage with a variety of content, a large part

## A game of chicken in the Korean peninsula

*On North Korea, the world is way past tactical solutions. Only a comprehensive diplomatic solution will work*

Thirteen thousand kilometres. That's how far North Korea's newest Hwasong-15 missile can travel, which puts the United States, its principal adversary, within striking distance. With nuclear capable intercontinental ballistic missiles in its arsenal, and with hardly any workable U.S. military options to disarm Pyongyang, nuclear North Korea is now an inevitability and here to stay. Lessons from the tragic end of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Qadhafi would further disincentivise North Korean supreme leader Kim Jong-un to give up his weapons. Pyongyang's neighbours, namely Japan and South Korea, and the international community, the U.S. in particular, however, have not reconciled to this reality provoking a nuclear crisis in the Korean peninsula.

### The rationality of escalation

Kim Jong-un has been called all kinds of names, from a ruthless dictator to a madman. But Kim's actions consolidating his hold over power in Pyongyang or developing North Korea's strategic arsenal show that he is anything but irrational. More pertinently, his policy of taking on the entire international community is seemingly premised on the classical military strategy of escalating to de-escalate — to

initially escalate to unacceptable levels so as to force one's adversaries to make concessions in areas they otherwise would not. Being recognised as a nuclear weapon capable state would be the foremost objective; survival of his regime and an eventual removal of sanctions would be the natural consequences of such a recognition.

Given that Pyongyang is pursuing such an escalatory strategy when there is a great deal of great power disharmony and American indecisiveness, the odds are heavily stacked in its favour. In this game of chicken, Kim seems to be the winner.

### Great power buck-passing

Ever since Pyongyang withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, which led to the Six-Party Talks to diffuse the situation in the Korean peninsula, the North Korean regime has played the great powers against each other, exploiting their respective strategic calculations vis-à-vis Pyongyang, and each other. Having outmanoeuvred the big boys, North Korea conducted several nuclear tests and has now reached a point of no return, leaving the great powers stupefied and outwitted. Notwithstanding Pyongyang's determination to go down this road by all means, the

differing great power endgames and their unwillingness to commit sustained political and diplomatic capital, individually and together, to the Korean peninsula have contributed to the current crisis in a major way.

Today, having exhausted all its strategies, from imposing sanctions to isolating North Korea, Washington has neither any leverage nor is it in a position to make a successful military strike against the country. China is not only worried about a lethal nuclear fallout in its neighbourhood and the potential rush of North Korean refugees into its territory but also uneasy about what may otherwise be an excellent solution — a reunified Korea, something Beijing thinks will undercut its rising regional predominance. Russia, having had clandestine dealings with the North Korean regime in the past, also has no cards to play. And yet, if the unravelling of the Korean peninsula weakens Washington's standing in the region further, Moscow and Beijing would certainly not mind that.

Japan and South Korea, in a sense, then are the real victims in this game of great power buck-passing and geopolitical expediency. Seen as arch-rivals by Pyongyang and located in what is arguably the world's most

dangerous neighbourhood, Tokyo and Seoul would be the first to face Kim's wrath. What is complicating their plight even more is the shakiness of the extended deterrence commitments of U.S. President Donald Trump's “America First” policy.

Going nuclear would not take too much time or effort for either of these technologically advanced countries. The lack of a firm commitment from Washington on security commitments could potentially prompt them to develop a modest strategic arsenal which would have a domino effect for the region and the rest of the international system. In a self-help world of such kind, the NPT-led non-proliferation regime as we know it would cease to exist.

### Systemic crisis

At the heart of it, the crisis in the Korean peninsula reflects an endemic and worrying disorder in the contemporary international system. For one, international diplomacy has failed in the region. The ability of the great powers to compromise and reach a workable consensus to deal with global crises seems to have considerably reduced especially with the arrival of Mr. Trump and the assertion of China and Russia. What is even more worrying is this: the failure of the great

powers to arrive at a workable consensus in crisis situations is perhaps a sign of the times to come.

Second, the current crisis is further intensified by the deal-breaking tendencies of Mr. Trump. For instance, his administration's tirade against the Iran nuclear deal, the end result of long, arduous negotiations, is sending out all the wrong signals to the international community. If Kim's North Korea is decidedly revisionist, Mr. Trump's revisionist tendencies are equally damaging. What is also becoming clear today is that isolating states that “misbehave” does not resolve conflicts. Be it Pakistan, Iran or North Korea, isolating states in the international system can only further complicate existing crises. The reason why we have been able to restrain the development of Iranian nuclear weapons is precisely because the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, plus Germany) reached a historic nuclear deal in 2015 despite pressure from within the U.S. and countries such as Israel to use force against Tehran. Had it not been for this deal, we would have had quite a mess in our neighbourhood today.

(Contd on page 22)

# For clean air, India needs a policy leap



It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that air pollution is one of the biggest public concerns in India today. Its implications are many but just two will suffice here. A report of the Lancet Commission on pollution and health states that around 19 lakh people die prematurely every year from diseases caused by outdoor and indoor air pollution. A study by the Indian Journal of Pediatrics shows that the lungs of children who grow up in polluted environments like Delhi are 10% smaller compared to the lungs of children who grow up in the U.S. This is nothing short of a public health emergency. What is needed, therefore, is a comprehensive policy to curb pollution. We need to act now.

At the heart of the problem of pollution are carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. About 75% of all greenhouse gas emissions are CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced through burning fossil fuels — oil, coal and natural gas — to generate energy. Since the early 2000s, carbon emissions have

increased because of high growth in the Indian economy. In 2014, India's total carbon emissions were more than three times the levels in 1990, as per World Bank data. This is because of India's heavy dependence on fossil fuels and a dramatically low level of energy efficiency.

Emissions can be curbed only if people are persuaded to move away from fossil fuels and adopt greener forms of energy. But how do we achieve that? Tax carbon, period.

A part of the carbon revenue thus generated can be used for a systemic overhaul of the energy mix, which, to a large extent, would address the pressing problem of environmental degradation. The Indian economy's energy mix needs to be remodelled through investments in clean renewable sources of energy like solar, wind, hydro, geothermal and low-emissions bioenergy, and by raising the level of energy efficiency through investments in building retrofits, grid upgrades, and industrial efficiency. According to our estimates, this energy mix overhaul requires an additional 1.5% of GDP (to the current annual level of 0.6%) annually over the next two decades. Assuming that the Indian economy grows at 6% per annum and the population is likely to rise from 1.3 billion to 1.5 billion over the next two decades, the per capita

emissions will still fall as a result of this policy, from the International Energy Agency's 2035 Current Policy Scenario of 3.1 metric tonnes to 1.5 metric tonnes — a 52% decline. Since this expenditure is financed by the carbon tax revenue, it will be a revenue-neutral policy with no implications on the fiscal deficit.

There is, however, a problem with carbon tax. It's regressive in nature — it affects the poor more than the rich. Fortunately, there's a way out. Economists in the West have argued for a 'tax and dividend' policy according to which the revenue thus generated is distributed equally across its citizens and as a result, the poor are more than compensated for the loss, since in absolute amounts the rich pay more carbon tax than the poor. Such a policy of cash transfer, which might work in the West, however, has a problem in the Indian context, which has been discussed in the context of the Right to Food debate.

Instead of a cash transfer, the other part of the carbon revenue can be used for an in-kind transfer of free electricity to the population that contributes less carbon than the economy average, and universal travel passes to compensate for the rise in transport costs and to encourage the use of green public transport. Such a policy justly addresses the widening schism between Bharat, which bears the climate impact

burden, and India, which is imposing that burden because of its lifestyle choices.

As of 2014, more than 20% of India's population did not have access to electricity. In July 2012, India experienced a blackout affecting roughly 70 crore people. Through this Right to Energy programme, every household in India will have access to electricity, a feat that almost all the governments since Independence have dreamt of but have failed to deliver. The free entitlement of fuel and electricity for a household works out to 189 kWh per month based on our calculations from the National Sample Survey data. Anything above this limit will be charged in full to control misuse of this policy. Travel passes with a pre-loaded balance amount of around ₹4,600 per household per annum, which can be used in any mode of public transport — private and government alike — will be available for every household.

The level of carbon tax required for this policy to come into effect is ₹2,818 per metric tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>. It will be levied upstream, namely, at ports, mine-heads, and so on. While the prices of almost all the commodities will rise, the highest rise in price will be in fuel and energy since the carbon content is the highest in this category. To give an idea about the pinch that will be felt, the average price of electricity will

rise from its current value of ₹3.73 to ₹4.67 per kWh.

Other benefits

This policy not only curbs emissions but also delivers on providing more employment since the employment elasticity in greener forms of energy is higher than those in fossil fuel-based energy. Higher prices of commodities according to their carbon content will induce households, including the rich, to look for greener substitutes. They have the effect of enticing even the poor to move away from traditional forms of energy consumption because the price of energy will be zero for them (provided they consume less than the cut-off limit) as compared to a shadow positive price in terms of the time used for collection of wood or cow dung cakes. Availability of free energy also addresses the issue of stealing of electricity, since there will be no incentive left for those who steal. In India, even in 2014, the value of electricity stolen through corrupt means amounts to about 0.8% of GDP. It's difficult to put a figure on the health benefits that such a policy will entail, but as a rough measure, a significant part of more than 3% of India's GDP currently spent on pollution-induced diseases will surely come down. If we want to breathe to live, India needs to make such a policy leap.

# The power play in peacekeeping

Media coverage of peacekeeping operations is an area with many gaps. Consider for example, an incident last week, where at least 15 peacekeepers and five soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were killed and numerous peacekeepers wounded by armed militants in one of the worst attacks on United Nations personnel. A local Islamist extremist group overran the remote base. Most of the dead and wounded are from Tanzania. Was there any media coverage in India? It would have been a different story had they been troops from the West. In the midst of this, one must focus on China as its grip on UN affairs tightens and it starts deciding policy, to the detriment of India.

China rising

Amid the buzz around Beijing taking centre stage in world affairs, the import of China's

deployment of its first peacekeeping helicopter unit in the peacekeeping mission in Darfur has been lost sight of. Having made a reluctant entry in peacekeeping, when it sent a small cadre of soldiers to Cambodia in 1992, Beijing has become the largest troop contributor among the permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC). More importantly, China is now the third-largest contributor to the UN's regular budget and the second-largest contributor to the peacekeeping budget. News of any country supporting peacekeeping is good, but what does this portend in Beijing's quest for great power status? In a September 2017 report, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) says: "China's participation in UN operations offers... a low-cost means of demonstrating their commitment to global

stability... and allay(s) fears about its military and economic strength." But is the picture that simple for India in geopolitical power play?

The UN, especially the UNSC, is a blue-blooded political body, notwithstanding its charter of considering all countries as equals. In practice, a nation's voice is in proportion to what it contributes towards the UN, especially funds — India's contribution is only 0.737% when compared to China's 7.92% and the U.S.'s 22%. Troop contributions to peacekeeping do not get their due in UN power politics. Having led a peacekeeping contingent, in 2005, I have seen first hand how pivotal posts in UN missions have always been with major fund contributors. China is indeed a part of the picture.

**Veto power**

The CSIS report states that

China has used its veto only 12 times, but two were cast where its economic interests were involved, like in Myanmar and Zimbabwe despite these being low on human rights records. What is more worrisome, however, is that two vetoes were also cast "over concerns over territorial integrity pertaining to Taiwan". China was against sending UN peacekeepers to Guatemala and Macedonia because they had established diplomatic ties with Taiwan. When this self-serving act is linked with Beijing's other recent coercive actions such as against Mongolia due to a Dalai Lama visit, and against Japan when it is said to have halted exports of rare minerals following the arrest of a Chinese trawler captain, the increasing front-lining of China in international affairs via the UN has an ominous ring.

In 2015, China committed a standby force of 8,000

peacekeepers and a permanent police squad for UN operations. In addition, there is a 10-year \$1 billion China-U.N. peace and development fund and \$100 million in military assistance to the African Union. It is no coincidence that Africa is where China has large economic interests. Peacekeeping is said to be a cover for China to test its strengths in overseas deployments. The deployment of a People's Liberation Army Navy submarine off the Africa coast for anti-piracy patrolling is to train its seamen in long-distance operations.

**Impacting India**

Chinese involvement in peacekeeping, along with its higher funding contributions will put Beijing in the driver's seat in formulating peacekeeping mandates, thereby affecting India in more ways than one.





# The strongest Opposition voice in the country: Why 'silent' Manmohan Singh worries the BJP

*On Monday, Singh shocked the BJP with an unusually combative response to the PM's accusation of the Congress conspiring with Pakistan. He strongly criticised Modi for the "falsehood and canards being spread to score political points" and sought nothing less than an apology from him.*

It's an irony that the man who was ridiculed for his silence, the man who was accused of being weak has now become the Opposition's strongest voice against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The 'Accidental Prime Minister' has proved the power of his silence by speaking out aggressively—in his own carefully chosen words—against the policies of the BJP government.

Each time Dr Manmohan Singh has spoken, the BJP appears rattled. Everyone from the PM and Finance Minister downwards has come out to counter him. The BJP and its top leaders ridiculed him at every opportunity they got during his tenure as prime minister—they called him the weakest PM, ham-handed, a puppet and disparaged him as "nikamma". However, in May 2015, when Prime Minister Modi invited him for a discussion on the economy and foreign policy, Singh earned the respect of BJP watchers as well as its cadre. Modi was considered a complete contrast to Manmohan Singh. Modi is seen as a strong

and articulate leader, qualities Singh has yet to display. But today, Singh stands tall—as he predicted, history is already kinder to him than the media was during his tenure.

On Monday, Singh shocked the BJP with an unusually combative response to the PM's accusation of the Congress conspiring with Pakistan in the Gujarat elections at dinner organised by Mani Shankar Aiyar. He strongly criticised Modi for the "falsehood and canards being spread to score political points" and sought nothing less than an apology from him. The strongly-worded statement was political too. "Fearing imminent defeat in Gujarat, desperation of Prime Minister to hurl every abuse and latch on to every straw is palpable," his statement said. These words surprised even his party colleagues. Sources in the Congress said that when the PM first made the allegation, Singh was reluctant to go public and left it to the party to react. However, with the BJP mounting attack on him, Singh changed his mind and

broke his silence.

Singh's attack triggered a series of reactions from the BJP including senior ministers like Union Ministers Arun Jaitley and Ravi Shankar Prasad. Former Army Chief Deepak Kapoor who attended the dinner clarified to The Indian Express that it was just a private dinner and conversation concerned only Indo-Pak relations. However, Jaitley described it as a "misadventure." He then invoked Sharm-el-Sheikh, alleging that Singh had indulged in a "similar misadventure" in 2009 when he allowed a joint statement after a bilateral meeting between him and his Pakistan counterpart Yousuf Raza Gilani, to mention Balochistan in it. Yesterday, Manmohan Singh's statement seemed to have achieved its objective. More of those who attended the meeting came out to clarify that it was a usual track-II diplomatic meeting. Many in the BJP admitted privately that the PM should not have made such an allegation about a meeting which was attended by former

diplomats and a former Army Chief.

Singh has rarely made public interventions in the last three years since the BJP came to power but whenever he has spoken, it has weighed too heavily for the BJP to ignore. In November 2016, Dr Singh termed Modi's demonetization as "monumental disaster". He, uncharacteristically, lashed out at the government and its decision, calling it "organised loot and legalized plunder" adding that the '50-days' were like a torture that could have a disastrous effect on the poor and the deprived. He said the decision could lead to GDP declining by two percentage points, which he said would be "an underestimate and not an overestimate." Immediately, Jaitley countered. However, instead of speaking as Finance Minister, Jaitley reacted politically and reminded Singh of the loot under his regime in the 2G scam, the CWG scam and the irregularities in allocation of coal blocks. He asserted: "An anti-black money drive is (an) ethical

drive, a moral step. And what is morally and ethically correct has to be politically correct." But the damage was done. Singh's reputation as an economist made his words credible.

Modi took Singh's attack seriously. He criticised him for his "silence" on scams during his tenure and referred to him as someone adept at bathing with a raincoat on. Modi said: "There is not a single black mark against him despite all the corruption. Only Doctor Saab knows how to bathe with a raincoat in the bathroom." (Bathroom me raincoat pehen kar nahana... Yeh kala to doctor sahab hi jante hain, aur koi nahin janta). Singh's intervention during the passage of the GST bill in the Rajya Sabha, earned him the respect of the Treasury benches. While the Congress wanted to make the passage of the bill tougher for the BJP in the Upper House where it had the numbers to stall it, Singh intervened and asked his party not to seek changes in them to "maintain consensus and federal agreement."

## Centre to set up 12 special courts to exclusively deal with cases against 1,581 tainted lawmakers

NEW DELHI: In an important decision intended to put an end to the inordinate delay in the prosecution of politicians in criminal cases, the Centre has decided to set up special courts to deal exclusively with cases against 1,581 MPs and MLAs and to dispose them of within a year.

Centre's decision could be a body blow to politicians who, despite facing serious charges, have stayed in Parliament and state assemblies because of delays in trying them. All of them should come under the purview of the special courts and their fate could be decided

within a year.

Complying with the direction of Supreme Court which had asked the Centre to set up special courts for tainted lawmakers, the government had told the court that 12 such courts will be constituted across the country to decide cases against lawmakers who are facing serious criminal charges. Two special courts will handle cases against 228 MPs and other 10 courts will be set up in as many states—Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, UP and West Bengal—where number of

tainted MLAs are more than 65.

The government also placed the scheme framed by it for special courts before the court and said that Rs 7.80 crore had been earmarked for the scheme which would be in operation for a year. It said that number of special courts to be constituted was decided on the basis of presumption that each court would be able to dispose of 165 cases per annum and 12 courts would bring to an end the long pending cases against MPs and MLAs.

"Disposing of 1,581 criminal cases involving political persons within a time frame of one year as directed by SC is the aim as well as the objective of the scheme. It is proposed to set up a total of 12 special courts across the country in various states to decide such cases at an expenditure of Rs 7.80 crore. On December 8, Department of Expenditure in Ministry of Finance has given in-principle approval for the same," the government said in its affidavit.

The Centre said that in other states, where the number of cases tainted MLAs are less than 65, such cases could be tried in existing Fast Track Courts and no special court needed to be set up. The centre

filed its affidavit in compliance of SC order which had directed it to frame scheme while hearing a PIL filed by Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay seeking life ban on convicted lawmakers from electoral politics.

### TOUGH ASK

**228** Members of Parliament to be tried in two special courts

**13,500** Approx number of total pending cases

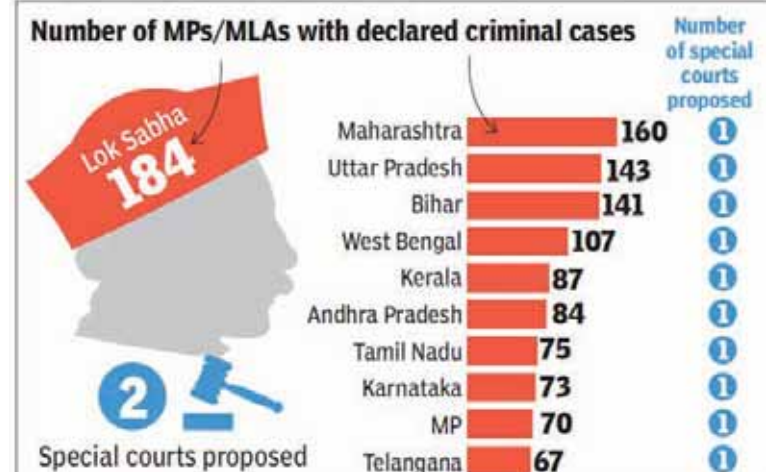
**1,125** Number of cases that each special

court will have to decide in a year

**242** Number of days trial courts normally function in a year

**4.6** Average no. of cases per day each special court will have to dispose of

### BOOKED FOR CRIME



**Disposing of 1,581 criminal cases involving political persons within a time frame of one year as directed by the SC is the aim as well as the objective of the scheme...**

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# 'Shame on you': Sharad Pawar attacks PM Modi for remarks against Manmohan Singh



defence officials," Pawar, a former defence minister, said. "Modi's government has not solved issues of farmers and other issues the country faces, but he is bringing the Pakistan angle as a diversionary tactic for Gujarat elections," Pawar said at a public rally — 'Halla Bol' — organised by the Congress and the NCP in Nagpur on issues relating to agrarian crisis. Modi has demeaned the office of the Prime Minister, Pawar alleged. Rahul Gandhi hit out at the Prime Minister for his remarks against Manmohan Singh while addressing a press conference in Ahmedabad on the

final day of campaigning for the assembly polls. "What Modiji has said about former PM Manmohan Singh is not acceptable," he said. In an editorial in its mouthpiece 'Saamana', the Shiv Sena said a Prime Minister is supposed to take action and not level allegations. "Prime Minister Modi has levelled a serious charge that Pakistan is interfering in Gujarat polls. We can understand the worries of Modi but a PM is supposed to take action and not level allegations. "Gujarat has become even more important than Kashmir. Until yesterday, Pakistan was interfering in

Kashmir and China was interfering in Leh, Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh," it said. Nowadays, in all elections, either Pakistan or fugitive underworld don Dawood Ibrahim is brought at the forefront, the Sena quipped. "When sand below the feet starts moving, Pakistan and Dawood chanting begins. It is happening today as well. This is an impious way," it said. The Sena further said that even in Bihar polls, BJP's national president had brought in Pakistan. Despite he saying that crackers will be burst in Pakistan if Nitish Kumar wins, the latter decimated the BJP, it said.

**Nagpur :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi's allegation against his predecessor Manmohan Singh over the Gujarat polls drew more condemnation on Tuesday with NCP chief Sharad Pawar telling him "shame on you" and Congress president-elect Rahul Gandhi calling it unacceptable. Key BJP ally Shiv Sena also launched a sharp attack on PM Modi, saying that dragging Pakistan into Gujarat election campaign was an "impious" way of trying to win the polls. The Prime Minister at a poll rally in Gujarat on Sunday sought to link a dinner meeting hosted by suspended Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar for Pakistan dignitaries and attended by Manmohan Singh among others with the ongoing assembly polls and a conspiracy against the BJP.

Modi had insinuated that his predecessor had colluded with Pakistan for BJP's defeat at the polls. The former Prime Minister responded by saying Modi was setting a "dangerous precedent" and asked him to apologise to the nation, a demand rejected by the Union government. Pawar criticised PM Modi for "deliberately" misconstruing the dinner meeting at Mani Shankar Aiyar's residence on December 6 and presenting it as a conspiracy by Pakistan to interfere in the Gujarat polls. The meeting took place a day before Aiyar's "neech aadmi" (lowly person) jibe against Modi that led to his suspension from the party. "Shame on you, Prime Minister for making such allegations. You have made the allegations against this country's former

## House for Sale in Wantagh



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

**Bsmt/Subfl:**  
1st Floor: Lr/Eik/Den/Br/Bth  
2nd Floor: Br/Br/Br/Bth  
3rd Floor:

Beautifully Maintained Mid Block Property. 4 Bedrooms, 2 Baths With Updated Appliances. Lots Of Natural Light, Closets, 4 Bedrooms, 2 Bath, Eat In Kitchen, Living Room And A Den To Entertain Guests And Family. This House Will Not Last !!

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# India, Australia hold first high-level dialogue on strategic, defence ties



NEW DELHI: The first high level "2+2" dialogue between India and Australia is yet another step for the two countries to move to a much closer engagement particularly in the areas of defence and security.

Foreign secretary S Jaishankar and defence secretary Sanjay

Mitra led the Indian delegation in the inaugural round of talks with Australian foreign secretary Frances Adamson and defence secretary Greg Moriarty here today. "There is a growing convergence of strategic perspectives between the two countries. Both sides agreed that

a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large," a statement by MEA said.

The bilateral discussions will segue into a trilateral tomorrow between India, Australia and

Japan, with Japanese foreign secretary Shinsuke Sugiyama joining up. The focus of course is on the evolving Asian security architecture and the challenges posed by a rising China. All three countries were, only a month ago, meeting in Manila for a rejuvenated "quadrilateral" dialogue.

The timing of the dialogues, right after the Russia-India-China trilateral and a BIMSTEC gathering on Buddhism has its own significance. India is balancing all its interlocutors, giving itself "space" in its foreign policy. That was also part of the conversation Indian leaders had with Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, who is believed to have raised his brows at the quadrilateral grouping.

India and US will be holding their own 2+2 meeting at the ministerial level in the coming months, while a similar

arrangement with Japan is likely to be bumped up to the ministerial level. The MEA said the discussions reviewed "All aspects of bilateral relations with a focus on strategic and defence relations between the two countries." While India is hesitant about letting Australia into the Malabar naval exercises, these discussions are expected to smoothen that particular engagement. In fact, in recent months, India and Australia also engaged in high level bilateral naval exercises, as both countries build on their convergences as Indian Ocean powers.

Adamson met Secretary (East) Preeti Saran and Secretary (ER) Vijay Gokhale in the MEA, while Moriarty met Chief of Staff Committee and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba and visited Rajputana Rifles Regimental Centre.

## Gujarat Election Insights Can BJP overcome anti-incumbency again?

One of the biggest questions posing a daunting challenge to analysts today is, whether there is a post Modi slide in fortunes for the Gujarat BJP. Deep data insights reveal that while the overall mandates in Gujarat looked like a zero sum game, there was a substantial churn on the ground. Contextual factors offset the electoral outcome of the churn, but it might just be that this time round many of those could have peaked, leading to a perception of a visible challenge to the BJP.

In 2002, the BJP polled 50% of the votes winning a huge 128 seats. The 2007 assembly election was supposed to be the one that was to redeem the Modi government as the one with development as its calling card, and with a CM who could beat anti-incumbency. On the face of it, the BJP was redeemed winning 117 seats, with a slightly lower vote share 49%. In 2012, the vote share dipped again by a single percentage point, and the BJP won just two seats less 115, again posting a verdict that looked untouched by the curse of anti-incumbency, and thus reinforcing an unassailable BJP.

However, a closer look at the jigsaw suggests, that the challenge visible to the BJP was actually building up for a while - demographic changes, delimitation, and strengths in certain



pockets, rendered macro numbers which looked static, but did not reflect the churn on the ground. Sample this, between 2001 and 2011, the districts that saw a more than 50% growth in urbanization were Surat, Kutch and the north eastern district of Sabarkantha. This was the new generation Gujarati, more exposed to newer enterprises and newer professions, either through industrialization or cooperative movements in the farming and dairy sector. This was the natural constituency, to whom a governance oriented Modi could appeal to.

In 2007, the BJP declined heavily in the Godhra hinterland of central

Gujarat, its vote share slipping from 54% in 2002 to 45% in 2007. However in south Gujarat - Surat being the lead city there, which symbolized the newly Industry driven urban Gujarat, the BJP surged from 42% to 51%, almost compensating the vote share loss in central Gujarat. In 2002, the BJP lost most of Kutch district to the Congress, but regained in 2007. In 2007, the non-tribal areas of Sabarkantha and adjoining districts gave a thumbs up victory to the BJP, with the party winning 24 out of 26 seats at stake. Clearly, there was a churn on the ground, the Godhra vote had indeed been replaced by a neo-urban vote.

### Indian girl, 6, is raped and tortured to death after being abducted from her home

A six-year-old Indian girl was abducted from her home, raped and murdered by an unknown assailant in Hisar, Haryana state this weekend.

The little girl was tortured to death, police sources told MailOnline India, with serious injuries to her internal organs.

The girl was abducted on Saturday and her body found on Sunday, with mass protests in the area in response to the horrific abuse she suffered.

Angry residents in Hisar and nearby Uklana closed their shops and protested by blocking the roads demanding action against the unknown accused.

The family have also refused to cremate the body until the accused is arrested

'The victim died due to torture perpetrated by inserting wood in her body by the accused. We have also found injuries inside the intestine and uterus.

'The wood was inserted with a force which not only caused serious injuries inside the uterus but also in the intestine,' Dr Reetu Gupta who conducted the post-mortem, said.

The post-mortem report has also found bruises on the girl's shoulders and waist, and injuries on the nose and throat, which were found bleeding when the victim's body was spotted by locals on Sunday morning.

According to the family, the girl was with her family members overnight but was reported missing the next morning.

They launched a search in the morning with the help of neighbours who spotted the girl's body.

Police have registered a case of abduction, rape and murder against an unknown suspect who is still at large.



# Will prayers reach god from illegally built temples, asks Delhi High Court

**The court asked the municipal corporation of north Delhi, under whose jurisdiction the area falls, to produce records pertaining to the construction of the road and the pavement adjoining which the illegal encroachments have sprung up.**



What is its sanctity," a bench of Acting Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice C Hari Shankar said, warning that everyone responsible for unauthorised constructions, including the temple, "will be dealt with".

The court asked the municipal corporation of north Delhi, under whose jurisdiction the area falls, to produce records pertaining to the construction of the road and the pavement adjoining which the illegal encroachments have sprung up. The direction was issued after Delhi government additional standing counsel Satyakam, appearing for the Public Works Department (PWD), told the bench that the

road and the pavement was the responsibility of the municipal corporation.

He said while one paw of the statue fell on the pavement, the rest of the structure was primarily located on land belonging to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). Thereafter, the court asked the authorities why commercial activities and car parking was permitted in the area and said it will prosecute the corporation and DDA officials during whose tenure the statue and other encroachments came up.

Satyakam, who also appeared for the Delhi Police, said the temple,

including the statue, was being maintained and operated by a trust whose bank statements were being examined by the agency. The bench asked the police to complete its enquiry and follow and enforce the law. It also questioned the trust authority over running and maintaining a temple on DDA land.

The court was hearing several pleas in connection with illegal constructions and encroachments in Karol Bagh area of Delhi. It had earlier said that religious structures cannot be allowed to encroach on public land for private gain.

Will prayers reach god if you pray from temples built illegally on pavements? This was a question posed by the Delhi High Court today as it dealt with a case of removing encroachments from around the 108-feet tall Hanuman statue in the Karol Bagh area of central Delhi.

"Will prayers reach the god if you pray from illegal encroachments on pavements?"

# Drug menace at IIT-Kanpur: Administration holds special drive to counsel students

**The primary drug which is being consumed is marijuana dipped in some chemical, and smack and charas are also being consumed in a small quantity.**



here is that there are many unauthorised person from the nearby villages enter the campus, using it as a shortcut. It is very hard for us to stop them all or check everyone. We also need the district administration help to make an alternative way for these people," Tiwari further said, adding that though the administration has assured them, they haven't received any concrete help till now.

On how they found the drug problem, Tiwari said, "Around 4-5 months ago there were complaints of some unauthorised people coming continuously in

the campus and going into the hostels. When we checked we found that 2-3 among them were bringing drugs to the campus. During enquiry they named a security guard too. Followed by that there were surprise raids in the campus."

"The staff involved was expelled right then, we increased the security and took action which gave great results that time. But now again such complaints are coming, and we have found that the drug supply is there."

"During our campaign some months ago we did find some

small peddlers and dealers. But the others involved and the actual kingpin is yet to be identified, and only the city administration can do that," the Officiating Director said adding they are planning to again run such campaigns.

Meanwhile, Akhilesh Kumar, SSP Kanpur said that they have formed police teams in this regard and have given the responsibility to SP (west) who all are keeping a check on those who has a record in drug dealing. He said the police is also trying to identify and nab the new players in the market.

The IIT Kanpur administration is holding a special drive to counsel students against drug use after internal inquiries revealed that drugs are finding their way into the campus. The counselling sessions are being run in association with the Kanpur district administration and police.

Manindra Agarwal, officiating director of the institute, said that they are regularly running the sessions to raise awareness among students. Surprise checks are also being conducted in the campus, he added.

Agarwal, however, refused to reveal the estimated number of students using drugs. He said that the primary drug which is being consumed is marijuana dipped in some chemical, and smack and charas are also being consumed in a small quantity.

"We have observed that drug consumption in the institute has increased in the last some years and we have to address this. And in order to do that we have also asked the district administration and the police to help us identify

and nab the peddlers and those who are helping the drugs reach inside the campus," Agarwal said.

Talking in detail about the role of the police, Registrar KK Tiwari said that though the institute is very much capable of handling the drug problem inside the campus, but since their jurisdiction and information is limited to the campus itself, they need the help of police to identify those who are involved in helping the drugs reach the campus, directly or indirectly.

"The students in the campus are our responsibility and the district administration cannot do anything in that matter. But all we need from the intelligence and the police is to help us identify those elements who has a police record in drug dealing and might be involved in this. We need the administration to keep a check on such people and share their information with us so that we can take action," Tiwari said.

"The main issue we have in

# Campaign pitch rises to a high in Gujarat

As campaigning for the second phase of the Gujarat Assembly election ends on Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi exchanged barbs and traded charges in their last frenetic lap of electioneering in the PM's home State.

On Monday, Mr. Gandhi asked the Prime Minister to talk about Gujarat in his election speeches.

"The Prime Minister talks sometimes about Pakistan and sometimes about China and Japan. Modiji, this is the election for the future of Gujarat. Talk something about Gujarat too," Mr. Gandhi said, addressing farmers in North Gujarat.

Mr. Gandhi addressed four rallies in the region, where voting will be held on December 14.

Accusing Mr. Modi of maintaining silence over the development of Gujarat and the BJP's performance during its 22 years at the helm in the State, Mr. Gandhi said that despite it being election time in Gujarat the Prime Minister is not talking about the BJP government's scorecard.

Mr. Gandhi said that the BJP kept changing

the election theme from Narmada to OBC to China and Pakistan.

On his part, the Prime Minister slammed the Congress president-elect for his taunts on "crony capitalism" and listed numerous schemes and initiatives he had launched first as Gujarat CM and then as PM after the 2014 national polls.

"You have been spreading lies in the State about our government and think everyone is a fool to believe you. I started Krishi Rath to educate the farmers of Gujarat. Was it for Adanis," the PM asked, in a strong reaction to the Congress leader's barbs about his government working for a handful of corporates and industrialists.

Picking another scheme he had launched in Gujarat to promote girl child education, Mr. Modi asked, "Was it for the daughters of Ambanis that I was begging in villages, pleading with people to send their daughters to schools."

This was for the first time that the Prime Minister was hitting back so strongly to Mr. Gandhi's questions, and that too, just two days before the second phase voting to be held for 93 Assembly constituencies.



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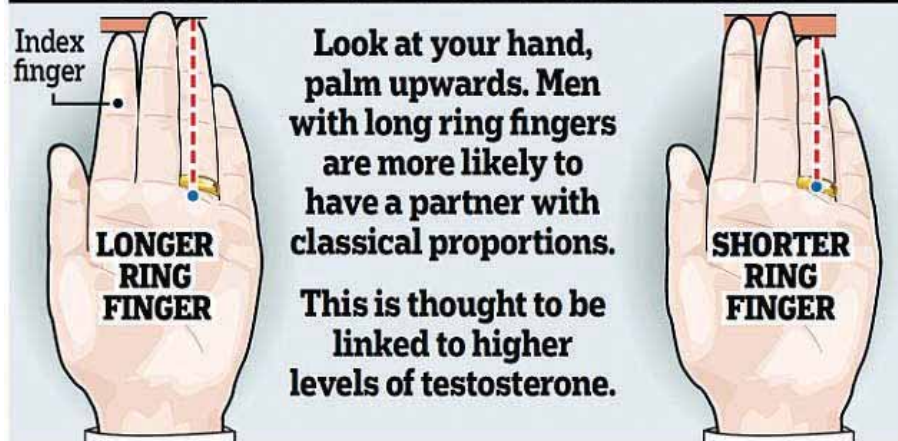
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# Men with longer ring fingers are four times more likely to land curvier lovers, say scientists

## HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP?



Those men hoping to entice the girl of their dreams with a special gift this Christmas might need to think again.

The chances of landing a model girlfriend are decided before they're even born, scientists claim.

Men with long ring fingers are four times more likely to end up with a partner with the classically sought-after combination of a slim waist and prominent chest.

The extra millimetres on that digit are caused by a burst of male hormone testosterone whilst in the womb. And, in later life, that develops into a manliness that curvy women apparently find irresistible.

Researchers from Jagiellonian University Medical College in Krakow, Poland, examined the

hands of 50 young men in long-term relationships then took the vital statistics of their partners.

They found men with ring fingers longer than their index fingers and busty women with small waists tended to gravitate to each other.

Their study in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences* states: 'Our results suggest men's pre-natal environment has an impact on the likelihood of being in a relationship with a more attractive and presumably more fertile woman. 'Men with [longer ring fingers] were four times more often partnered with women who had both relatively narrow waists and large breasts.'

Lead author, human behaviour expert Berenika Kuna, added: 'Eye-

tracking studies have shown that, during evaluation of female body attractiveness, men focus mainly on the waist and breast areas, which deliver honest signals about a woman's reproductive status.

'A narrower waist in relation to wider hips is a visual sign of healthiness and youthfulness. Larger breasts may be a sign of sexual maturity and nurturing ability. However, mainly in Western cultures, they are considered a sign of attractiveness.' More testosterone exposure in the womb has other effects too. These include being more muscly and athletic – as the hormone also promotes greater muscle development.

For example, a study found boys with longer ring fingers had more powerful grips irrespective of their age or body size. While the ring finger is typically longer in males than the index finger, the two fingers are usually of similar length in women.

Men with longer ring fingers have also been found to have better spatial abilities – while those with shorter ring fingers have superior verbal ability. Exposure to too much testosterone in the womb has been associated with an increased risk of developing diseases in adulthood that are more common in men, such as autism and Tourette's syndrome.

## Married math teacher, 32, 'had intercourse and oral sex with her 14-year-old student inside middle school'

A middle school teacher from Ohio has been charged with repeatedly having sex with a 14-year-old student on school property earlier this year. Jessica Langford, 32, appeared in court on November 21 and pleaded not guilty to three counts of unlawful sexual conduct with a minor and three counts of sexual battery.



Langford, a married mother-of-one from Centerville, had taught math at Miamisburg Middle School for nine years, until she resigned her position in late May after allegations of sexual misconduct had come to light. According to court documents cited by the Dayton Daily News, Langford is accused of twice performing oral sex on the teenage boy, twice receiving oral sex from him, and twice having sexual intercourse with the 14-year-old. The suspected sexual contact between the teacher and student took place on May 23 inside the middle school, according to the documents. Following her indictment last month, Langford was released on her own recognizance.

## Prince Harry 'kicks the smoking habit' for Meghan Markle 93-year-old woman handcuffed and jailed after refusing to leave her care home



Prince Harry 'kicks the smoking habit' for Meghan Markle. In a bid to stay healthy with his wife-to-be in the long run, Prince Harry has "promised" to quit smoking as "it's not nice for Meghan Markle as a non-smoker." Prince Harry 'kicks the smoking habit' for Meghan Markle. According to a source, "Harry has promised no smoking at all at home. it's not nice for Meghan as a non-smoker." "So there's no more hanging out of the window for a quick puff. Harry has quit for Meghan," the insider added, reports the Daily Star. Prince Harry 'kicks the smoking habit' for Meghan Markle. After announcing their upcoming wedding in May next year, the betrothed royal has been reportedly working hard to shed those extra kilos. Although, smoking is officially banned at his home of Nottingham Cottage, still Harry would relax the rules when entertaining guests. Prince Harry 'kicks the smoking habit' for Meghan Markle. Prince Harry and his fiancée Meghan Markle will get married at Windsor Castle's St. George's Chapel in May next year.

A 93-year-old woman was handcuffed and jailed after refusing to leave a care home she claimed was no longer accepting her rent. Juanita Fitzgerald, from Lake County, Florida, was arrested on Tuesday after she said the National Church Residences' Franklin House housing community had decided to "put her out" after blaming her for mould in her apartment. Police said she was given notice of her eviction on Monday, but refused to leave the building the next day, reports Florida TV station WKMG. woman handcuffed jailed. According to a police report seen by the station, Ms Fitzgerald told officers: "Unless you carry me out of here, I'm not going anywhere." A Lake County sheriff's spokesperson said a deputy tried to connect Ms Fitzgerald with members of her family and other housing facilities, but she refused. She also allegedly turned down the offer to stay with a nurse who worked there. The report states that as officers attempted to escort her out of the building, she intentionally slid down her chair onto the floor, and resisted police when



jailed. They eventually managed to get her out of the independent living facility and put her in the back of a patrol car without handcuffs, it said. Ms Fitzgerald was spared having to spend her 94th birthday behind bars after a judge handed her over to a caregiver on Thursday. Her birthday was on Friday. woman handcuffed jailed. But the pensioner still faces charges of trespassing and is due to appear in court on 27 December. Karen Twinem, a spokesperson for National Church Residences, told WKMG Ms Fitzgerald had said she would not pay rent because she thought she would die soon.



Patients should be offered the chance to listen to music during procedures to reduce pain and anxiety, says a leading surgeon.

Bhaskar Somani, a consultant urological surgeon, said it was a 'practical, cheap and harmless' intervention that also increased patients' satisfaction and willingness to undergo treatment again in the future.

'In the modern era, the volume of urological procedures delivered on an outpatient basis has risen and many of these are carried out under local anaesthesia,' he said.



## Patients should be offered music during surgeries to reduce pain and anxiety, according to top doctor

'However, from the patient perspective, the experience of undergoing such procedures – not just in urology but across medical and surgical specialties – while awake can cause pain and anxiety.' Mr Somani, who works at University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, made his comments following a study by his researchers. They reviewed data on 1,900 patients in 15 international studies who

attended urology outpatient appointments for a range of procedures and investigations. The analysis, published in the Journal of Urology, found a

reduction in pain and anxiety among patients who listened to music in 90 per cent of the studies, while overall satisfaction was better in 53 per cent and the willingness to repeat the procedure was higher in 40 per cent. There was also evidence of patients who listened to music tolerating higher levels of shockwaves, a procedure used in urology.

Mr Somani said: 'Music seems to decrease anxiety and pain and serve as a useful tool to increase procedural satisfaction and willingness to undergo it again.' He said the proven benefits, low cost and simplicity of music therapy presented a 'strong case' for a wider roll-out across specialties. 'A clear strength of music is its low cost, non-invasive nature and ease of delivery,' added Mr Somani. 'There is a very strong case for all patients to be offered the option of music as an additional therapy when undergoing procedures.'

## Indian-origin man killed by armed robbers in US



Washington : An Indian-origin man has been killed during a robbery by two hooded attackers in Ohio, becoming one of the latest victims of gun violence in the US. Karunakar Karengle, 53, was working last Monday at the Jiffy Convenience Mart on Camelot Drive when two men came in with a firearm around 10 pm, police said. Fairfield Fire Department first responders arrived and brought Karengle to UC West Chester Hospital. Police said that Karengle died of his injuries on Friday. His identity had been withheld until his family in India was notified, Journal News reported. Indian-origin man killed No arrests have been

made, making nearby businesses and employees a bit uneasy. Fairfield police Lt Ken Gerold said they believe Karengle did not have relatives that lived in the area. A description of the suspects was unavailable, police said, except that they both wore hoodies covering most of their faces. One wore a dark jacket while the other wore a light coloured jacket. "I'm sorry that it happened," Kim Cannon said. Cannon works across the street from Jiffy Mart at Laundry Station. Indian-origin man killed "It scares me even more knowing that the guys, or whoever it was, were parked behind our building and I was working that night and could

have walked out. "It was shocking to hear that somebody was actually killed," Cannon said. The shooting comes amidst growing attacks on Indians and Americans of Indian descent in recent months. Earlier this month, a 30-year-old Indian national pursuing his masters in Chicago has been seriously injured after he was shot in his right cheek by an unidentified assailant. Indian-origin man killed Srinivas Kuchibhotla, a software engineer from India, was fatally shot in Olathe, Kansas, in February by a US navy veteran who had told him and his friend at a bar to go back to their country. Weeks later, a Sikh man was shot in his arm in his driveway in Kent, Washington state, by a masked man who had told him to go back to his "own country". There were 58,491 incidents of gun violence across the country in 2017 in which 14,763 people were killed and 29,888 others injured, according to Gun Violence Archive (GVA), a not for profit corporation providing public access to gun-related violence.

## 43 Indian fishermen arrested by Pak authorities: official



Karachi : Forty-three Indian fishermen have been arrested and seven of their boats seized by Pakistani authorities for allegedly fishing illegally in the country's territorial waters in the Arabian Sea, officials said today. The fishermen were arrested yesterday and have been handed over to the Docks police, a spokesman for Pakistan's Maritime Security Force (PMSF) said. "The Docks police will now present them before a judicial magistrate who will most likely send them in judicial remand to jail," Commander Wajid Nawaz Chaudhary said. Indian fishermen arrested The PMSF has arrested 144 Indian fishermen over the last one month for alleged illegal fishing in Pakistani waters. With the latest apprehensions, the number of such arrests of Indian fishermen this year has gone up to over 400. The spokesman said the Indian fishermen were arrested as the Pakistan maritime security forces were conducting exercises near

Pakistan's Maritime border in the Arabian Sea. "Speedboats and helicopters were used in the exercise when the Indian fishermen were spotted in our waters," Chaudhary said. Indian fishermen arrested He said the PMSA had on November 10 arrested 55 Indian fishermen and seized nine fishing boats while on November 12 four boats were seized and 23 Indian fishermen arrested for allegedly entering into Pakistani waters. He said on November 16 also the PMSA had arrested a batch of 23 Indian fishermen and seized four Indian boats. Poor fishermen from Pakistan and India are frequently detained for illegally fishing in each other's territorial waters since the Arabian Sea does not have a clearly defined marine border and the wooden boats lack the technology to avoid drifting away. Indian fishermen arrested In October the PMSA had arrested two batches of 50 Indian fishermen.





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# As we complete 15 Years

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

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

**-Sharanjit Singh Thind  
Editor In Chief & Publisher**



# Stop sleeping with your cell phone

**Anything closer than arm's length could cause cancer and infertility, health officials warn**

The California Department of Health warned that people need to keep their cell phones several feet away from them to reduce radiation exposure and health risks.

California released guidance for reducing exposure to cell phone radiation on Thursday, amid mounting evidence that cell phone use may be linked to cancer, attention, mental health and reproductive health issues.

Cell phones transmit information using low frequency radio signals, which may expose us to unhealthy radiation, especially when streaming or downloading large files.

Research has not been able to prove definitively that cell phone radiation is dangerous, but there have been enough studies linking the two to warrant caution, especially for children, according to the health department press release.

The statewide notice comes after several cities, including Berkeley and San Francisco, issued local warnings that their citizens should make some distance between their phones and their bodies.

The radiofrequency (RF) energy cell phones use to

transmit information are at the bottom of the radiation totem poll, but research suggests that our frequent, close-range exposure to cell phones may be enough to endanger us.

'Keeping a phone directly on the body has never been a good idea,' says Dr Devra Davis of the Environmental Health Trust.

In fact, cell phone makers themselves seem to agree. Apple, for example, includes an 'RF exposure' notice in the iPhone's settings.

The notice explains that the iPhone's RF emissions were tested at 5 mm - about the thickness of a fine point pen - from the body, and fall within the US standards of safety.

But it also includes advice for reducing exposure - not unlike California's new guidance - by using speakerphone or hands free accessories.

'Most people are not aware that there is a clear warning to keep the phone off the body embedded in the phone,' says Dr Davis.

This is particularly worrisome because most parents aren't aware of these warnings are not managing their children's exposure to

phones.

The California guidance notes that RF may more easily penetrate the brain matter of children than that of adults. The exposure may also be more damaging and have more lasting effects on the developing brain.

Studies have shown evidence that cell phone exposure may cause tumors in the brain or ears, where the body is frequently in contact with the device.

Though research on RF's effects on children specifically is fairly scarce, many psychologists have already warned that cell phone use may be linked to poorer attention, mental health and sleep for adolescents.

Less than a week ago, France banned cell phones from primary and middle schools. Though the ban's goal was primarily related to mental health, it has drawn praise from experts worried about radiation exposure.

The country has also been at the forefront of research on the physical health effects of cell phone exposure.

'The French have tested the phones the way they are used' -



touching the body - 'and RF exposure exceeds the French standards by four more times, and apply that to the US standards, and it's even much more than that - about seven times [the recommended levels],' says Dr Davis.

Other research has shown strong links between RF and male sperm counts and sperm quality.

Studies in multiple countries 'have show that men who keep phone in their pockets the longest have lowest sperm count, with most damage,' says Dr Davis.

'Many people keep their phones in their pockets for hours a day, esp in the summer with thinner exposures will be far greater,' she adds.

Contemporary cell phone signals use 'the weakest signals, but strength of the signals is not issue when comes to biological effect.' It's not the power, it's the irregular nature of signal.'

The California guidelines address this by explaining that the most dangerous exposures happen when there are surges of RF energy. This happens when, essentially, the technology has to work harder to transmit information.

The state warns against close contact when phones have two or fewer bars of signal, when you're in a moving car, or if you are trying to receive or send large quantities of data by streaming or downloading media.

## If the Ancient Greeks knew the Earth was round, why do so many celebrities think it's FLAT?



Among all the scientific questions that have fascinated Man over the centuries, surely there is one that is beyond debate. Planet Earth is round, not flat. The Ancient Greeks first discovered this fact in at least 200BC, if not 300 years earlier. The Renaissance astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus delivered solid mathematical proof in 1543.

And we've seen it for ourselves in numerous breathtaking images of Earth relayed from space. So how is it that a growing number of people are starting to reject as baloney the fact that our planet is a sphere? The Flat-Earthers — a derogatory term used to denote people who are out of touch with the realities of modern life — are

back on the march. Thanks to the internet, their numbers have grown to a size unparalleled since the Spanish Inquisition and, inevitably, celebrities are flocking to join. Last month, the former England cricketer, Andrew 'Freddie' Flintoff, declared himself a Flat-Earth enthusiast.

He argues that 'evidence suggests the world isn't round', asking: 'If you're in a helicopter and you hover, why does the Earth not [rotate under you] if it's round?' He added: 'Why would water stay still if we're hurtling through space? Why is it not wobbling?'

Well, Freddie, these are, indeed, tough questions of the perplexing type that a toddler might ask. But Flat-Earth Flintoff

won't be distracted from such quandaries by the offer of a lollipop or soft toy.

He has previously revealed his interest on his Radio 5 show, which he co-hosts with former footballer Robbie Savage, when he said the moon landings could have been faked and that he'd been persuaded by a podcast called The Flat Earthers. Flintoff plans to attend the next annual meeting of the Flat Earth International Conference in the U.S. next year, having somehow missed this year's event — the first ever, which was completely sold out. Perhaps Flintoff was hovering in his helicopter, waiting to see if North America would come spinning round!

But thousands of Flat-

Earthers made it to North Carolina, flying from Britain, New Zealand and Argentina, ignoring the fact that aircraft computer systems are configured to navigate a spherical planet, not a flat one.

Robbie Davidson, the conference organiser, claims the movement is in its best shape since Copernicus annoyingly offered proof that our planet is round. He said: 'You're going to see more celebrities and scientists come aboard. This is just the beginning.'

Indeed, B and C-listers are queueing up to join, as though Flat-Earth were an astrophysics version of TV's Celebrity Big Brother House. Shaquille O'Neal, the

American former professional basketball player and rapper, declared himself one of the gang in March.

'I drive from Florida to California all the time, and it's flat to me,' he declared. 'I do not go up and down at a 360-degree angle, and all that stuff about gravity.' He and Flintoff should get along well.

In September, another U.S. rapper, Bobby Ray Simmons Jr (better known as B.o.B — he had a number-one hit in 2010 with Bruno Mars), set up a crowd-funding appeal to launch a satellite to send back pictures that would prove the flatness of our planet. Thus far, he has garnered only \$6,878 towards his \$1million target.



# In Nepal, with hope

The polling for the historic parliamentary and provincial elections of Nepal concluded on December 7 peacefully, despite last minute attempts by some desperate elements to disturb them. The counting is now going on, 24/7, in three shifts and is likely to be completed by December 15. The elections, held in two phases on November 26 in 32 pahadi and himali districts and on December 7 in the remaining 45, are very significant, being the first under the 2015 Constitution of Nepal. Earlier this year, local government elections were held in three phases on May 14, June 28 and September 18 in six metropolitan cities, 11 sub-metropolitan cities, 276 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities. The holding of two sets of national elections conducted for all three tiers within a span of seven months is a remarkable achievement of the Election Commission in fulfilment of the constitutional mandate. These elections mark the culmination of the process that started in November 2006 with the signing of a Comprehensive

Peace Agreement (CPA) to set up a federal structure. From a Hindu kingdom, Nepal has now formally transformed into a federal democratic republic. The 11 long years of transition have seen important changes. A Constituent Assembly (CA) was elected in 2008 for a term of two years.

It, however, failed to bring out the new constitution despite giving itself repeated extensions, till the Supreme Court put its foot down to sack it in 2012. The second CA, elected in 2013, proved much more efficient and productive, coming up with the new constitution within two years. Credit must be given to the political parties for a spirit of accommodation and the decision to defer for the post-election period the most contentious issues, including the delineation and the naming of the federal provinces.

A highlight of the elections was the enthusiastic popular participation as evident from the high voter turnout of 75 per cent in the local elections and approximately 68 per cent in the two phases of simultaneous

elections to parliament and provincial assemblies.

Full credit to the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) for conducting the elections rather smoothly despite time constraints and lack of crucial powers to decide the timing of the elections, which was left to the government. Speedy production and distribution of voter identity cards and easy access to voter rolls contributed significantly to the high turnout. The elections have been widely regarded as free, fair and independent. The arrangements were made for 12.25 million voters at 15,344 polling booths in 7,752 polling centres by almost 1,70,000 polling officials. The ECN accredited 45,000 domestic observers and nearly 300 foreign observers. The European Union and the Carter Centre, which sent the biggest teams, have both commented on the fairness of the elections. I also had the privilege of being a member of the observation team from different election commissions of South Asia invited by the ECN. It was delightful to see enthusiastic

voters participation in what clearly looked like a festival of democracy. Importantly, this was despite very tight enforcement of the stiff code of conduct. There was hardly any noisy procession or defacement of walls with posters and slogans, etc.

A noteworthy feature is that the elections were held simultaneously to the provincial and national parliament, something which has seen a hot topic of debate in India for the last couple of years. Contrary to apprehensions, the voters, despite a high 35 per cent illiteracy rate, had no problem handling as many as three ballot papers — one for the provincial assembly, one for parliament, under the first-past-the-post (FPTP), and the third for proportional representation (PR) system for both the tiers. This was made possible by a rather effective voter education programme put together in a short time due to the inevitable debate whether voter education is the job of the EC or of the political parties. The training of staff played an important role too. Some reports, however, suggest

that many voters were confused with a single ballot for two elections (parliament and province) in PR and ended up voting only on one part. We would soon know how many blank votes are found. Lesson for the future: Have separate ballot papers.

It would be interesting to understand the democratic structure of the state as it is significantly different from India's. The parliament would be bicameral of which the lower house — the House of Representatives (HoR) — would consist of 275 members with 165 members directly elected by FPTP (as in India) and 110 indirectly elected by PR. The seven provincial assemblies together have 550 members of which 330 are directly elected through FPTP and 220 by PR. The upper house, called the National Assembly, consisting of 59 members is yet to be constituted. It will have eight members each from the seven provinces, elected by an electoral college consisting of the elected legislators. The remaining three will be nominated by the president.

**Holding of the parliamentary and provincial elections is a huge achievement, a culmination of a tortuous process that started in 2006. The people now await development and stability.**

## A Chinese connection that will prove costly for the Maldives

*The Maldives' increasing reliance on China is pushing the island nation into alarming economic debt*



The Maldives, an island paradise for tourists, is ruled by a geopolitical serpent. The Maldivian president, Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, has been using Chinese money and Saudi Arabia-backed Islamism to throttle his country's democratic polity. The direction he is taking the strategically important Indian Ocean archipelagic state is raising eyebrows in New Delhi. Yameen just completed a

four-day state visit to Beijing where he signed free trade and maritime agreements with China. In of themselves, these are innocuous. Placed in the ways and means of Yameen's past four years of rule, his actions are less benign. "We are weighing our options," said a senior Indian official when asked about developments in the Maldives.

Yameen defeated the liberal candidate, Mohamed Nasheed, in elections in

2013. Since then, however, he has used his hold of the police and judiciary to persecute his political opponents. With presidential elections due next year, Yameen's tastes for foreign funding and repressions have increased. The political winds don't favour him. In local council elections in May, Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party and its allies won 319 seats against the ruling party's 191.

The Maldivian president has

been throwing around China cards since he came to power. Xi Jinping became the first Chinese leader to visit the country in 2014. China was then granted large scale infrastructure contracts, including a bridge connecting the main Maldivian islands, port facilities and an airport. The IMF has projected the Maldives' external debt, presently 34.7%, will reach 51% of GDP by 2021. Two thirds of this debt is Chinese held.

By Indian assessments these projects carry price tags two to three times higher than normal. The assumption is Yameen and his cronies have been lining their pockets. The piper has already begun calling the tune. Three Chinese naval ships docked in Male in August and the Maldives has endorsed the Belt Road Initiative. India has seen this script before: It is a rerun of Mahinda Rajapaksa government's attempt to leverage Beijing and distance himself from New Delhi.

India is also watching Yameen's other international

link: Saudi Arabia. The Maldivian president has used local gangs with Islamicist links to muscle his domestic opponents. A number of liberal bloggers and journalists have since been killed or disappeared. At Riyadh's behest, Yameen has broken relations with Iran and Qatar. More dangerously, about 100 to 200 Maldivians have joined the ranks of Islamic State. However, Yameen's relations were with Saudi Arabian factions who were recently purged by the present crown prince. New Delhi is already in communication with Riyadh. New Delhi has shown its displeasure indirectly. The Maldives is the only South Asian neighbour that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not visited. It is likely India will wait to see what happens in the elections next year. The ballot box helped remove Rajapaksa from office. The danger is that Yameen seems to be trying to ensure the elections will not matter. At that point, India's options may narrow dramatically.



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# Gender And Development: The highs and lows of women drug users in Manipur

**28.2 per cent of female injecting drug users in India are from Manipur, the highest in the country.**

"SP, World is yours, Heroin; they make you feel like superman. Oh wait, superwoman! Thanks to these drugs, I survived some very distressing phases of my life. I felt sick, tired, helpless and irritable when I wasn't taking them.

~Akon speaking about the high she got from drugs.

For over seven years, Akon was addicted to 'World is yours' (WY) and SP tablets. The former is a mixture of caffeine and methamphetamine, while Spasmo Proxyvon (SP) is a painkiller with a mild opioid. Akon would feel a gush of energy and euphoria. And then a period of insomnia, irritation, anxiety and anger would follow. To get over these lows, she would burn and smoke more tablets. It was a vicious circle and Akon was stuck.

Akon is currently undergoing treatment at the Integrated Rehabilitation Centre for Addicts (ICRA) in Torbung, a small village in Churachandpur district, in south-west Manipur. The residential centre situated in the midst of lush green farms is a two-hour drive from the capital Imphal. Since its establishment in October 1999, this women-only center has enabled more than 2,000 women drug users between the age groups of 15-60 find rehabilitation, including medical treatment, psychological counselling and vocational training. Most women, like Akon have landed here on their own.

When I walked into the centre a few months ago, Akon was sitting in a group. Most of them were laughing, cracking jokes. Akon, though was silent and distant. An hour later, when she decided to talk about her journey to Torbung, Akon mentioned her marriage to a drug peddler in Thoubal district and her six children.

"It didn't matter to me that he was making his living by transporting drugs across the border, at least not until his travels led to the extramarital affairs. When I first found out about other women, I drank up a bottle of cough syrup so that I could stop crying. I felt I was flying. It was my first brush. I got addicted soon enough. In the last seven years, I have been going to rehabilitation centers, but

it keeps coming back. I have had 10 relapses till now," she says.

Akon's story is similar to that of many other female drug users in Manipur, who are either pushed into drugs by their husbands/ partners or encouraged by peers. A 2015 study by the UN office on Drugs and Crime says that 28.2 per cent of female injecting drug users in India are from Manipur, the highest in the country.

The same study says that for more than half of Manipur's women addicts, drug peddling and sex work are the primary sources of income. Like in the case of Akon, whose husband moved to Assam and her parents took her children away, women drug users in Manipur are unlikely to be living with a partner or spouse, a reason that makes them more vulnerable to continued abuse.

"I have nowhere to go, no one to be with," Akon says, her voice feeble, almost incoherent.

Manipur with its porous border with Myanmar (the world's second largest producer of opium after Afghanistan) is an easy transit and market for drugs. The civil insurgent movements and prolonged cycles of violence and repression have all contributed to the high rate of drug abuse. Men and women, both equally vulnerable, but for different reasons.

"Post the 1992-1993 Naga- Kuki conflict, many Kukis migrated to different parts of Manipur. Young girls went to Imphal, trying to make a living. They fell prey to the drug peddlers and traffickers who started using them for transporting drugs across the border. The history of women addicts starts there. Today, the reasons why men and women in this region become addicts are very different, says Pradeep Keisem, Member of Manipur State Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

Young men with their faces masked in scarves, plying rickshaws on the streets of Imphal has been an imagery used to describe unemployment in the state. These are educated young men, graduates, in many cases unable to find employment. Nearly 7.5 lakh people registered unemployed in the state as of

February, 2016. The literacy rate for Manipur at 79.85 per cent, is higher than the national average of 74.04 per cent.

"For men, it's the boredom that comes with unemployment, peer pressure or simply a job as a drug peddler. For most women, it's likely to be an escape from the trauma they may have experienced. It could be because they have lost their husbands to extra judicial killings or have suffered domestic violence. There are also college going girls who are now taking it up for the fun of it, because of easy availability. 100-150 rupees for a tablet. They are trying eraser, mosquito repellent or even SP," Keisem explains. Experts say that given the drug use among women in the state, responses and rehabilitation efforts have neither kept pace nor distinguished between men and women and the prejudices they face. Unlike in case of men, families of female drug users are likely to abandon and disown them. Men are more likely to get support from their families once they are on the path to recovery. Women are not easily re-integrated, which makes them more vulnerable to relapses. "55% of women treated here have had relapses. 70% women who come here are destitute or homeless. Very few are brought in by families. 70% of women who come here are sex workers, and it becomes difficult to treat them along with the college going girls," explains Maharabi Singh, the co-coordinator at ICRA Torbung.

Rima, a 44-year old single woman wanted to pose for photographs without a veil when we met her at the centre in Torbung. "I don't care," she said. "I tried Heroin for the first time when I was 20, mainly because everyone in college was trying it. I got addicted to an extent that if I didn't inject even a single day, I would go mad. In all these years, I have had 20-30 relapses. My family has abandoned me, they didn't even think of getting me married. Maybe if I were a man, I would have got help, there would be more options for help."

Opiate Substitution Therapy

(OST), a form of treating opiate addiction by replacing illicit drugs with medically prescribed ones, such as buprenorphine or methadone is one such help that Rima is referring to. Research has shown that OST is effective in reducing illicit drug intake, vulnerability to HIV and death from overdose. Despite these benefits, only 3 per cent of injecting drug users in India—and only 8 per cent of them worldwide—have access to OST, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). It is even more difficult for women, to access OST, given that it is available only as a last resort after the patient proves that they have tried and failed programmes for drug rehabilitation and detoxification.

Apart from facing structural barriers in accessing services like the OST which are already inadequate and available in male dominated centres, women drug users are also more susceptible to HIV, TB, Hepatitis and reproductive health issues. "If they are married to male drug users, the prevailing socio-cultural norms increases their vulnerability to contract HIV as they don't have the agency to negotiate safe sex or refuse sex," says Keisem.

Akon had sought treatment at other centers (for both men and women) before she came to the women-only center at Torbung. Majority of the patients there were male. So was the staff. There was abuse and violence, and even sexual abuse in some of the male dominated centers, thus making it impossible for women to seek residential treatments.

"There is a lot of lacuna that needs to be filled. To help the younger girls, we need a juvenile IRCA center. We also need more exclusive women facilities that allow children. Of course, regulations that stop the easy availability of drugs are most important," says Maharabi Singh. His team of 12 members, 5 male and 7 female divide the day, keeping women busy in group conversation, physical exercise, meditation, physiotherapy and counselling sessions.



# Why India needs to protect its technology companies

Steve Jobs built the Macintosh by copying the windowing interface from the Palo Alto Research Center. As he admitted in 1994, "Picasso had a saying, 'Good artists copy, great artists steal'; and we have always been shameless about stealing great ideas".

Apple usually lags in innovations so that it can learn from the successes of others. Indeed, almost every Apple product has elements that are copied. The iPod, for example, was invented by British inventor Kane Kramer; iTunes was built on a technology purchased from Soundjam; and the iPhone frequently

copies Samsung's mobile technologies — while Samsung copies Apple's.

Facebook's origins also hark back to the ideas that Zuckerberg copied from MySpace and Friendster. And nothing has changed: Facebook Places is a replica of Foursquare; Messenger video duplicates Skype; Facebook Stories is a clone of Snapchat; and Facebook Live combines the best features of Meerkat and Periscope. Facebook copied Whatsapp but couldn't gain market share, so it spent a fortune to buy the company (again acting on the Silicon Valley mantra that if stealing doesn't work, then buy).

China opened its doors at first to let Silicon Valley companies bring their ideas there to train its entrepreneurs. And then it abruptly locked them out so that local competition could thrive. It realised that Silicon Valley had such a monetary advantage that local entrepreneurs could never compete. India has an advantage over China: its engineers are building Silicon Valley's most advanced technologies and leading many of its companies. And with the protectionist sentiments of the Trump administration and constant anti-immigrant rants, foreign-born people are getting a clear

message: Go home; we don't want you. This is a gift to India and China, because the immigrant exodus is boosting their innovation capabilities. What India should encourage is foreign investment. There is little disadvantage in sharing the risks with investors who can stomach the failures common in startups. Investors in both Silicon Valley and China perceive huge opportunities in India's exploding Internet market, and are champing at the bit to invest. They bring valuable experience and contacts with them: just what India's entrepreneurs need in order to gain the advantage over Silicon Valley.

## A meeting, a conspiracy

I wonder what the prime minister would have said if he was aware that Wednesday's dinner was not the first such event hosted by Aiyar with Kasuri as chief guest? A similar dinner was held at the Taj Mahal Hotel's Chambers in April and, even earlier, in 2015 when Kasuri's book was published. In fact, both Mr and Mrs Kasuri were guests at Aiyar's daughter's wedding and he was a cabinet minister at the time.

Indeed, what might Modi have made of the fact — had he known

of it — that the Pakistan high commissioner hosted a dinner on Sunday night, just hours after his angry allegations, for a similar selection of guests to meet Kasuri at the Taj Mahal Hotel's House of Ming restaurant? This might have produced a flight of fancy akin to the very best of crime fiction!

The truth is the prime minister's allegations and suspicions are not just malicious and delusional but utter nonsense. Whilst seeking to defame Aiyar and his guests he's

actually demeaned himself. This was not just undignified but unethical and, because Modi knows it's a lie, also immoral.

So why did he do it? Normally Modi is meticulous about the accusations he raises and the innuendos he levels. Such juvenile and hallucinatory conspiracy theories are not his style. Does this suggest that fear and foreboding of the Gujarat outcome has put him in a funk? Is this electoral panic?

In fact, this wasn't the first time the prime minister's speeches have betrayed deep anxiety. At one of his early Gujarat rallies he accused the

Gandhi family of revealing to the world what Morarji Desai used to drink. Earlier only a few knew what he was referring to but now his bizarre comments have informed lakhs more. Yet the truth is in an interview to Mark Tully Desai readily admitted he drank his own urine and even wrote a book on the subject.

It's a relief the Gujarat campaign ends on Tuesday evening. India cannot afford for its PM to inflict further wilful damage on himself, unless he's determined to pluck defeat from the jaws of presumed victory.

## A game of chicken in the Korean peninsula

Finally, and at a deeper level, the disarmament platitudes of the N-5 (or the five nuclear weapon states) and no progress on their disarmament commitments have eroded the faith of the nuclear have-nots in the global nuclear order. In an indirect but relevant way, such erosion of a normative global order has contributed to the North Korean crisis. Therefore, those lamenting how Kim's nukes will weaken the non-proliferation regime have only themselves to blame for it.

### The future

Now that Pyongyang has crossed the nuclear threshold, international sanctions

and the use of force against North Korea will not yield the desired results. It will lead to immeasurable human suffering within North Korea and in its neighbourhood. We are way past tactical solutions, and, therefore, only a comprehensive, sustained and diplomatic solution will work, though the result of which is uncertain, and the intent for which is non-existent among the great powers at this point. However, if indeed Kim is "escalating to deescalate", Pyongyang might be open to such engagement especially since it has now gone beyond being forcibly disarmed. Moreover, for Kim, talking itself would constitute a form

of recognition for his regime.

The most unpleasant part of such a comprehensive solution would involve according de facto "recognition" to North Korea's nuclear weapons. In other words, North Korea has nuclear weapons and its delivery mechanism in its custody, and there is no getting away from that fact, not now. If so, all we can do now is to consider how we can live with a nuclear North Korea rather than think of impractical military solutions to disarm Pyongyang. For sure, it would be a pity to add it to the list of states possessing nuclear weapons. But then there is a time to prevent something from becoming a

reality, and there is a time to accept when it becomes an inevitable reality.

The operational aspect of this approach would involve taking on board North Korea's historical grievances, involving the regional powers including China and South Korea to reach out to Kim, and reviving the dormant Six Party Talks at the earliest. Revival of the Six Party talks is important precisely because entrusting China and or Russia to solely deal with North Korea would be unwise. Moreover, multilateral engagement would also prevent anyone from engaging in underhand dealings with Pyongyang.

## India most reliable regional partner of Afghanistan: Pentagon

This assistance includes civil development projects such as the Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam and the Afghan parliament building, the report said.

India provides significant training opportunities for Afghan officers and enlisted personnel and has frequently offered to increase its burden sharing for Afghanistan, it said, adding that approximately 130 Afghans travel to India each year to attend various military and commissioning programmes.

India has also donated limited security assistance, most notably four Mi-35 aircraft, the Pentagon said.

"The new South Asia policy highlighted our relationship with India and called on India to provide more assistance to the international efforts in Afghanistan. The United States welcomes additional Indian economic, medical, and civic support to Afghanistan," the Pentagon said in its report.

This is the first report of the Pentagon to Congress after US President Donald Trump announced his new Afghan and South Asia policy in August.

"Our purpose in Afghanistan remains the same: to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a safe haven from which terrorist groups can plan and execute

attacks on the United States, or our allies and citizens abroad. To accomplish this, we continue to support our Afghan partners and train, advise, and assist its military and government institutions," it said. Under the new strategy, the US will continue to support the Afghan government and security forces in the fight against the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria - Khorasan (ISIS-K), and other insurgents and terrorists, to strengthen the Afghan government and prevent reestablishment of terrorist safe havens in Afghanistan.

"A major change from our previous strategy is the shift from a time-based

approach to a conditions-based one. This shift underscores the US commitment to the continued development of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), provided that our Afghan partners satisfy their obligations," the Pentagon said. The new strategy does not mean a return to US-led combat operations, instead, the key to success lies in improving ANDSF capabilities and allow them to lead in the fight against the Taliban, it clarified. "We will continue to work by, with, and through the ANDSF to help them defeat their enemies and to ultimately arrive at a political settlement in Afghanistan," said the Pentagon.



# 79% of people say they will vote for Modi in 2019

NEW DELHI: Sabha elections. The three-part survey was conducted online over 72 hours between December 12 and 15 with over half a million responses.

Despite the note ban, GST and a no-holds-barred poll campaign in Gujarat, more than three quarters of respondents, in the survey conducted in nine languages across 10 Times Group media properties, said they will vote for him if Lok Sabha polls were held today.

Similarly, 79% of those surveyed said a Modi-led government is currently the most likely scenario in the 2019 Lok

Sabha elections. The three-part survey was conducted online over 72 hours between December 12 and 15 with over half a million responses.

According to the survey, only 20% said they would vote for Congress president-elect Rahul Gandhi in a head-to-head contest with Modi today.

However, while a significant 58% of those surveyed remain unimpressed with him, 34% respondents said the Gandhi scion has been able to establish anew connect with voters. But what is worrisome for Congress is that as many as 73% of the respondents said they don't consider the party an

alternative even after Rahul's elevation.

Does that mean if Rahul were out of the picture, Congress will fare somewhat better?

Not really, according to the survey. While 38% of those polled said they wouldn't vote for Congress if a non-Gandhi were to be its leader, almost an equal number (37%) said they would vote for the party if another leader from outside the family were to lead it. While Rahul may or may not be winning the personality contest, the larger-than-life figure of Modi appears to be key for those who are in favour of BJP. Consider this -



31% of those surveyed said they wouldn't vote for BJP if he weren't to be its PM candidate. This means that while BJP has retained its core

constituency (48% said they would vote for the party even if he was not the leader), PM Modi remains its premium brand and adds a sizeable number to

its vote base. Each response in the survey has been geo-tagged to city and state. The results were concealed from voters till after voting ended.

## Desi diaspora largest in the world

### GULF TOP DESTINATION

Top 7 destination countries for global diaspora		No of international migrants (in million)
1	US	46.6
2	Germany	12.0
3	Russia	11.6
4	Saudi Arabia	10.0
5	UK	8.5
6	UAE	8.0
7	Canada	7.8

Top 7 countries of origin for global diaspora		No of international migrants (in million)
1	India	15.6
2	Mexico	12.3
3	Russia	10.6
4	China (+ Hong Kong)	10.5
5	Bangladesh	7.2
6	Pakistan	5.9
7	Ukraine	5.8

Home away from home: Where Indians go		
Rank	Country	No of Indians (in million) / % of total Indian diaspora
1	UAE	3.5 / 22.4
2	US	2.0 / 12.8
3	Saudi Arabia	1.9 / 12.1
4	Kuwait	1.0 / 6.4
5	Oman	0.7 / 4.5
6	UK	0.7 / 4.5
7	Qatar	0.6 / 3.8

Total 15.6 million

The number of foreign-born people residing in the US has almost quadrupled from fewer than 12 million in 1970 to 46.6 million in 2015 (of which nearly two million were of Indian origin). The Gulf nations house the biggest share of the Indian diaspora — nearly 3.5 million or 22% of the total Indian diaspora were in the UAE, and 1.9 million (or 12%) in Saudi Arabia.

According to immigration experts, protectionist measures adopted in these and other countries will eventually transform the diaspora landscape. We are witnessing intense vetting of applications for H-1B, the most popular work visa for Indians headed to the US, and entry into the US is likely to involve stricter rules. The number of migrants to the Gulf has dipped drastically in recent years, owing to economic conditions and the protectionist measures adopted by these countries. As reported earlier by TOI, pan-India emigration clearance for the Gulf in 2016, 5.07 lakh, showed a decline of 33% as compared to the previous calendar year. The decline trend has continued in 2017.

## Iraq hangs 38 members of ISIS, Al-Qaeda

Iraq hangs 38 members: council. Iraq hangs 38 members on Thursday hanged 38 jihadists belonging to the Islamic State (ISIS) group or Al-Qaeda for terrorism offenses, provincial authorities said. It was the largest number of executions in Iraq on a single day since September 25 when 42 people were put to death in the same prison. "The prison administration executed on Thursday in the presence of Justice Minister Haidar al-Zameli, in Nasiriyah prison, 38 death row prisoners belonging to Al-Qaeda or Daesh (ISIS) accused of terrorist activities," said Dakhel Kazem, a senior official in the provincial

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Saturday declared victory against ISIS after a three-year campaign by government forces backed by a U.S.-led coalition to retake territory seized by the jihadists. ISIS swept across Syria and Iraq in 2014, declaring a cross-border "caliphate" in territory roughly the size of Britain, attracting thousands of foreign fighters. Since then, several military offensives, including those backed by the U.S.-led coalition, have since seen ISIS lose most areas it once controlled.

## Indian-origin student pleads guilty of US cyber attacks

A 21-year-old Indian-origin student has pleaded guilty of executing a series of cyber attacks on the Rutgers University computer network in the US, authorities said. Paras Jha of New Jersey along with two others — Josiah White of Pennsylvania and Dalton Norman of Louisiana — also admitted on Wednesday to creating

and operating two botnets which targeted "Internet of Things" (IoT) devices, the US Justice Department said. Indian-origin student A botnet is a network of private computers infected with malicious software and controlled as a group without the knowledge or permission of the computers' owners. The multiple cyber attacks were launched between

November 2014 and September 2016. "Paras Jha has admitted his responsibility for multiple hacks of the Rutgers University computer system," Acting US Attorney Fitzpatrick said. "These computer attacks shut down the server used for all communications among faculty, staff and students, including assignment of course

work to students, and students' submission of their work to professors to be graded. Indian-origin student "The defendant's actions effectively paralyzed the system for days at a time and maliciously disrupted the educational process for tens of thousands of Rutgers' students," said Fitzpatrick. "The defendant has admitted his role in this criminal

offence and will face the legal consequences for it," he added. Jha pleaded before US District Judge Michael Shipp in New Jersey's Trenton federal court to violating the Computer Fraud & Abuse Act. Indian-origin student He executed a series of attacks on the networks of Rutgers University that shut down the institution's central authentication server,

which maintained, among other things, the gateway portal through which staff, faculty and students delivered assignments and assessments. According to court documents, Jha succeeded in taking the portal offline for multiple consecutive periods, causing damage to Rutgers University, its faculty and its students.



# Devalued Degree: 7 of 10 seats empty, in engineering graveyard, few lessons come to life

**An Express Investigation - Part II: As many as 18 engineering institutes have closed down in Haryana since 2012, the third largest number after Andhra Pradesh (23 colleges wound up) and Telangana (21).**

To listen to the death knell of an undergraduate engineering degree, come to the graveyard — Haryana which, at 74%, tops the vacant seat list in the country and its Sonapat district, home to the state's private education hub. Launched in 2006 by then Haryana Governor Jagannath Pahadia, Shri Balwant Singh Institute of Technology (SBIT), spread over 10 acres, is a textbook example of what has gone wrong.

Last August, when its second-year students returned from their vacation, they found that most of their teachers had left. "For almost two weeks, there was no one to take classes for four of our papers," says a Computer Science student who did not wish to be identified. "The college then replaced our teachers with B.Tech. graduates, some of them fresh out of college." As for first-years, a school teacher was brought in to teach thermodynamics — from the school across the road run by the same group. Clearly, these violated norms mandated by the All India Council of Technical Education, the apex body of engineering colleges in the country, according to which teachers at the entry level (assistant professor) should have had a postgraduate (ME/Tech) degree. But AICTE norms have long gone out of the window at colleges like SBIT — a testament itself to the laxity in regulation and the close-your-eye-see-no-evil approach to colleges (see box below).

No wonder, 97% of its first-year seats are unfilled this academic session — 17 students against an intake of 540 BE/BTech seats. Almost one half of the campus remains inaccessible to students. "The institute runs up a power bill of almost Rs 2 lakh a month. We couldn't afford to keep all classrooms functional," says an administrative officer at SBIT.

Of the first-year batch of 17, 13 are in Computer Science, four in Mechanical Engineering — not one has opted for Electrical, Electronics and Information Technology this year.

The Indian Express could not reach college chairman Sushil Yadav or institute director V K Panchal. Both were not available

when The Indian Express visited the campus and did not answer calls and SMSes left on their mobile phones.

The story of SBIT is illustrative. As many as 18 engineering institutes have closed down in Haryana since 2012, the third largest number after Andhra Pradesh (23 colleges wound up) and Telangana (21). AICTE records investigated by The Indian Express show 17 institutes in the state are currently on the regulator's radar for low admissions and run the risk of forced closure next year.

This, again, is the third largest number after Maharashtra (26) and Andhra Pradesh (19) though Haryana has, at 58,551, half the number of B.Tech seats as Maharashtra.

Haryana's Sonapat district, home to 17 engineering colleges as of 2016-17, the highest in the state, is now pockmarked with failed institutions. According to AICTE data, three colleges have closed down in this district in the last five years but the situation on the ground is worse — a visit revealed at least five had shut shop indicating that there were colleges winding up without informing AICTE.

Things weren't always this bad.

Haryana was late to join the engineering bandwagon that the country rode in the mid-1990s — fuelled by the IT boom of that period — but when it did, like elsewhere, colleges mushroomed across the state helped by the ease with which the AICTE granted approvals. In fact, 74 per cent of the total engineering institutions in the state — 106 out of 144 — that offer undergraduate courses were set up only in the last decade.

Many of these colleges came up in Sonapat. Its proximity to Delhi meant better job opportunities for the graduates," says Bachan Singh, deputy director and registrar at Bharat Institute of Technology (BIT), which was established in 2008. Last year, 89 per cent of the college's 420 BTech seats were empty and the institute is surviving on revenue generated from the pharmacy college next door run by its parent group, Bharat Group of Institutions.

Until 2009, the nearby

Bhagwan Parsuram College of Engineering, whose last batch graduated in 2016 and which has had no fresh admissions since 2013, had nine buses to ferry students from Delhi and all over Haryana to the institute. The college is now largely under lock and key with part of it leased out to a wrestling academy.

S K Bhardwaj, 62, the college principal who now lives in Gurgaon, says, "In 2009, we had almost 1,400 BTech students across all four batches. In fact, we increased our seat intake the same year and even started building a new academic block in 2010 for new classrooms to keep pace with the burgeoning demand."

Experts point out that this "indiscriminate expansion" in Haryana also coincided with a period when AICTE was accused of rampant corruption.

According to AICTE data, 2008-09 witnessed an increase of almost 30 per cent in engineering intake over the previous year — the highest in a single year since 2001 — with over 700 new engineering institutes being approved, 41 of these in Haryana.

That year, the CBI caught then AICTE member-secretary K Narayan Rao accepting a bribe from the owner of an engineering college in Andhra Pradesh. The incident eventually led to the suspension of then AICTE chairman R A Yadav.

Then came the great unraveling.

With the global economic crisis of 2008 slowing down growth in US and Europe, the main markets for IT companies, the job market shrunk. Like elsewhere, Haryana was hit hard.

College principals say the first slump in fresh admissions was witnessed in 2011, when big companies stayed away from campus interviews. Last year, less than half of the 180 final-year students at BIT were placed through campus recruitment. Bachan Singh admits that only 25 to 30 per cent of the graduates usually find jobs now, a big shift from the 60 to 65 per cent placement rates about six years ago.

The combination of poor student intake and poor placements have trapped

institutes in a "vicious cycle", says Vinod Dhar, who was in charge of the placement cell at SBIT for almost six years until he quit four months ago. "When companies visit a college campus for recruitment, they expect a pool of at least 150 to 200 students to choose from. Why would a company want to come to your campus when your batch of graduates is as small as 30 to 40? This is a big reason why colleges haven't been able to attract companies now. This is also the reason why more and more institutes in Haryana are holding their placement drives together so that companies have a larger pool to choose from."

Interview with Prakash Javadekar: 'Students must get quality education... Without quality, they are not going to seek admission. That's the large message'

Lowering the bar, industry disconnect

The year 2011, says Bachan Singh of BIT, was the inflection point. "We had good companies visiting our college till 2010. Maybe it's a problem of oversupply (of students) or a slump in the economy but now only BPOs participate. These jobs pay little. Moreover, why would an engineer want to work at a call centre," Singh says.

Industry leaders, college principals and academics The Indian Express spoke to agree on reasons — poor quality of both students and faculty exacerbated by lower eligibility norms and an outdated syllabus.

Mohandas Pai, former Infosys board member and chairman of Manipal Global Education, says he has a theory for why IT companies, which are among the largest recruiters of engineers in the country, may have deserted colleges in Haryana.

"Colleges in North India have a problem. People here are not taught to speak in English. This (IT) is a global industry. If your communication skills are not strong, then the (job) opportunities will be less. So if you ask me, Haryana having a large number of vacant seats is not a surprise," he says.

Unlike states such as Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, Haryana has no common

entrance test for admissions to undergraduate engineering colleges. It does, however, conduct online counselling based on the JEE (Main) merit list. If institutes fail to fill their seats through online counselling, they are free to admit students directly and it's this route that most colleges in Haryana take.

The minimum requirement for students to secure a B.Tech seat is an aggregate score of 45 per cent in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. The eligibility criterion, laid down by AICTE, was 50% until 2011.

"AICTE may have lowered the bar from 50 per cent to 45 under pressure from institutes suffering from low admissions. There's only so much a teacher can do to make such students (with bare minimum pass marks) excellent engineers. This eventually affects job placements. So institutes are trapped in a vicious cycle," says Dhar, the former placement officer at SBIT.

With poor admissions reducing revenues to a trickle, a few years ago, institutes started cutting corners. Faculty was the first casualty with unpaid salaries and work pressure taking a toll on those who stayed back.

"Private colleges depend on student fee to sustain themselves. Fewer students meant fall in revenue and this affected us (teachers) directly. I did not get an increment for almost seven years and to make matters worse, our salaries never came on time. A delay of two to three months was considered normal," says a teacher at SBIT who did not wish to be identified as he was still waiting for the college to clear his dues.

Teachers say that it's unfair to blame them for the poor quality of graduates. "Once faculty started quitting, many of those who stayed back had to teach as many as five papers. Our output will obviously get affected under such a work burden. You cannot expect a teacher of computer science to teach a paper on e-commerce," says a former teacher of the college who too did not want to be identified.



# Consuming soy, broccoli, kale may help cut side effects of breast cancer treatment

*The findings, led by researchers from Georgetown University, showed that intake of cruciferous vegetables and soy foods were associated with fewer reports of menopausal symptoms.*



(News Agencies) researchers say. Consuming soy foods such as soy milk and tofu and cruciferous vegetables such as cabbages, kale and broccoli may help reduce common side effects of treatment in breast cancer survivors, As a result, such

patients often experience hot flushes and night sweats, among other side effects that are commonly post menopause. The findings, led by researchers from Georgetown University, showed that intake of cruciferous vegetables and soy foods were associated with fewer reports of menopausal symptoms.

Higher soy intake was also associated with less reported fatigue. Phytochemicals, or bioactive food components, such as isoflavones in soy foods and glucosinolates in

cruciferous vegetables may be the source of the benefit, the researchers said.

While isoflavones bind to oestrogen receptors and exert weak oestrogenic effects, glucosinolates in cruciferous vegetables influence levels of metabolising enzymes that can modulate inflammation and levels of oestrogen, possibly attenuating treatment-related symptoms. The study addresses an important gap in research on the possible role of lifestyle factors, such as dietary habits, in relation to side effects of treatments, said

lead author Sarah Oppeneer Nomura from the University's Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center.

"These symptoms can adversely impact survivors' quality of life and can lead them to stopping ongoing treatments," Nomura said. "Understanding the role of life style factors is important because diet can serve as a modifiable target for possibly reducing symptoms among breast cancer survivors," she added. For the study, published in Breast Cancer Research and Treatment, the team

included 173 non-Hispanic white and 192 Chinese Americans. Women who consumed more soy foods also showed suggestive associations with lower reporting of other symptoms, including joint problems, hair thinning/loss and memory, but these associations did not reach statistical significance. Thus, until more study is conducted, breast cancer patients should not suddenly start eating soy, if they have not consumed it before, the researchers warned.

## Cholesterol alert: 50% of middle-aged individuals have hardened arteries

*A high level of so-called "bad cholesterol" is the main reason why apparently healthy individuals suffer heart attacks or strokes in middle age.*

(News Agencies) Half of middle-aged people who are normal weight and don't smoke or have diabetes may have clogged arteries, researchers said Thursday, urging stronger measures to lower cholesterol. A high level of so-called "bad cholesterol," or LDL-C, is the main reason why apparently healthy individuals suffer heart attacks or strokes in middle age, said the report in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology (JACC). "Atherosclerotic plaques are present in 50 % of middle-aged individuals (40-54 years old) with no classical cardiovascular risk factors," said the study. The report was based on nearly 1,800 people who had no classical risk factors for heart disease or stroke.

LDL cholesterol was the top predictor of arteries that were in the process of hardening, but had not yet caused a health crisis. "Even in people with optimal blood pressure, blood sugar, and total cholesterol, we detected an independent association between the level of circulating LDL-C and the presence and extent of subclinical atherosclerosis," said study co-author Javier Sanz of Spain's Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Cardiovasculares Carlos III (CNIC). Current guidelines from the US National Cholesterol Education Program describe LDL-C levels that are above 160 mg/dL as "high." Those from 130 mg/dL to 159 mg/dL are considered "borderline high." Experts should consider lowering these thresholds to improve population health, the researchers argue.

"Although the absence of classical cardiovascular risk factors is linked to a low risk of cardiovascular events, people in this situation still have heart attacks and strokes," said lead author Leticia Fernandez-Friera. "We therefore need to define new markers of early atherosclerosis in these apparently healthy individuals."

## Self control: Mindful yoga can help troubled youth reduce risky behaviours

*In spite of early life stressors, positive coping behaviours, either learned or self-generated, can actually have a protective effect.*



(News Agencies) public health researcher at UC, spent 12 months practising mindfulness-based yoga can help young people, who are dealing with stressful situations like exposure to violence and family disruption, avoid turning to negative, risky behaviours, scientists say.

Researchers from the University of Cincinnati (UC) in the US looked at the link between stressful life events and an increase in substance abuse, risky sexual behaviours and delinquency in a diverse population of 18- to 24-year-old youths.

As part of a 10-year study, Jacinda Dariotis,

"We found that many of these youths who had endured stressful life events and otherwise would have fallen into the risky behaviour trap could actually have positive outcomes later in life because they chose to join in prosocial physical activities, yoga or mindfulness meditation," said Dariotis.

"We took a holistic approach, looking at these issues from a social and biological perspective," she said.

Testosterone can be influential in dominance and aggressive behaviours, but

if directed through prosocial behaviours like sports, yoga or healthy competition it can have very positive outcomes.

Dariotis found that at-risk youth who voluntarily spend their time reading books, playing sports or engaged in avoidance coping behaviours were twice as likely to avoid risky sexual behaviours or substance abuse.

An example of avoidance coping behaviours, she says, is not thinking about a bad event that had occurred and instead, thinking about what could be better.

## Environment matters: Living in cold regions may put you at higher risk of cancer

(News Agencies) People who live in cold regions may be at an increased risk of developing cancer, a study has found. According to the study, populations living in very low temperatures, like in Denmark and Norway, had among the highest incidences of cancer in the world.

In the study published in the journal Molecular Biology and Evolution, researchers suggest that there is an evolutionary relationship between adaptation at extreme environmental conditions - like cold and high altitude - and increased cancer risk in humans.

"The findings of this study provide evidence that genetic variants found to be beneficial in extreme environments, can also predispose for cancer," said Konstantinos Voskarides, from the University of Cyprus.

"Cell resistance at low temperatures and at high altitude probably increases the probability for malignancy. This effect hardly could be filtered out by natural selection since most cancers appear later on in age after most people have their children," said Voskarides. Researchers focused

on the effect of low temperatures, either within Arctic/Scandinavian climates or high altitudes. Their analyses focused on the relationship between cancer risk and local average annual temperatures. They concluded that the extremely cold environment contributed to the cancer risk. For the study, they carefully examined the data of worldwide cancer incidence. They probed the available literature bibliographic cancer incidence and genetic data for human populations living at extreme cold and extreme high-altitudes.



# Worried about visible panty lines?

## Try these simple hacks to avoid embarrassing situations

Visible panty lines and camel toes can ruin the perfect outfit. To avoid the faux pas, try these suggestions by Smita Murarka, Head-Marketing and E-commerce at MAS

(News Agencies)Visible panty lines and camel toes are a big fashion faux pas and can ruin a good outfit. Smita Murarka, Head-Marketing and E-commerce at MAS Brands India (amanté and ULTIMO), and Neha



Kant, founder of Clovia, underwear leads to lines and discomfort whereas a loose underwear easily bunches up inside one's clothes, showing wrinkles and bumps.

\* Underwear should be selected depending on the outfit being worn. Thongs are a good option when you are wearing tight clothing, boyshorts provide full coverage, hipsters offer modest coverage at the hip area, full briefs cover your abdomen area, and bikinis are an all-time favourite for a feminine look.

\* To avoid visible panty lines, opt for seamless panties, boyshorts or thongs. To hide bulging belly fat, opt for panties with a high waist or broad waistband.

\* Always wear nude or skin-coloured panties under white or light bottoms.

\* While wearing low-waist jeans, always wear a low waist or ultra low waist panty.

\* Avoid camel toes with a simple hack using panty liners. Place two panty liners on top of each other and adjust it over your panty.

\* The fabric of the clothes plays an important role while selecting the right underwear. A smooth seamless panty is an apt choice while wearing dresses and flimsy light fabrics.

\* Stay away from thongs when you are working out and stick to cotton panties. It is important to wear the right kind of underwear to avoid UTI, yeast infection and other problems.

## Victoria's Secret model Adriana Lima is done with stripping for 'empty causes'

*Adriana Lima took to Instagram to announce her decision. She posted that she is tired of the impositions that women have to bear, and encouraged women to embrace themselves.*



(News Agencies) Victoria's Secret model Adriana Lima says she will start being more selective about the assignments she takes up and will not take off her clothes anymore for causes that aren't worth it. Lima shared a note a social media explaining her decision, reports people.com. She said: "I had received a call for the possibility of

filming a sexy video of me to be posted and shared (on) social media. Even though I have done many of this type, something had changed in me. "A friend approached me to share that she was unhappy with her body (and) it made me think... that everyday in my life, I wake up thinking, how do I look? Was I going to be accepted in my

job? And in that moment I realized that the majority of women probably wake up every morning trying to fit in a stereotype that society/social media/fashion imposed. "I thought that's not a way of living and beyond that... that's not physically and mentally healthy, so I decided to make that change... I will not take off my clothes anymore for a empty cause... Embrace yourself. Nature is beautiful. Natural is sexy." The 36-year-old said she is "tired of the impositions". "We 'as woman' can't be continuing (to live) in a world with such superficial values, it's not fair for us. It's physically and mentally not healthy. "I want to change it, in the name of my grandma, my mother, and all her ancestors that have been labeled, pressured, (and misunderstood,)" she added. Lima has two daughters with her ex-husband Marko Jaric, Valentina, 8, and Sienna, 5.





# Natalie knows how to be in news

SHE'S currently on holiday in Japan with her boyfriend Harley Bonner. But Australian actor-model Natalie Roser isn't going to let her vacation get in the way of staying up to date on current events.

In a photo shared to Instagram on Thursday, the 27-year-old posed topless in bed, using a newspaper to cover her ample assets. The lingerie model wore just a pink G-string as she used a Japanese newspaper to strategically cover her assets.

She beamed at the camera, wearing little to no makeup and showing off her endless legs. "It's a challenge to leave the hotel when it's this perfect," Natalie said.

Natalie is in Japan this week with her boyfriend Harley Bonner, the loved-up pair sharing multiple updates of their trip to Instagram. The couple enjoyed a whirlwind romance after meeting in late 2016, with Natalie moving to Melbourne to be with her actor beau in August.

In October Natalie and her then fiancé Dan Adair called off their wedding and later split. Despite being known for her stunning physique, Natalie recently opened up about her body image struggles.

"My body confidence is good now, but there have always been doubts—if you don't get a job, you think, 'Is it because my measurements are bigger than the girl who did?'" she said.

"Little things play on your mind. But I learnt pretty quickly that it's not necessarily me; it's about what the client is looking for to represent their brand. Once I realised that perhaps I just didn't fit the bikinis or clothes the way they wanted, I relaxed and started to take care of myself for me," she said.

*Daily Mail*

The model is in Japan this week with her boyfriend and the two have been sharing snaps on Instagram



## HUDSON FILES CASE AGAINST OTUNGA

JENNIFER Hudson has accused her ex David Otunga of trying to make her look bad as their ongoing custody battle gets increasingly bitter.

The *Spotlight* singer, 36, has filed an emergency motion to stop her former fiancé from speaking to the press or posting on social media about their custody dispute over son David Jr., eight.

The actress has claimed the ex wrestler has been leaking false information to make himself look better and is ruining her career in the process, according to documents obtained by The Blast.



Jennifer Hudson with ex-partner David Otunga.

David has also filed documents, accusing Jennifer of 'throwing repeated public jabs' which would violate their custody gag order.

Hudson has claimed her former partner or his team have been telling media outlets he won primary custody of their son, but she insists that is false. And though she dropped an order of protection against the wrestler last month, she insisted that was because he agreed to vacate their family home, not because he won custody of the youngster.

She also stated David had signed a confidentiality agreement in August, but he is now denying the authenticity of the signature on agreement.

Hudson claimed David is deliberately trying to place her in a false light by creating negative news, and she thinks that is harmful to both their child and her career.



Dwayne Johnson with his wife Lauren Hashian and daughter Jasmine.

HE was just awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. But it seems Dwayne Johnson has considerably loftier goals in mind, as he revealed on Thursday.

It turns out the 45-year-old *Jumanji* star is looking to possibly run for President of the United States in 2024, although he realises his Hollywood career could get in the way.

"I couldn't do both," he admitted before explaining that "realistically, as we go into 2018, when you look at my slate as we're developing and shooting into 2019 and 2020, the slate goes deep into 2021, so it feels like the realistic consideration would be 2024."

Of course, Johnson first made his name as The Rock, a wrestler participating in the WWE profes-

sional wrestling league. The idea to pursue politics originally came from a 2016 Washington post article which stated that he could win if he ran for president.

"It was never something that I trumpeted and beat my chest and ever said publicly, 'This is what I'm going to do,' but as that story picked up, Americans picked it up and there was this sentiment of, 'We're not joking, and we would really love the idea if you would run,'" he remembered.

When fans did start encouraging him to run, he immediately

started thinking about if they were correct in their assessment of him being able to win.

"I knew I had to listen to the people and really, really think about it," he said, before describing the level of careful thought he's putting into the idea.

"I'm well aware politics is not the business I'm in, so the best thing I can do is continuing to listen and learn as much as I can," revealing his famous modesty.

Johnson, who is currently registered as an Independent, also discussed how the current administration isn't living

up to his expectations.

"I continue to be hopeful that our leaders exhibit poise, perspective and the ability to bring our country together during these tough times — which I don't feel our presidency is currently doing — so that's where I'm at."

He then went on to define perhaps the most important trait a leader should possess, saying "I care deeply about our country, and I care deeply about our people — especially now. Decency matters and being a decent human being matters, and character matters, and leadership matters."

Actor says he cares deeply about the United States

# Dwayne might actually run for US President



Dwayne Johnson is looking to run for President in 2024.



## 1921 trailer

Enjoy these GIFs of Zareen Khan reacting to ghosts, demons, spirits and Karan Kundra

**The 1921 trailer promises a horror movie, but ends up delivering a comedy - starring Karan Kundra and a terrified Zareen Khan. We made GIFs for your amusement.**



(News Agencies) From the director of Raaz, Raaz 3 and Raaz Reboot comes the latest attempt at making audiences jump, and then jump again, and then jump, and then jump again... you get the idea. The first trailer for 1921, the sequel to 1920, which came out a decade ago, has all the makings of a Vikram Bhatt movie - England, fog, candles, an aspiring movie actor, sudden romantic numbers, kissing, but best of all Zareen Khan. Specifically, Zareen Khan reacting to 'demons, spirits, ghosts, spectres, apparitions, shadows, devils, poltergeists, wraiths and Karan Kundra. Here's the official plot synopsis: "Based in the year 1921 the film deals with Ayush & Rose's battle with extreme paranormal activities created by a ruthless and cursed spirit that would lead them to their ultimate redemption or downfall." Your guess is as good as ours. You're welcome for all these GIFs, by the way. Feel free to use them at opportune moments in your life.\

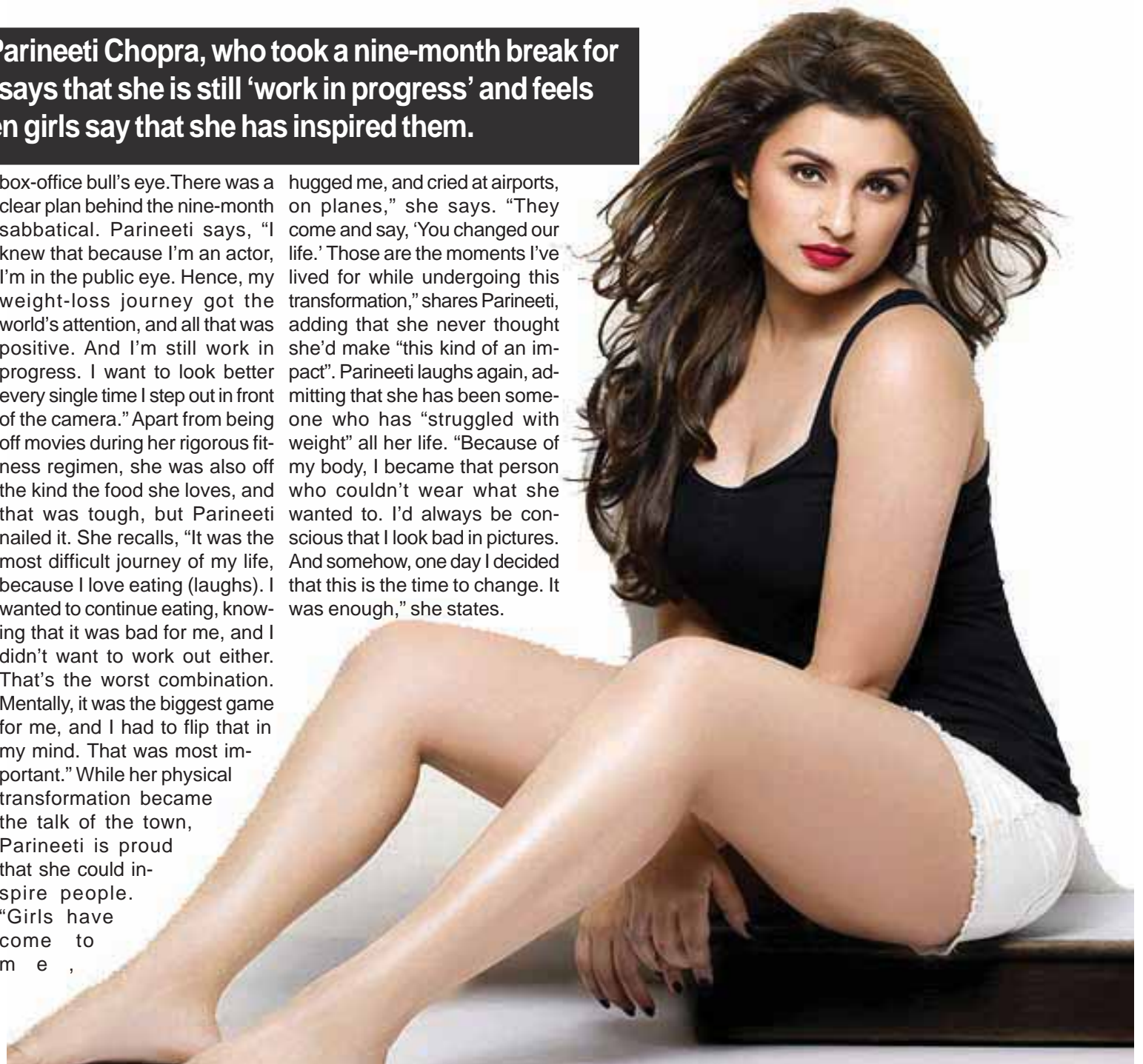
## Parineeti Chopra: It was a big blow to be away from all the stardom for nine months

**Golmaal Again actor Parineeti Chopra, who took a nine-month break for drastic weight loss, says that she is still 'work in progress' and feels proud when girls say that she has inspired them.**

(News Agencies) What's the best way to silence body-shaming trolls and get over a low phase in one's career? Different folks have different strokes. Bollywood actor Parineeti Chopra did it with a drastic weight-loss regimen and a bona fide success, Golmaal Again. As she completes six years in Bollywood, Parineeti says that the time spent away from the sets took a mental toll on her. "No, it wasn't easy," she says of the nine-month break she took to get into her best shape. "I was away from all the stardom that I had got so used to in all these years of being a part of this industry; so definitely, it was a big blow." It was in 2011 when Parineeti debuted as one of the three female leads in Ladies Vs Ricky Bahl. The following year, she proved her acting prowess, playing the solo lead in Ishaqzaade, opposite Arjun Kapoor. Since then, it has been a roller-coaster ride for Parineeti, who has had some hits and some misses. The actor, who has starred in films such as Shuddh Desi Romance (2013) and Hasee Toh Phasee (2014), unveiled her new, svelte self in this year's release, Meri Pyaari Bindu, opposite Ayushmann Khurrana, but the film was rather wide of the

box-office bull's eye. There was a clear plan behind the nine-month sabbatical. Parineeti says, "I knew that because I'm an actor, I'm in the public eye. Hence, my weight-loss journey got the world's attention, and all that was positive. And I'm still work in progress. I want to look better every single time I step out in front of the camera." Apart from being off movies during her rigorous fitness regimen, she was also off the kind the food she loves, and that was tough, but Parineeti nailed it. She recalls, "It was the most difficult journey of my life, because I love eating (laughs). I wanted to continue eating, knowing that it was bad for me, and I didn't want to work out either. That's the worst combination. Mentally, it was the biggest game for me, and I had to flip that in my mind. That was most important." While her physical transformation became the talk of the town, Parineeti is proud that she could inspire people. "Girls have come to me,

hugged me, and cried at airports, on planes," she says. "They come and say, 'You changed our life.' Those are the moments I've lived for while undergoing this transformation," shares Parineeti, adding that she never thought she'd make "this kind of an impact". Parineeti laughs again, admitting that she has been someone who has "struggled with weight" all her life. "Because of my body, I became that person who couldn't wear what she wanted to. I'd always be conscious that I look bad in pictures. And somehow, one day I decided that this is the time to change. It was enough," she states.





# Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma tie the knot in 'Royal' wedding style

(News Agencies) The 'king' of Indian cricket Virat Kohli has tied the knot with glamorous Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma in a celebrity wedding which has India gripped.

The moment, pictures and video of the dazzling duo went viral as the newlyweds were defined as a 'power couple' with a current net worth of about Rs 600 crore. Monday's wedding ended weeks of speculation in the gossip pages of India's newspapers and on the airwaves of the country's excitable 24-hour news channels that the couple, dubbed Virushka, had recently got engaged. Shailendra Singh, brand analyst and joint managing director of Percept Profile Ltd, told India Today TV: 'I would say, this is the biggest moment in Indian brand market. Both make

a power couple with equal strength and opportunities. I can easily predict that Virushka would have a net worth of Rs 1000 crore in next two years.'

Experts believe both are well-positioned brands available in the market.

'Both will create a new category altogether of stability, family, true and loyalty. Products such as house loans, cars, insurance and so on, would start coming in', Singh said.

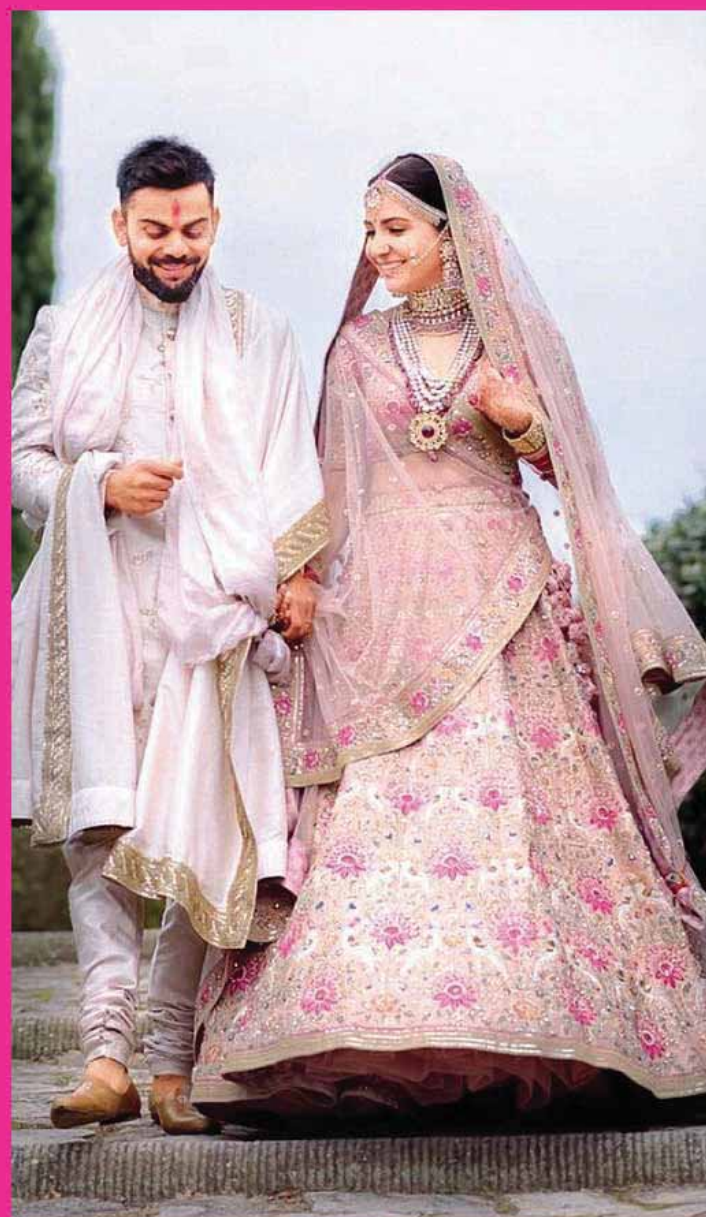
According to a Finapp report, an estimated net worth of Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma is Rs 382 crore and Rs 220 crore respectively.

The net worth of Virat includes match fees, IPL salary and income from brand endorsements. For Anushka, money is coming from movie

remuneration, brand endorsements, private investments and so on.

Finapp has claimed that Anushka's net worth has seen a growth of over 80 per cent in last three years, with a prediction that her assets is likely to grow at a rate of 30 per cent and annual income by 18 per cent, respectively, over the next three years. As per the data available in public domain, Anushka charges around Rs 10 crore per film and Rs 4 crore per brand endorsement. She has a personal investment of nearly Rs 40 crore in real estates in Mumbai and across India. She owns at least four cars - such as BMW, Range Rover and Mercedes - worth Rs 5 crore.

Virat earns an annual income of Rs 120 crore. With his world class records, he is one of the highest-paid celebrities and sports players in the world.



## Cricket's love affair with Bollywood

WITH Virushka finally getting hitched, here's a look at cricketer-filmstar romances that left fans awestruck in the past.

### ZAHEER KHAN & SAGARIKA GHATGE

The couple was in a relationship for a few years and tied the knot in Mumbai last month. They are on their honeymoon at present in the Maldives. Sagarika is best known for her role in Shah Rukh Khan's 2007 hit, *Chak De! India* while pace bowler Zaheer played for the Indian team from 2000 to 2014. They met through common friends three years back.



Zaheer & Sagarika got married in November.

### YUVRAJ SINGH & HAZEL KEECH

Indian all-rounder Yuvraj Singh tied the knot with British-Mauritian model Hazel Kech in November last year in Chandigarh. Hazel made her debut as a supporting actress in Salman Khan's *Bodyguard* in 2011.

### HARBHAJAN SINGH & GEETA BASRA

Harbhajan Singh tied the knot with actress-model Geeta Basra in October 2015. The wedding took place in Jalandhar. Their daughter, Hinaya Heer Plaha was born in July last year. British-Indian Geeta made her Bollywood debut alongside Emraan Hashmi with the 2006 film *Dil Diya Hai*. Prior to the wedding, the duo was in a relationship for over three years.

### MOHAMMAD AZHARUDDIN & SANGEETA BIJLANI

Former Indian cricket skipper Mohammad Azharuddin got married to former Miss India and actress Sangeeta Bijlani in 1996. The marriage lasted for 14 years and the couple parted ways in 2010.

### MANSOOR ALI KHAN PATAUDI & SHARMILA TAGORE

The late cricket legend Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi tied the knot with actress Sharmila Tagore in December 1968. Tiger, as Pataudi was called, met Sharmila through a common friend in 1965 and the two dated for three years before getting married. They are parents to actor Saif Ali Khan, actress Soha Ali Khan and jewellery designer Saba Ali Khan. Pataudi breathed his last in Delhi in 2011.

Compiled by  
Ahana Bhattacharya



Pictures from Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma's wedding (top) and mehendi ceremony (above) went viral on social media on Monday.

Congratulations! You guys make an amazingly beautiful couple

— SONAM KAPOOR  
Actress

Beautiful couple and I wish them and their loved ones the best years ahead.

— KARAN JOHAR  
filmmaker

May you continue to smash goals in the face, like Kohli smashes tidy 6s. Love.

— RICHA CHADHA  
Actress

So wonderful. Many congratulations to both the families.

— SHAHID KAPOOR  
Actor



(Insider Bureau) Lights, camera and ACTION! Its that time of the year! The largest, oldest and most authentic Indian pageant is all set to be held Sunday December 17, 2017 at New Jersey's finest Royal Alberts Palace. Neelam and Dharmatma Saran of IFC, are the pioneers in organizing Indian pageants and fashion shows in the USA and other parts of the world, of which the Miss India Worldwide has been acclaimed as the "most glamorous Indian function in the world." And, of course, the Miss India Worldwide is the only international Indian pageant. Originating in 1980, in less than 20 years, this



States will take the stage competing to attain the next national title of MISS, TEEN AND MRS. INDIA USA! This eventful weekend will include preliminary judgements in which Segments will consist of Ethnic wear, Evening wear, talent segment and an intellectual question and answer segment.

Gracing the event this year, will be Mr. Prabhakar Sharan; the First Indian to establish a mark in Latin American movies. Based in Costa Rica, he will be attending the pageant to scout for new faces for his upcoming Bollywood and Hollywood movies.

## Miss, Teen and Mrs India USA 2017

pageant flared from the state level, to nationals, and yet international as well! Hosting ladies across the United States, to across seven seas, this pageant has been a platform to many renowned south asian artists such as Bollywoods very own Aarti Chabria, Pooja Kumar, Monica Gill just to name a few. Proudly, this platform also encourages to imbibe Indian values, traditions and culture among the youth of Indian origin around the world.

On Sunday December 17, 2017 beautiful Miss, Youthful Teens and elegant Mrs from all over the United



## Aishwarya Rai beauty secret revealed

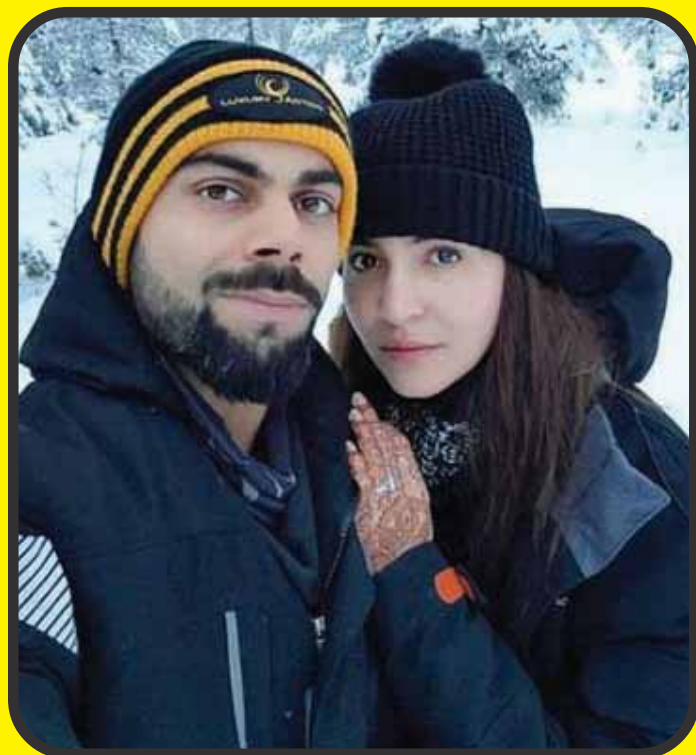
(News Agencies) Aishwarya Rai beauty secret revealed. One of most stunning women in Hindi film industry, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan has quite literally conquered the world of beauty. Aishwarya Rai beauty secret revealed Aishwarya Rai is now a mother of a child, but her beauty remains same. Whenever she goes to events, she looks very different, her beautiful look, hairstyle and stylish dress sense amaze everyone. Aishwarya Rai beauty secret revealed According to sources, Aishwarya uses toning oil to maintain her beauty. Ash uses Ayurvedic slimming oil which is ordered from Kerala. Bachchan family spending a lot of money to help the cultivation of that oil so that Ash always looks beautiful.

## Rishi Kapoor insults Delhi journalists with "Muft Ki Daru" comment

(News Agencies) Rishi Kapoor hain (Who are you?). When they presented their credentials, he objected to the presence of journalists at the launch on Thursday evening of a book on his late father, the legendary Raj Kapoor, in spite of an invitation from the publisher. Kapoor reportedly lost his cool when he spotted three journalists about to walk in to the toilet he was stepping out of. An angry Kapoor asked the journalists, "aap log kaun charge resisted, saying: "You know how Rishi Kapoor is. He has created a scene at our hotel twice in the past."



## Anushka shares first honeymoon photo on social media



(News Agencies) Anushka shares first honeymoon photo on social media. After marriage, Virat and Anushka again on headlines for their honeymoon trip. Anushka finally posted the first photo from her ongoing honeymoon on her Instagram handle. Anushka, who is currently holidaying near Italy with Virat, shared a click from the snowcapped mountains of Europe.

Anushka and Virat, earlier in the day, also posted a thank you note for their wedding planners Shaadi Squad. "The people responsible for making the most memorable occasion of our lives peaceful and beyond beautiful ?? - our lovely wedding planners @shaadisquad" they wrote.



## Priyanka Chopra receives Mother Teresa Memorial award

(News Agencies) Priyanka Chopra receives Mother Teresa Memorial award. Actor Priyanka Chopra has been honoured with this year's Mother Teresa Memorial award for social justice. Priyanka received the award for her contribution towards lending her support to social causes, such as her recent visit to Syria, where she met and interacted with refugee children. The actor is also UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassador and is known for supporting various philanthropic activities. The 35-year-old star's mother, Madhu Chopra, received the award on her behalf. "I humbly accept the award on her behalf.

As a mother, I am immensely proud to have a child who is so compassionate and has so much kindness in her. She exemplifies the fact the more you give the more you get. Even as a child, she was influenced by Mother Teresa and has been supporting Prem Niwas in Bareilly. "It is justifiable for her to receive this honourable award and I am immensely proud of her. I'm thankful and I'm sure she is humbled that her efforts have been recognised by the foundation that believes in helping the needy and supporting the deprived and raising funds for those who are impoverished," Madhu said in a statement.



## Kylie Jenner enjoys shopping for baby

(News Agencies) Reality TV star Kylie Jenner, who is reportedly expecting her first child with boyfriend Travis Scott, is "having fun" while shopping for her baby. The 20-year-old is yet to confirm her pregnancy, but media reports said that she is splurging huge amounts on some unique baby items. Kylie Jenner enjoys shopping "Kylie is having a lot of fun picking out items for her baby. She's definitely leaning towards pink hues and having fun with the fact that

she's having a girl," a source said. The source shared that Kylie earlier picked up plenty of clothes and baby gear, including a stroller. Kylie Jenner enjoys shopping. The "Keeping Up With the Kardashians" star last month threw a baby shower hours after her step-sister and reality TV star Kim Kardashian threw her own baby shower. Kim is



expecting her third child with rapper Kanye West via surrogacy.

## UK poll : Shahid Kapoor is the 'Sexiest Asian Man



(News Agencies) Bollywood star Shahid Kapoor has been voted the "Sexiest Asian Man" in the world in an annual UK poll released in London. 36-year-old popular actor of recent award-winning films such as "Uda Punjab" beat off competition from chart-topping British-Pakistani singer Zayn Malik, last year's winner who came in at third this year. UK poll: Shahid Kapoor is the 'Sexiest Asian Man' London-based weekly newspaper 'Eastern Eye' conducted a poll "50 Sexiest Asian Men", in which Shahid Kapoor voted as "Sexiest Asian Man". Another popular Bollywood star and one of the past toppers of the list, Hrithik Roshan, is ranked second for the third year in a row. Kapoor told the newspaper, "I would like to

thank everyone who voted for me. I am humbled by the desirable

tag". "I believe sexy is not only to do with the physical, but as much to do with the mental perspective on life. This one is for all those fans who have loved and supported me," he said. Asjad Nazir 'Eastern Eye' entertainment editor and founder of the '50 Sexiest Asian Men' list, Asjad Nazir, cited Kapoor's growing profile as a role model as a key factor behind his big win this year, despite the postponement of his hotly-anticipated film "Padmavati", in which he tackles the role of a Rawal Ratan Singh.



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