

**Urvashi
 Rautela Trolled**

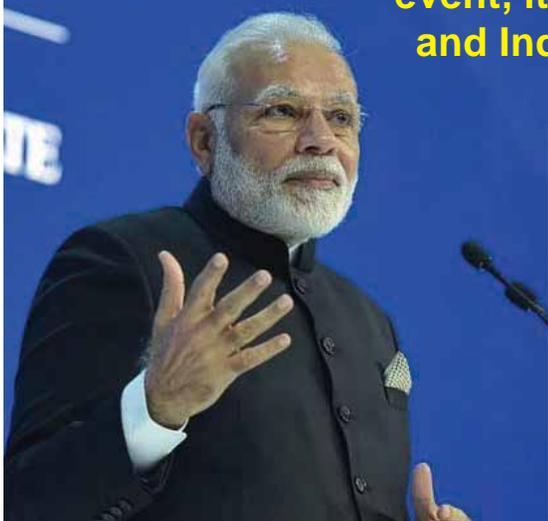


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Modi's speech at Davos

Just what the audience wanted to hear

Given the preponderance of business leaders at the event, it was always clear that Modi would pitch India and India's economy strong at the World Economic Forum, and he did not disappoint



(SAI Bureau) Davos : Any leader asked to address the plenary session of the World Economic Forum at Davos has an opportunity to do two things. The first is to pitch his (or her) country strongly to foreign companies and investors. The second is to build the brand of both the individual and the country by looking at issues and concerns beyond those that just concern his or her country. The world, after all, is sorely lacking in statesmen (and stateswomen) of global stature.

The audience at the World Economic Forum was looking for these two big messages in Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech during the plenary session of the World Economic Forum at Davos. It wasn't looking for anything else and, in truth, it isn't interested in anything else. At the end of a speech delivered in Hindi – this was expected, and seen as a sign of confidence
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Nationalism Made In USA

Defence cooperation is part of India's increasing subordination to US geostrategy

(SAI Bureau) Washington DC : Kenneth Juster, the US Ambassador to India, in his first public speech, has suggested that military liaison officers be posted on a reciprocal basis in the two countries' "combatant commands". This is not a new issue, as the United States has been urging the Indian government since 2002 to post a liaison officer at the Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii. It is the Pacific Command which covers the whole area of the Asia-Pacific up to India. The Vajpayee government did not reject the proposal then but wanted an off-icer posted with Central Command. What is, however, new is the proposal to do so on a reciprocal basis, which means that there would also be an American military -officer posted at an Indian Command headquarters.



(Contd on page 23)

The Chief And His Court

The 'mutiny' raises some fundamental questions about the judiciary, and its relation with the executive. It was a moment of rupture created by many backstories.

(SAI Bureau) New Delhi : A pillar crumbled a little. The edifice tottered just that bit. And the world watched, stupefied and taut with tension, as bits of mortar went flying. Who could have foreseen an event that raised questions of the State from what seemed a routine, administrative event in the Supreme Court? When, on June 12 last year, the four -seniormost colleagues of the Chief Justice of -India



(CJI) approached him with an issue rela-ted to work allocation? All they wanted settled was an objection to his marking a politically sensitive case to a particular judge. Except that it had not happened before. Nor had what followed. Not in India. Perhaps nowhere else either. Precedents are the life-blood of law. (Contd on page 22)

Padmaavat row

Make fringe groups, such as Karni Sena, pay for destruction of public property



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Delhi's Pollution is Putting The Poorest At Risk

"Sometimes the whole place smells of petrol. What choice do we have?"

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI Farida used to live in Pul Mithai, one of New Delhi's biggest slums. Every morning, she would go to the market and wait around the trucks to collect any spilled grains or discarded fruits and vegetables, which she would then clean and sell. Last month, government officials evicted Farida along with her husband,

(Contd on page 23)

India-themed cafe faces protest in London



(News Agencies) LONDON: A cafe based on an Indian theme and offering 'The Gandhi' vegan breakfast on its menu is facing protests by some activists who believe it glorifies the British Empire and presents a "garish" colonial view of India.

The Blighty India Cafe in

Tottenham, north London, says it takes inspiration from the "great Commonwealth powerhouse of India, championing it through our decor, menu and atmosphere".

However, an online petition started by some Labour Party activists is urging local Tottenham MP David Lammy to

force the cafe to change its theme.

"It is adorned with Hindi and a neon Gandhi on the wall. The owners are not Indian, and the food is not Indian, but British with an Indian 'twist' - which frankly many Indians would find offensive. It is a garish colonial view of India, stereotyped and built for English consumption," notes the petition, started by Indian-origin activist Zainab Khan along with a few others. The cafe is the second one set up in London by the Blighty Commonwealth of Cafes and is based on the concept of sourcing coffee beans from Commonwealth countries.

"We are serious about coffee. We source our beans from Commonwealth countries - Rwanda, Kenya, India, Tanzania, Papua

New Guinea and Malawi and roast them ourselves to ensure we are serving the highest quality drink possible," says the company's mission statement.

The signature dish at both cafes in north London is the full English breakfast in three variants - the Winston as the traditional non-vegetarian version, the Clementine is a vegetarian option, and the Gandhi as "the only vegan full English breakfast we know of". "We never imagined that Churchill or Gandhi would attract complaints. We thought they were both widely-liked and admired figures," said co-owner Chris Evans. "All we are doing is celebrating a true British hero in Churchill and the ties between Britain and Commonwealth countries through the mediums of cof-

fee and food," he said.

The petition against the Blighty India Cafe comes a few months after a street art mural of Britain's war-time Prime Minister outside the company's first eatery, the Blighty UK Cafe in Finsbury Park, was vandalised. Churchill's famous two-fingers' victory sign pose alongside the slogan "double shot" implied a double espresso coffee order. But it had to be removed after vandals repeatedly defaced the art-work by spraying words such as "warmonger" and "imperialist". Blighty is an informal term for Britain or England and is traced back to the "bilayat" and "bilayati" used by soldiers from the Indian sub-continent during the First and Second World Wars.

NRI held for molesting American in a five-star hotel in New Delhi



(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: A Non-Resident Indian (NRI) working as a contractor with a global IT firm was arrested on Thursday for allegedly molesting a 52-year-old American woman in a room at Taj Diplomatic Enclave hotel on Monday. The woman alleged that the accused laced her drink and tried to grope her while she was semi-conscious. Police have registered a case of molestation at Chanakyapuri and arrested the man.

In her complaint, the woman, who had arrived in India on January 6, told cops that the 25-year-old accused had met her at the hotel in Chanakyapuri on January 8. She said she met the man near

the hotel's pool area, and he invited her to his room for a drink. She alleged that the man had mixed something in her drink which made her woozy, and he then tried to grab her. However, she managed to push him away and leave the room.

Police officers say that the accused was in Delhi on business and was staying in a room on the eight floor of the hotel. The American woman checked out of the hotel a day after the incident and shifted to another hotel in Gurgaon. On January 10, she returned to Taj and registered a complaint with police. "A case under sections of outraging the modesty of a woman and molestation was registered and a

police team arrested the man from his room," said B K Singh, additional CP (New Delhi).

The woman also recorded her statement before a magistrate. She told cops she had come to Delhi for a business project and to meet some associates in Gurgaon.

A spokesperson for Taj Diplomatic Enclave said they have been providing all support to police. "We have been made aware by the lady guest of this incident between her and another resident guest. We have been in contact with the lady guest, a formal complaint with the authorities was also facilitated by the hotel team. The hotel will cooperate with the authorities in any investigation. [The] Safety and security of our guests and associates is paramount," the spokesperson said. Police have recovered CCTV footage from the hotel which shows the man entering the room with the woman. In her statement, the woman said she did not register a complaint immediately but changed her mind after narrating her ordeal to a friend.

First Indian-origin death-row prisoner in US to be executed on February 23



(News Agencies) WASHINGTON: The execution date of the first death-row Indian-American prisoner+ convicted of killing a baby and her Indian grandmother has been set for next month. Raghunandan Yandamuri, 32, in 2014 was given death penalty for kidnapping and killing a 61-year-old elderly Indian woman and her 10-month-old granddaughter. It was seen as part of a botched kidnapping-for-ransom plot. Yandamuri's execution date has been set for February 23 by local correctional authorities. However, he is likely to get a reprieve because of a 2015 moratorium on death penalty by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf. Yandamuri is the first Indian-American to face death

penalty. Federal authorities alleged that killings were part of a botched kidnapping-for-ransom plot.

A native of Andhra Pradesh, Yandamuri had come to the US on a H-1B visa. He holds an advanced degree in electrical and computer science engineering. Following his conviction, he asked that death penalty be imposed upon him.

Later he appealed his sentence, but lost his appeal last April. The local Times Herald on Wednesday reported that even though his execution by lethal injection is set for February 23, he might get a reprieve because a death penalty moratorium previously was put in place by Governor Tom Wolf.

ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀਅਤ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾਨ

PUNJABI DUNIYA

The extension of proxy voting rights to NRIs needs meticulous planning

Evolving a foolproof system to ascertain the genuineness of the proxy selected by an NRI could be a challenge



The need for proxy voting as well as postal ballot was recognised in order to remove the hardships faced by certain voters because of frequent outstation transfers. In many countries, postal ballot and proxy voting are given to certain categories of voters, especially government servants and armed services personnel. Although the contours or the mechanics of proxy voting are yet not clear, any implementation mechanism for such a move has to be carefully crafted. Postal ballot is allowed to Americans who reside outside the country's jurisdiction,

but in the United States the election process is carried out efficiently with clear instructions for voters. It is therefore necessary that the Election Commission of India discharges this enormous responsibility by educating the voters and officials concerned properly. At the same time, it will have to impress upon voters the need to preserve the secrecy of the ballot by providing an individual security code. Another challenge could be devising a foolproof system to ascertain the genuineness of the proxy selected by an NRI for casting the vote. One more note of cau-

tion: At present, the expenditure of candidates and parties is watched closely within the geographical limits of the electoral constituency where the election is held. But it will be tough to keep a watch on expenditure incurred outside the country. Perhaps a declaration should be attached to the ballot affirming non-acceptance of any gain from the candidate or political parties. One hopes this will not open up new ways to bribe voters. The candidate and political party should maintain details of the money spent abroad for inclusion in the final statement of expenditure.

(News Agencies) (News Agencies) With the government introducing a bill in Parliament in the winter session, more than 25 million Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) who are registered voters in the country could exercise their franchise in elections held in India through a proxy while staying abroad. The move to relax the residence requirement and actual personal participation for NRIs through an amendment to the Representation of People Act is a step forward towards internet voting.

Singh pleaded guilty, agreed to testify in Mangano case

(Media Reports) Mineola, long Island- Restaurateur Harendra Singh has admitted to bribing former Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano and former Oyster Bay Town Supervisor John Venditto, according to newly unsealed court documents.



Media reports suggest that Singh secretly pleaded guilty in October 2016, but his words were hidden from public view until the documents were unsealed Wednesday. His guilty plea also names an unnamed New York City official.

Those documents show that Singh admitted offering and giving Mangano and Venditto bribes and kickbacks in exchange for them taking official action in his favor on an as-needed basis. The actions happened between January 2010 and February 2015, according to the documents.

The Manganos and Venditto have all pleaded not guilty. They are scheduled to go on trial on their own federal corruption charges in March.

Singh said some of the gifts he gave Mangano included a massage chair, an office chair and wood flooring to be installed in the

master bedroom of the Manganos' home. Singh said he paid for a watch worth approximately \$7,000 for one of Mangano's sons.

In addition, Singh admitted to paying for trips for Mangano and his family. Singh said he also provided a no-show job to Linda Mangano from 2010 through 2014-- and that he paid her approximately \$450,000. Singh said he hired Linda Mangano at the request of Ed Mangano, and his purpose in hiring her was to influence the county executive.

Singh also said he gave Venditto, his family and other Oyster Bay officials free meals and significantly discounted rates for events at his restaurants and catering halls, free use of conference rooms and free limousine service.

Singh said both the town and county awarded contracts to him in return for the gifts and bribes. Singh also said the town guaranteed loans to Singh's companies worth in excess of \$20 million, collectively. According to the plea transcript, Singh agreed to be a key witness in the corruption case on Long Island against Mangano, his wife and Venditto.

For Sale in Wantagh, Long Island



- 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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How Trump is making China and India great again

With his constant tirades against immigrants, particularly from what he calls “shithole countries”, Donald Trump is giving many countries the greatest gift of all: causing the trickle of returning talent to become a flood

Thank you for what you are doing for America; your successes have put India in very positive light and shown us what is possible in India” said Atal Bihari Vajpayee to me in a one-on-one meeting during his visit to the White House in September 2000. He added that he would love to see Indian-American entrepreneurs return home to help build India’s nascent technology industry.

Bill Clinton and George W. Bush granted him his wish with their flawed immigration policies. The U.S. admitted hundreds of thousands of foreign students and engineers on temporary visas but did not have the fortitude to expand the numbers of green cards. The result was that the waiting time for permanent resident visas began to exceed 10 years for Indian and Chinese immigrants. Some began returning home. Now with his constant tirades against immigrants, particularly from what he calls “shithole countries”, Donald Trump is giving many countries the greatest gift of all: causing the trickle of returning talent to become a flood. For India, the timing could not be better. With hundreds of millions of people now gaining access to the Internet

through inexpensive smartphones, India is about to experience a technology boom that will transform the country itself. And with the influx of capital and talent, it will be able to challenge Silicon Valley—just as China is doing. This is the irony of America’s rising nativism and protectionism. When I met Prime Minister Vajpayee, I was the CEO of a technology startup in North Carolina. Later, I became an academic and started researching why Silicon Valley was the most innovative place on this planet. I learnt that it was diversity and openness that gave Silicon Valley its global advantage; foreign-born people were dominating its entrepreneurial ecosystem and fueling innovation and job growth. My research teams at Duke, the University of California at Berkeley, New York University, and Harvard documented that between 1995 and 2005, immigrants founded 52% of Silicon Valley’s technology companies. The founders came from almost every nation in the world: Australia to Zimbabwe. Immigrants also contributed to the majority of patents filed by leading US companies in that period: 72% of the total at Qualcomm, 65% at

Merck, 64% at General Electric, and 60% at Cisco Systems. Surprisingly, 40% of the international patent applications filed by the US government also had foreign-national authors.

Indians have achieved the most extraordinary success in Silicon Valley. They have founded more start-ups than the next four immigrant groups, from Britain, China, Taiwan, and Japan, combined. Despite comprising only 6% of the Valley’s population and 1% of the nations, Indians founded 15.5% of Silicon Valley startups and contributed to 14% of US global patents. At the same time, I also realised that protectionist demands by nativists were causing American political leaders to advocate immigration policies that were (and are) choking US innovation and economic growth. The government would constantly expand the number of H1-B visas in response to the demands of businesses but never the number of green cards, which were limited to 140,000 for the so-called key employment categories. The result? The queues kept increasing. I estimate that today there are around 1.5 million skilled workers and their families stuck

in immigration limbo, and that more than a third of these are Indians. Meanwhile, I have witnessed a rapid change in the aspirations among international students. The norm would be for students from China and India to stay in the US permanently because there were hardly any opportunities back home. This changed. My engineering students began to seek short-term employment in the US to gain experience after they graduated but their ultimate goal was to return home to their families and friends. Human resource directors of companies in India and China increasingly reported that they were flooded with resumes from US graduates. For students, the prospect of returning home and working for a hot company such as Baidu, Alibaba, Paytm, or Flipkart is far more enticing than working for an American company. You cannot blame them, especially given that delays in visa processing will lock them into a menial position for at least a decade during the most productive parts of their careers. This has been an incredible boon for China. One measure of the globalisation of innovation is the number of technology start-ups with post-



money valuations of \$1 billion or higher. These companies are commonly called “unicorns”. As recently as 2000, nearly all of these were in the US; countries such as China and India could only dream of being home to a Google, Amazon, or Facebook. Now, according to South China Morning Post, China has 98 unicorns, which is 39% of the world’s 252 unicorns. In comparison, America has 106, or 42%, and India has 10 unicorns, 4%. An analysis by the National Foundation for American Policy revealed that 51% of the unicorns in the US have at least one immigrant founder. It is clear how shortsighted the US government has been. With the clouds of nativism circling the White House, things will only get worse. America’s share of successful technology startups will continue to shrink and Silicon Valley will see competition like never before. America’s loss is India’s gain.

India-Asean ties: A cup half full?

Despite the great strides made, India-Asean relations have not measured up to expectations. There continue to be significant asymmetries in this expanding engagement.



The India-Asean engagement has made impressive strides over the past 25 years, starting with a modest sectoral dialogue partnership in 1992, a full dialogue partnership in 1995, a summit partnership in 2002 and a strategic partnership in 2012. The invitation to all 10 Asean heads of

state/government as chief guests for India’s 68th Republic Day celebrations will mark yet another and even more significant upgrade of the relationship. All 10 Asean leaders will be present which reflects the importance they attach to the relationship. The unprecedented nature

of the collective invitation extended to leaders of a regional grouping, in turn, reflects the Indian intent to highlight the priority it attaches to its South East Asian neighbourhood. Despite this record, one must acknowledge that India-Asean relations have not measured up to expectations. There continue to be significant asymmetries in this expanding engagement.

One, political relations have outpaced the economic, commercial, cultural and people to people relations. The India-Asean trade is currently only US\$ 71 billion and has been declining since reaching a peak of US\$80 billion in 2011-12. The Asean-China trade by contrast is US\$450 billion. It is unlikely

that the trade target of US\$ 200 billion for 2020 will be met. Despite more than 22% of India’s cumulative outward FDI being located in Asean and 2,000 Indian companies being present in Asean countries, India’s profile is modest when compared to China and Japan. In 2016 India invested US\$ 1 billion in Asean as compared to US\$ 10 billion by China. Only Singapore is a major investor in India responsible for a cumulative total of about US\$ 30 billion and this constitutes more than 98% of the Asean total. While India and Asean have concluded an Agreement on Goods, Services and Investment, gains have been modest. India is reluctant to conclude the Regional Coop-

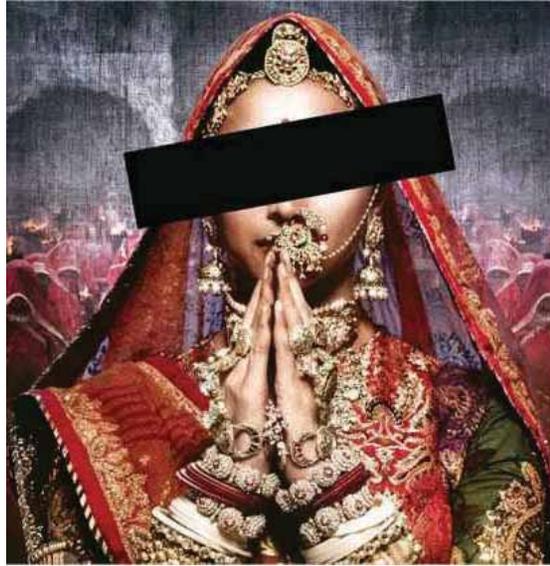
erative Economic Partnership (RCEP) which would constitute a mega trade agreement among Asean countries, India, China, Japan, ROK, Australia and New Zealand, mainly due to apprehensions over China swamping the Indian market. Lack of physical connectivity between India and South-East Asia continues to be a major constraint and even the few like the Kaladan Multi-modal Transport Corridor through Myanmar’s Rakhine province and the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway have been inordinately delayed. This will further limit the prospects for expanding India-Asean trade and commercial relations.

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Rani Nirbhaya

What make the gang-rape and murder of our Nirbhayas less honourable than the jauhar of Rani Padmini? This question ought to be asked of all the brave men of Haryana and Rajasthan.

Another Nirbhaya has fallen in the killing fields of misogyny, patriarchy and sexual depravation. There have been five rapes in the last three days in Haryana and four of these victims were minors. But we call one of them Nirbhaya, not because she was fearless, she would have been as fearless or fearful as any other 15-year-old, but this child too was gang-raped, mutilated and murdered. The sheer violence on her body and soul threw up memories of that gruesome night on the Delhi roads in



2012 when Jyoti Singh was gang-raped and an iron rod thrust into her intestines. The Haryana girl's friend too was killed. All this while many state governments and even the Supreme Court were trying to decide whether to ban a movie on Rani Padmini, a fictional character created by medieval poet Malik Muhammed Jayasi. What make the gang-rape and murder of our Nirbhayas less honourable than the jauhar of Rani Padmini? This question ought to be asked of all the brave men of Haryana and Rajasthan. If women or girl children are playthings for goons with big moustaches, turbans and bigger claims over others' lives, then why cry for Padmini? Or is it that these children or young women do not commit suicide before getting their wombs and entrails burst? Probably they would, as the fictional Rani did, if they get to know that modern-day Allauddin Khi-ljis are on their way to rape and kill them. But unfortunately they are simply not given the option of suicide when they are getting butchered. The Khilji of the poem is now almost Everyman, mostly from a dominant caste, privileged and at times with some political clout. For instance, what should Varnika Kundu have done when chased by the son of a political heavyweight? Think about jauhar or call up the police?

There cannot be a worse hypocrisy than the Padmavat controversy in an Indian, dominant caste milieu. The protesters here are merely reinforcing their right over the body of a woman, not celebrating her choice. Sure, there is obviously the question of the Muslim other. For, had it been the "honour" (whatever is meant by that term) of a woman, commoner or queen, the same society would never have violated this very "honour" of its own women, day and night. So, the turbaned, moustachioed lot were merely saying that the Muslim other does not have a right over the body of our women, you rape your women, we'll rape ours. And every time they prey on a girl child or chase an upper-middle-class woman through the roads of a so-called safe city, they are exercising their entitlement.

This also brings us to another very important issue. A man or more aptly a beast attacking a woman is a matter of shame for the society, for him and his family. But even now perfectly empowered families desist from lodging complaints or speaking out against goons who find some perverse thrill in groping women. Every part of the body is equally private and there ought not to be any shame in speaking out against an attack. There were reports even from urbane Bangalore about women being groped, molested and slapped by bike-borne thugs. Unless every small mis-ogynistic crime is reported and the perpetrators caught, there will always be Nirbhayas in our neighbourhoods, rural or urban. It is nauseating but pertinent to add that an iron rod thrust into the intestines has become a metaphor of threat and abuse for the worst of the rapists to establish their entitlement.

An increasing income gap is a sign of an economy that has failed its citizens

The richest 1% of Indians, an Oxfam report says, have managed to capture 73% of all the wealth generated in the country last year. The report also goes on to calculate that for a minimum wage worker in rural India, it will take 941 years to earn what a top executive in a leading firm makes in a year.

Even as the Sensex reaches new highs, and India is touted as the next big thing in the world of business, the annual Oxfam survey has provided some sobering data. The richest 1% of Indians, the report says, have managed to capture 73% of all the wealth generated in the country last year. The report also goes on to estimate that for a minimum wage worker in rural India, it would take 941 years to earn what a top executive in a leading firm makes in a year. This glaring income gap is a huge problem for India, sitting as it is on a massive demographic dividend.

It is becoming increasingly clear that in the years after liberalisation, most of the benefits have accrued only to those who were already rich (or even relatively rich) to begin with. Issues of hunger, poverty, malnutrition and education remain largely the problem of those at the lower end of the economic spectrum. It has been estimated that by 2020, the average age of Indians will be 29. In a young country in which a majority of the population will be of an employable age, there is an urgent need to equip these young people with adequate education and skills, and, more important, fruitful employment. It is through disgruntled and unemployed youth who find it hard to make ends meet that social unrest can easily fester.

If top executives continue to earn fat salaries at the expense of those who work only for minimum wages, and the majority of employment comes from the informal sector, this income gap is only likely to widen. The need of the hour is for the government to create many more jobs for young people, invest in better social welfare schemes, and improve the state of agriculture and small businesses. An increasing income gap is the sign of an economic system that has failed its citizens. The twin crises of agriculture and viable jobs compounded with inadequate systems of education and healthcare could prove to be a rising India's undoing.

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The Rise Of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Reveals A Harsh Truth

Many journalistic accounts of Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Prince Mohammed bin Salman (often referred to as MBS), depict him as power-hungry and corrupt, and cite these two impulses for his behavior and policies. When King Salman designated MBS as his heir in June 2017, MBS effectively became the most powerful man in the kingdom. And despite ill-advised purchases (including a yacht and a French chateau, which have cemented the impression of the crown prince's greed), power consolidation and money alone cannot explain recent developments.

The fact is that MBS is trying to deal with a harsh truth about Saudi Arabia: The kingdom is economically and politically unsustainable, and is headed toward a disaster.

The crown prince inherited a sclerotic state with limited administrative capacity and an economy that is largely reliant on declining oil revenues. The country is burdened by a venal elite comprised of thousands of royals and hangers-on who operate with impunity and are a huge drain on the economy. It is saddled with a bloated public sector which employs 70 percent of working Saudis, and its military is incapable of defending the homeland despite billions spent on armaments. The nation's religious elite prevents so-

cial change to maintain its dominance and privileges. And on the international front, Iran seeks to destroy the kingdom's system of rule.

Additionally, there is almost no taxation in Saudi Arabia, and the government provides a generous system of entitlements that can only be maintained at ever higher oil prices. To top that off, women - the better educated and more motivated portion of the population - are largely left out of the workforce.

The system of rule up until MBS's rise to power depended on an unwieldy process of consensus building between various royal factions that has proven incapable of reforming the system. For change to happen - and for the dynasty to survive - it became necessary for a leader to emerge who would disenfranchise large sections of the royal family, force the religious establishment to relinquish its monopoly on public morality and space, as well as lead a reform of the economy and the military.

But what has MBS accomplished so far? On the domestic front, he has emasculated the royal family and is in the process of ending their culture of immunity from legal and financial responsibility. The arrest of 11 Saudi royals on January 6th and several others in November during the anti-corruption drive should be understood

in this vein.

In addition, the country is socially transforming, as the religious establishment and the Islamist opposition have been tamed through a combination of threats and imprisonments. Women will be driving soon in Saudi Arabia, cinemas will be opening, and weekend musical concerts are now held, attracting large throngs of young people who can be seen singing and dancing. MBS is trying to appeal to young Saudis, who form the majority of the population. His message is one of authoritarian nationalism, mixed with populism that seeks to displace a traditional Islamic hyper-conservatism - which the crown prince believes has choked the country and sapped its people of all dynamism and creativity.

Internationally, MBS can claim two important successes. First, he has resumed the strategic relationship with the United States (and the Trump administration, specifically) after relations between the two countries reached its nadir under President Barack Obama. Secondly, he has developed a strong relationship with President Vladimir Putin of Russia, evidenced by successive oil production agreements and the beginning of coordination between the two countries on the matter of Syria. But the economy represents MBS's Achilles' heel. On one hand,

the crown prince is keen to balance the fiscal budget, and to do so by ending the regime of subsidies and entitlements that represent a massive drain on the government's finances. On the other hand, he also wants a bullish economy and for the private sector to become more dynamic and the principal generator of employment.

The difficulty lies in that the private sector's performance has historically correlated with the scope of government spending. The government has pursued inconsistent economic reform policies, such as cutting energy subsidies, imposing a value-added tax on goods and services, and increasing allowances and salaries to government employees. The state's administrative capacity must improve, along with better signaling of policies: Economic malaise has the potential of generating widespread displeasure among the population, especially because Saudis have placed very high expectations of MBS's ability to improve their lives. Ultimately, MBS wants to base his family's legitimacy on the economic transformation of the country and its prosperity. He is not a political liberal. Rather, he is an authoritarian, and one who sees his consolidation of power as a necessary condition for the changes he wants to make in Saudi Arabia.

Bollywood, and not just the political class, has let down Padmaavat

Barkha Dutt

Much has already been said on the sins of omission and commission by the state governments of Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat that made it possible for mobs to assault a bus carrying school children and openly instigate violence against the actors of Padmaavat. Nor has the Opposition been unequivocal in criticising the frenzied bigotry of the self-appointed Karni Sena, with individual Congress and BJP leaders (General VK Singh; Digvijaya Singh) even uniting across the trenches to give it legitimacy. The political patronage of these goons, which has ranged from tactical support to gutless ducking, has been slammed universally.

But there is another dimension to the Padmaavat debate, and that is the tragic and fearful unwillingness of the Hindi film industry's own stalwarts to stand up and be counted. This was the moment for Bollywood to come together against extortionist pressure and to unionise against the by now familiar circus of imagined grievances and public threats. If the biggest stars of India — arguably with more social influence and following than any politician — would have marched through the streets of Mumbai or worn black bands in pro-

test — or if nothing else, co-ordinated a mass Twitter agitation — would the state governments and the police not have been under severe pressure to contain the thugs? And this united rage should have been shown almost a year ago, when the sets of Padmaavat were first targeted by hooligans. What explains the outspoken comments on Padmaavat by movie stars from southern India when contrasted with the craven and cowardly silence of most of the Mumbai-based icons (save some honourable exceptions)? Deepika Padukone has certainly shown admirable and dignified strength, amid the worst sort of abuse and threats. But how many of her colleagues have openly stood shoulder-to-shoulder with her when she most needed it?

Veteran actor Sharmila Tagore told me that the reason the industry gets repeatedly coerced into capitulation is because "we never speak in one voice". She accused the industry's "big boys of taking problems straight to ministers instead of fighting them united".

I have repeatedly had the same arguments with friends who are directors, producers and actors. Not just about why they don't resist blackmail more firmly; but also about why, as leaders of civil society, they don't take more

public positions on key issues unlike how Hollywood does. They always point to the trauma of the kind the Padmaavat team has endured to underline how much is at stake and how vulnerable they are to random attacks.

I'd argue it differently. If commerce is privileged over principle every time, the film industry should accept that it will remain a sad little supplicant to the whimsical diktats of one or the other offended group. Don't all of them look on at the shameful saga of the past few months and feel they've had enough? Won't this be the tipping point for the industry to grow a spine and tell these pathetic bullies where to get off? Else they will continue to be at the receiving end. Today it's Padmaavat; tomorrow it will be someone else.

It is unfortunate to see truly iconic superstars quiver in diplomatic silence. They don't seem to be able to see the downside of being constant apologists. And this includes the ones with cult following — even India's most beloved star, Shahrukh Khan. In 2015, when he turned 50, he did a handful of interviews with some of us, in which he challenged hatemonger trolls who would mock those with an independent opinion with threats of 'Go to Pakistan'. He bravely took on

violence in the name of beef politics by saying "Our religion cannot be defined or showed respect to by our meat-eating habits. How banal and silly is that".

He was assertive and angry and articulated himself with gutsy brightness. "No one can question my patriotism". He did a similar interview with a colleague from another channel. Of course what followed played to script; he was mercilessly hounded and threatened. Tragically he took back his unambiguous words and uncharacteristically blamed us for supposedly distorting his words. (The interviews are online; you can watch them and make up your own mind on whether even a syllable was twisted.) To me the entire episode only illustrated how our bravest and best are unable, or unwilling, to be unfettered. And how they are left alone and isolated to fight their battles compelling them to be even more silent the next time around. I don't care if Padmaavat is a fine film or a terrible film. Those who did not publicly take a stand have opened themselves up to a similar set of lunatic threats in the future. Politicians have let down Padmaavat; but so has the film industry.

"Padmaavat": Trainer Bra For Deepika, Cowboy Boots For Ranveer



Hi-brow, Lo-brow or Uni-brow, I don't care. I enjoyed "Padmaavat". Enjoyed. Not adored. Big difference. Why? Because I am prejudiced. I enjoy OTT movies and generally overlook Sanjay Leela Bhansali's monumental cinematic vanity projects/blunders, like the dreadful Saawariya, which was barely saved from total disaster by Ranbir Kapoor's naked butt. Black made me see red. And Devdas? Well, I semi-trashed it in print to show allegiance to my Bong husband's damaged psyche after we shuddered through the SLB version of the classic. It took Mr. De weeks to recover from the 'sacrilege'. We even considered therapy. A confession: I was secretly practicing "Dola Re" when he was away. SLB films have that effect. You hate yourself for loving them, because that makes you feel culturally inferior!

When I read all the intellectual reviews of "Padmaavat", I asked myself "Are we talking about the same film?" SLB is SLB. He is not Satyajit Ray or Francois Truffaut. These are his films. And they look gorgeous. Nothing wrong in looking gorgeous, right? Gorgeousness is so therapeutic. They also make a humongous amount of money. Which means there is a gigantic audience out there lapping it all up. I belong to that segment. I lap up SLB's extravaganzas. His films are an ode to beauty. His actors resemble gods and goddesses. Every scene is meticulously staged and crafted. The artifice is obvious and delicious. Every movie is a tableau. And often, as lifeless. This one more so. My husband fell asleep half an hour into the private show. I thought, "Uh-oh. This isn't looking good." We had braved police barricades and bandobast to attend the second official screening of the film. The cops had our names! Some of my guests were not very happy being on cop lists! One lady diplomat had brought her body guard along...just in case. The film had better be bloody good, after all this, I said to myself. "We are risking our lives to watch the movie," a thrilled gal pal commented. We felt like wicked and rebellious schoolkids as we ordered tubs of popcorn and glared at the cops defiantly. SLB makes drama queens

of us all!

20 minutes into the film, a sense of *deja vu*; set in. Been there. Seen it. Despite that, I was hooked. Instead of paying attention to the dialogues, which were uneven and pretty odd, I was wondering why the most interesting character in the film - the impish, irrepressible, irresistible Jim Sarbh, playing Khilji's toyboy, no, make that toy 'begum', was not given blue-green-grey cosmetic lenses like everybody else! Not fair! Despite that huge disadvantage, he still stole the show from his master! That is a feat. When the master is Ranveer Singh, playing a savage sultan in cowboy boots. This was a serious problem for most of us. Those unfortunate boots. I expected to watch Clint Eastwood bashing up the baddies. But here was the baddie of baddies, snogging a harlot behind a pillar during his own wedding! Done with that little interlude,

Punishing sex buyers will help reduce exploitation of trafficked women

Andhra Pradesh's move to criminalise those sex buyers is a step in the right direction. The new law sought to be enacted by the state will attempt to close the loophole which allows buyers to go free because they plead that they are merely customers and do not fall under the definition of prostitution under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act which necessarily entails an element of commercial exploitation

Sex workers are some of the most exploited and marginalised members of society. Many women have been pushed into the legally murky trade by terrible circumstances, often by coercion and trafficking; many are trapped in a cycle of violence. Andhra Pradesh's new rule to criminalise those who buy sex rather than focusing on those who sell it is a progressive step in curbing the exploitation of women. The new law sought to be enacted by the state will

he strode up to an impressive plaster-of-Paris throne and murdered his chacha. (Note: in those very same high-heeled cowboy boots). Worse, he is also wearing faux fur. What the hell. Gender-bending is half the fun in an SLB movie. In this particular film, the only sexy, sensual, hot scenes (suggestive and therefore charged with erotic promise) are between Khilji and his ghulam/begum Malik Kafur, cavorting in a huge hot tub. Real steam and all...the other couplings are *thanda*.

There is about as much sexual chemistry between Padmavati and Ratan Singh as you might find in a sanitised school laboratory. Illey! Zero! He looks at her unblinkingly (Drat! Those coloured lenses again!). And she gazes back blankly. Alas - the beautiful, legendary Padmavati stays obstinately, chastely, disappointingly covered from head to toe throughout, bejewelled, remote and fabulous - like a Tanishq ad! Hey! Didn't they design the jewels for the magnum opus? I looked hard for at least a hint of waist, forget cleavage. I got the impression she was wearing trainer bras under those elaborate costumes. Of course, I am making sexist, piglet comments. But wait - the men are shown stripped down to their smalls a lot. So why not the Rani? Gender discrimination, I say!

There is a lot of noise around the "message" of the film. I find it hard to believe SLB is deliberately playing the Bad Muslim versus The Good Hindu card to appease some phantom political bosses. If that were the case, his film would not be

in deep excreta. The character of Khilji is what history tells us - us, the non-experts. He was a beast. A beast who loved tiny, caged birds fluttering helplessly in cages while his tent burns and soldiers die. A killer who cold-bloodedly chokes a cheeky nephew to death without missing a beat. It isn't this part of the narrative that bothers me, it is the over-simplification and embarrassing glorification of the great Rajput traditions. Come on! A noble king who generously grants "permission" to his doe-eyed, virtuous wife to commit mass sati? And he gets projected as the ultimate ruler who bids his consort goodbye after telling her she looks good with a sword in her hands!

Shahid Kapoor did what he had to with the material, exuding a sense of gravitas and dignity despite his insipid graph. He was terrific in key scenes projecting quiet strength and determination. But hey - everybody is raving about Ranveer's energy and Sultan swag. Tell me, when was the last time you saw Ranveer minus energy? He is turbo-charged, crossing a road to reach his vanity van. Deepika Padukone needs a change of pace. Or else she will be playing Padmavati forever. No complaints. She is unreal, and astonishingly beautiful in every frame - forget the trainer bra.

As for me, it was a *paisa vasool* experience. The movie will make zillions. What about a desi Cleopatra next, SLB? Same star cast. But no boots, please. They'd look even more ridiculous under Roman togas.



and do not fall under the definition of prostitution under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act which necessarily entails an element of commercial exploitation.

It is estimated that there are about 20 million sex workers in India, of which 16 million women and girls are victims of trafficking. These women are in no position to complain to the police or seek justice for the violence to which they are routinely subjected.

Shifting the focus of the law around sex work and prostitution to the buyer will ensure that the responsibility of soliciting sex is shifted to the demand side, and those who encourage the exploitation can be punished instead of victimising the women. Such laws also have the added advantage of not treating women as commodities that can be bought and sold, and penalising those who indulge in such commodification. While there are laws that attempt to curb prostitution and the running of brothels, so-called red light districts continue to thrive in many cities in India. Individual states taking cognisance of the issue and implement their own laws to reduce the demand for sex work can go a long way not just in ensuring that trafficking and exploitation of women is curbed, but also that those responsible for such exploitation are penalised.

Dubai firm accuses Kerala CPI(M) leader's son of cheating it of Rs 13 crore

The accused, Binoy Kodyeri, countered the accusation saying it was an old case that was settled four years ago.

A Dubai-based travel and tourism firm has accused Binoy Kodyeri, the son of the ruling CPI(M)'s secretary in Kerala Kodyeri Balakrishnan, of cheating it of Rs 13 crore and said it will approach the Interpol for justice.

Hasan Ismail Abdullah Almarzooqi of JAAS Tourism LLC said in a complaint that Binoy fled to India after cheating his firm. Almarzooqi said JAAS tried to settle the case through intermediaries a few months ago and his father was also roped in.

Balakrishnan promised to



repay the amount, but nothing happened, he added.

Binoy gave three cheques to the firm after being persisted, but all of them bounced when they were presented in respective banks.

"Since the Dubai public prosecution proclaimed Mr Binoy Vinodhini Balakrishnan as a wilful defaulter in the UAE, the court had asked us to file Interpol request so as to bring him back

to Dubai to get our money or to bring him under justice," Almarzooqi said his complaint.

He added his firm has arranged a lawyer to file a case with Interpol.

"Later, I came to know that he had borrowed money not only from my company but also from many banks and individuals without repaying back anyone of those," he said adding that cases like this will dent the

image of the Indian diaspora in the middle-east.

The firm said it wants to recover Rs 13 crore from him besides interest and litigation expenses.

Binoy, however, said it was an old case and settled four years ago. He said there was no case pending against him and has no idea how a "settled case" has surfaced all of a sudden.

Kodyeri Balakrishnan also

denied that any case was pending against his son in Dubai.

"It is nothing to do with the party. There is no case against him. He will reply to all allegations against him," he said after meeting chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan at the party's headquarters. Sources in the party said the complaint letter was leaked in Delhi by some leaders to embarrass the Kerala unit that foiled the CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury's move for an alliance with the Congress to take on the BJP in the upcoming elections. Yechury distanced from the controversy saying "it has nothing do with the party." Opposition Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party have sought a detailed probe into the charges against him.

BJP general secretary K Surendran said he will move the enforcement directorate soon. The latest incident has surfaced at a time when the party is in the thick of organisational elections and has insisted that its cadres and leaders lead a humble life and uphold proletarian values.

Padmaavat: Fringe runs riot, multiplex body says won't screen movie in 4 states

Multiplex Association of India said its members will not screen Padmaavat in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Goa.

Protesters stepped up their campaign against period drama Padmaavat on Wednesday, a day ahead of its nationwide release, prompting theatre owners in several states to hold off from screening the movie.

Acts of vandalism were reported from states including Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana following overnight protests and arson in Gujarat. State police chiefs promised increased protection for cinema halls on Thursday but the movie will not be screened in the BJP-ruled states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Goa, the Multiplex Association of India said. The protests are being spearheaded by Rajput groups and their allies unhappy with the depiction of legendary queen Padmini in the movie.

Just 15 kms away from the national capital, a Haryana Roadways bus carrying 25 passengers was burnt by about 50-60 protesters. Stones were thrown at a school bus in Gurgaon, leading to minor

injuries to some students, the police said.

The Congress termed the attack on the school bus as "reprehensible" and "devastating" and attacked the Haryana government for the "deteriorating law and order situation".

Police arrested 24 persons for the violence and several schools in the National Capital Region said they will remain shut on Thursday.

The spree of incidents also included a youth's attempt to immolate himself in Lucknow, road and rail traffic blockages in Jaipur and Mathura, burning of vehicles Bhopal, and stone-pelting in Etawah and Meerut. Police resorted to lathi-charges in Lucknow and Indore to disperse agitating crowds.

Lokendra Singh Kalvi, chief of the Shri Rajput Karni Sena that has emerged at the forefront of the protests, blamed Padmaavat producer Sanjay Leela Bhansali for the violence, saying the filmmaker has hurt the pride of Rajputs. He warned of widespread protests when the film is released, saying, "I may be arrested and bullets may be

fired but this cannot stop us."

In Delhi's Prashant Vihar, miscreants damaged around half a dozen cars while trying to stop a special screening of the film at a PVR theatre. "A group of 15-20 men damaged the cars in Maurya Enclave and tried to block traffic but ran away when we reached," said deputy commissioner of police (north west) Aslam Khan.

A youth tried to set himself on fire outside a multiplex in Lucknow where protests were witnessed at several cinema halls leading to the arrest of five persons, including some Lucknow University students. Elsewhere in Uttar Pradesh, police arrested eight persons in Etawah for attacking vehicles while protestors stopped a train in Mathura, damaged a cinema hall in Meerut and burnt a bus in Noida. Special screenings were cancelled in a majority of theatres and multiplexes across the state and theatre owners said they would not be playing the movie tomorrow.

Theatre owners in Haryana have also announced that they will not show the Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh



starrer.

Both Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, whose pleas to ban the movie were rejected by the Supreme Court, witnessed violent incidents in which alleged members of the Karni Sena damaged state roadways buses and blocked traffic on the national highways.

Traffic on the Delhi-Jaipur and Jaipur-Ajmer highways in Rajasthan and Agra-Mumbai highway in Indore was stopped.

Jaipur's police commissioner Sanjay Agarwal said additional security will be provided at the Jaipur Literature Festival starting Thursday, following a threat by the Karni Sena that it will protest against the presence of Central Board of Film Certification chief Prasoon Joshi at the festival.

In Ahmedabad, police registered four cases and

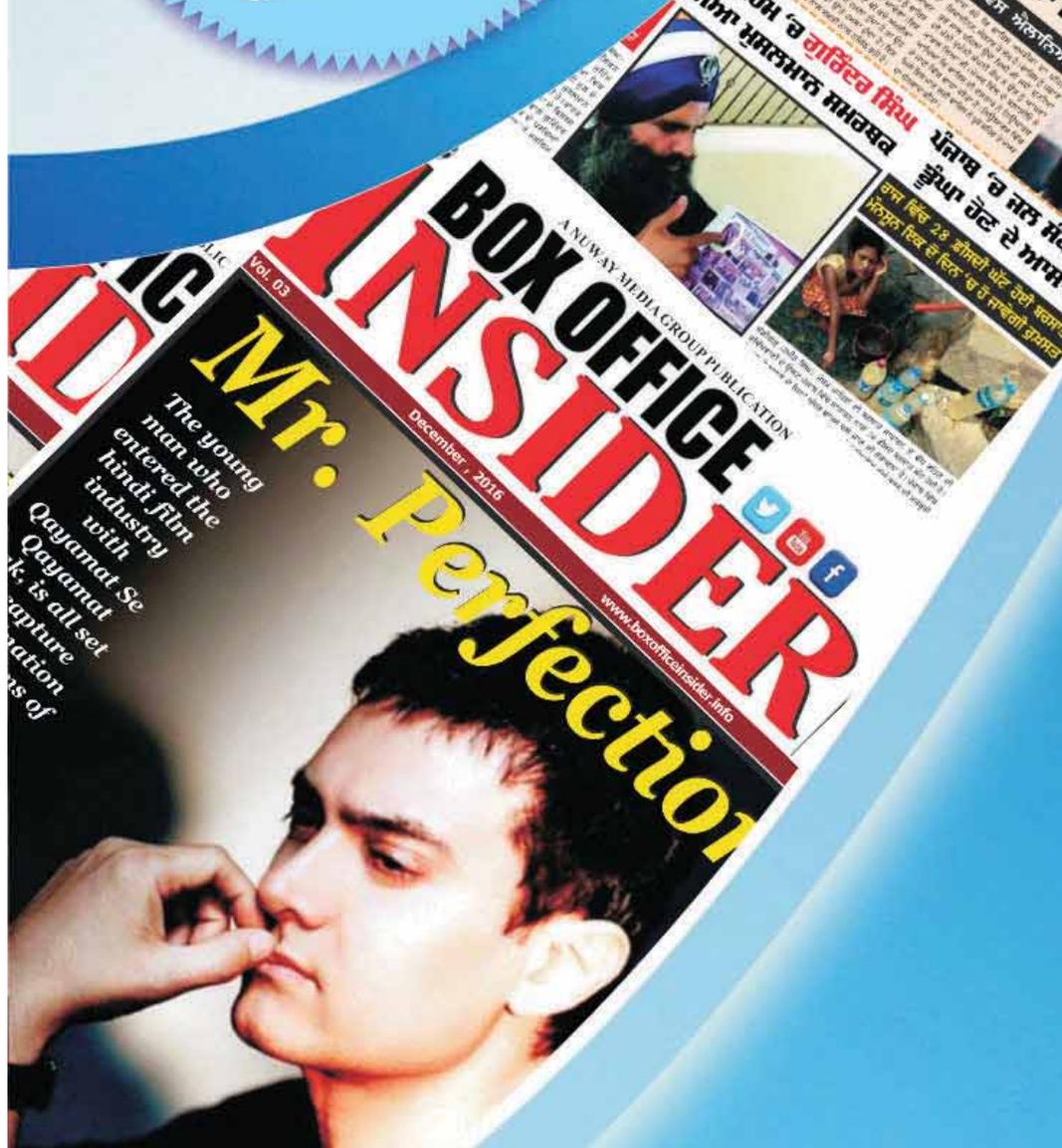
arrested over 48 persons day after alleged Karni Sena members ransacked four malls and burnt vehicles. No incident was reported on Wednesday.

As a precautionary measure before the film's release, about 100 Karni Sena members in Mumbai and 20 in Nashik were detained by the police. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to grant an urgent hearing to remove certain scenes from the film and deferred the matter to January 29. The Supreme Court had last week paved the way for the nationwide release of "Padmaavat", by staying the ban on the movie in four states. Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee said that everyone should adhere to the verdict of the court.



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RJD chief Lalu Prasad is a "people's hero and icon of social justice" but was now in jail after being framed by the BJP and Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, former deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav said on Wednesday.

Tejashwi, who is also leader of opposition in the Bihar assembly, said the Rashtriya Janata Dal will approach the high court, and if needed the Supreme Court to get justice, after his father was sentenced to five years in prison by the special CBI court in Ranchi in connection with fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 33.67 crore from the Chaibasa treasury



Tejashwi targets BJP, Nitish after Lalu's conviction, CM says not involved

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said the party will approach the Supreme Court after Lalu Prasad was convicted by the CBI court in Ranchi over fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 33.67 crore from the Chaibasa treasury in 1992-1993.

in 1992-1993.

"The CBI court's conviction is not final... we will challenge the verdict in the high court," the RJD leader said.

Chief minister Nitish Kumar, however, said it was a judicial decision, and that the government was not involved.

"We don't have anything to do

with this. It's a judicial decision, we will not react on it, but will not compromise on our justice and development agenda," he said.

Another former Bihar chief minister Jagannath Mishra too was handed down a five-year jail sentence. Both leaders have to pay a fine of Rs 5 lakh each.

This was the third fodder scam case in which the RJD chief has been convicted. Lalu Prasad is currently in jail in Ranchi after being convicted in another case in December.

"We all know that the BJP has been conspiring against Laluji but we have full confidence in the judiciary, and Laluji will get

justice soon," Tejashwi said.

"We will go to the apex court for justice to Laluji, who is the people's hero and icon of social justice.

"Laluji lives in the hearts of crores of people, not only in Bihar but across the country and abroad. Laluji may be behind bars after being framed by his rivals,

mainly the BJP and Bihar CM Nitish Kumar. RJD will go to the people because their decision is bigger than any decision."

"We have full confidence in the judiciary, and Laluji will get justice soon," he added.

Tejashwi claimed the NDA was planning to hold elections in Bihar by December 2018 and this was evident with senior BJP leaders as well as RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat undertaking tours of the state. The NDA wants to keep Lalu Prasad embroiled in legal difficulties so that it is smooth sailing for the alliance. But it was mistaken as the RJD would give a fitting reply whenever elections are held, he said. Tejashwi and other RJD leaders called on governor Satya Pal Malik and submitted a memorandum alleging that the law and order situation in the state was deteriorating and the weaker sections of the society, especially Dalits, were being oppressed.

He also took up the issue of the Srijan scam, in which Rs 1,000 crore in government funds were allegedly diverted to the accounts of a non-government organisation. "We hope that the CBI would investigate the multi-crore Srijan scam seriously and examine the role of the chief minister and his deputy Sushil Kumar Modi," he said.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik suspends MP Baijayant Panda from BJD

The announcement about the suspension of BJP MP Baijayant Panda was made by party vice president and state minister S N Patro

Seven months after removing BJD's media-savvy MP Baijayant Jay Panda as spokesperson of the parliamentary party, chief minister and BJD chief Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday suspended him from primary membership of the ruling party for "anti-party activities".

The articulate and widely networked MP has increasingly been isolated since last year when he called for 'introspection' within the party following the emergence of BJP as the principal opposition to the ruling BJD in the panchayat elections held in February. Panda, active on Twitter and Facebook, has been a source of discomfort for BJD as he would praise Prime Minister Narendra Modi while questioning Patnaik's working style.

Party vice-president Surjya Narayan Patro said Panda has been directly and indirectly indulging in activities aimed at weakening the BJD, whether it is in the Parliament, state,

constituency or media space — he missed no opportunity Panda to criticise BJD and eulogise the opposition.

"His claim of being a BJD founding member are totally false. Panda's conduct during the Panchayati Raj election, in which he did not campaign for party candidates even in his own constituency and instead indulged in

anti-party activities supporting opposition candidates, was against the interests of the party and its functionaries," said Patro.

Reacting to the disciplinary action, Panda tweeted: "@Naveen_Odisha didn't see through the conspiracy agnst me led by an IAS ofcr now controlling the party. I vehemently deny the allegations agnst me, they are entirely false and baseless. I will pray to Jagannath for guidance before I respond further." The action against Panda came after Patnaik last week asked two of his senior leaders to probe the allegations of the MP disregarding party workers.



Karni Sena threatens, online booking of 'Padmaavat' stops in Bihar

Karni Sena threatens, online booking of 'Padmaavat' stops in Bihar Shree Rajput Karni Sena activists have forced cinema halls to stop advance bookings for "Padmaavat", officials on Tuesday said. In Patna, online bookings for the movie were stopped following protest and threat by Karni Sena's activists. "Fear of Karni Sena is such that Cinopolis has not only stopped online booking of 'Padmaavat'. It cancelled 50 bookings after a group of Karni Sena activists protested and threatened the staff members," an official of district administration said. Karni Sena threatens, online booking of 'Padmaavat' stops in Bihar Three other cinema halls, set to screen the controversial movie, have so far not informed people about advance booking for the Sanjay Leela Bhansali directorial. In Gaya district, all cinema hall owners have decided not to show "Padmaavat" fearing violence by Karni Sena supporters. Karni Sena threatens, online booking of 'Padmaavat' stops in Bihar In Bhagalpur and Purnea districts also cinema halls have decided not to screen the film. Karni Sena's state president Dhirender Singh said cinema halls should not to show "Padmaavat", respecting the sentiments of the people. In the last 10 day, activists of the Rajput organisation, which has been at the forefront of anti-"Padmaavat" protest, have staged demonstrations across the state. Karni Sena threatens, online booking of 'Padmaavat' stops in Bihar Last week, some activists attacked a cinema hall in Muzaffarpur district, tore posters of "Padmaavat" and threatened to set ablaze the hall if the film is screened, police said. The police is, however, yet to act against those who indulged in the vandalism. According to district officials, the police would scan the CCTV footage.

Schools of scandal: Agra institutions hub of anti-social activities



There was a time when schools were thought to be the temple where the ideal citizen was moulded. The place that inculcated young and impressionable minds with a desire to acquire knowledge, respect for elders and eschew bad habits. However, of late, cases of

a Class I student of her own school by stabbing him with a knife, hoping the school would close early. A few years earlier, some students of a reputed school of Agra were rumoured to have raped their school teacher at a farmhouse, although nothing came out

school-going students attacking their teachers and threatening them for minor reasons have seen a steady increase. The latest being a Delhi student shooting his school principal because she had reprimanded him. Similarly, a Class VI student in Lucknow killed

of the case and the teacher too denied that any such incident had happened.

The prevalence of drugs and alcohol among school students have seen a sharp rise in the past few years and in Agra, groups of students can be seen outside almost all reputed school, openly smoking cigarettes. Talking to India Today, Agra Senior Superintendent of Police Amit Pathak said that bad parenting was largely responsible for such anti-social activities among children. According to him many parents were not spending enough time with their children and consequently they were unaware of their children's mindset. He said that the parents needed to be aware how their kids were interacting with other

kids in their school and locality. He said that the police were keeping such activities at local schools under observation and if the need arose, action would be taken to increase awareness among the parents towards their duties to their kids. He said that a shooting incident which happened at a local degree college was also an example of bad parenting as those involved in the incident were probably not raised correctly and the moral values necessary to make them model citizens of the country were not instilled in them. Pathak also said that part of the responsibility lay with the schools. Holding seminars on parenting and employing experienced student counsellors should be the focus areas.

Man's 'one minute' selfie with train proves too long, lands him in hospital

A video which surfaced on Wednesday shows the man standing too close to the tracks and ignoring a warning call. A man nearly died while taking a selfie video with a speeding train in the background in Hyderabad.

The man, who police identified as Shiva from Warangal, is seen standing right next to the railway tracks and pointing to an oncoming speeding train in the video. As the train draws up in line with him, Shiva



is knocked down and the video ends with a thud as people are heard rushing towards him. The incident occurred on Sunday near Bharat Nagar railway station on the outskirts of Hyderabad. The disturbing video surfaced on Wednesday and was quickly shared on social media, with users describing the stunt as the "height of stupidity". In the video someone is heard warning the man as the train comes closer. However, Shiva ignores it and is heard saying "one minute" before being hit by the train. Shiva sustained injuries on his head and hands. He was admitted to a private hospital where his condition was said to be stable.

3 members backing ban on virginity test ritual thrashed in Pune

Three members of 'Stop the V ritual', a WhatsApp group created to spread awareness against the practice of determining the virginity of a bride on the wedding night, were on Sunday thrashed by members of their community (Kanjarbhat) in Pimpri.

Pune: Three members of 'Stop the V ritual', a WhatsApp group created to spread awareness against the practice of determining the virginity of a bride on the wedding night, were on Sunday thrashed by members of their community (Kanjarbhat) in Pimpri. An FIR has been registered against 40 people and two persons have been arrested in connection with the incident.

A group of youngsters from Kanjarbhat community in Pune came together and formed the group. They had also filed a police complaint against the practice.

"We had shared some material on Triple Talaq and



Right to Privacy on Facebook. Some like-minded people from our Kanjarbhat community gave a positive response. So we came together to protest against this atrocity," admin of the WhatsApp group Vivek Tamaichekar had said.

As per the custom, the village panchayat spreads a white-bed sheet on the

first wedding night of a couple. If the sheet is found stained with blood, the woman passes the test otherwise she is accused of having had a physical relationship prior to her marriage. These tests are reportedly often performed without even the woman's consent. A masters student at the Tata Institute of Social

Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai, Tamaichekar said that the practice is against article 14 and article 21 of the Constitution.

"People here believe that this ritual should be done because it is our tradition and otherwise, our girls would be spoilt. We are protesting against that by spreading awareness," he concluded.

Rahul Gandhi takes dig at PM Modi, asks 'got any black money back from Switzerland'

Rahul Gandhi, who has been critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his foreign visits and failing to deliver on his poll promises, asked him again about his promise to bring back black money.

In yet another swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday

reminded him of his promise to bring back black money stashed abroad and asked if he had brought some of it on his plane while returning from the WEF meet in Switzerland.

Taking to Twitter, Gandhi also attacked the Prime Minister, who addressed the annual summit of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in

Davos, saying he should tell people there why 1% of India's population has 73% of its wealth.

"Dear PM, Welcome back from SWITZERLAND. Quick reminder about your promise on BLACK MONEY. Youth in India were wondering if you got any back with you in your plane?," the Congress chief

tweeted. In the tweet addressed to Modi ahead of his speech at WEF, Gandhi tagged a news report quoting an Oxfam survey that the richest 1% cornered 73% of wealth generated in India in 2017. "Dear PM, Welcome to Switzerland! Please tell DAVOS why 1% of India's population gets 73% of its

wealth? I'm attaching a report for your ready reference," he tweeted. Gandhi has been critical of the Prime Minister for his foreign visits and has accused him of failing to deliver on his poll promises. The Congress chief has alleged that the government was working only to benefit the rich.

Padmaavat controversy bad for jobs, investment in India: Arvind Kejriwal



investments in India.

Kejriwal tweeted that there must be no expectation for investments to flow in if entire machinery, including Central government, state governments and Supreme Court, cannot ensure the release of one movie.

According to the Delhi Chief Minister, even local investors would feel hesitant, adding that it is not good for "already dwindling economy". He added that the scenario was bad for job creation in the country.

He tweeted, "If all state govts, central govt and SC together cannot get one movie released and run safely, how can we expect investments to flow in? Forget FDI, even local investors wud feel

hesitant. Not gud for already dwindling economy. Bad for jobs". This comes shortly after Sri Rajput Karni Sena vowed to defy the Supreme Court and called for a janata curfew on January 25, when the film starring Deepika Padukone, Shahid Kapoor and Ranveer Singh gets released in theatres across India.

The statement by Kejriwal on investment and jobs in India comes close on the heels of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Davos visit for World Economic Forum summit wherein he tried to hardsell India as an investment destination. Addressing a roundtable of CEOs from global companies, the Prime Minister had said that "India means business".

Meanwhile, following the Supreme Court to states to ensure law and order situation when Padmaavat gets

released, police administration in different states have made all preparations to thwart any attempt by Karni Sena-like groups to target cinema goers and theatres.

However, reports of violent protests, arson, vandalism and destruction of public and private property have been coming in from across the country in the run-up to the release of the movie.

The film, which was initially slated to hit theatres on December 1, 2017, has already been given go-ahead by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). The censor board had formed a panel of historians, academicians and members of royal family to take a decision on the film. The Supreme Court also rejected pleas against the release of the film, saying there was no reason to ban a film that was already certified by censor board.

The protests and controversy around Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film Padmaavat seems to have angered Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

The protests and controversy around Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film Padmaavat seems to have angered Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. Taking to Twitter, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader has said that the protests and the failure to tackle them raises a question on flow of

Muslim family in Haryana village asked to go to Pakistan

A Muslim family in a village in Haryana has been threatened to leave their home and shift to Pakistan.



A Muslim family in a village in Haryana has been threatened to leave their home and shift to Pakistan. The family from Joshi Jat village in Sonipat has also approached police in this regard, and one person has been arrested in connection with the case.

Talking about the issue, a member of the family, Suresh Alvi, said that his family has been resident of that village for the past 300 years. He said that they are the only Muslim family in the village while the rest hail from Jat community. Alvi also pointed that his ancestors were even made sarpanch of the village in the past.

Alvi accused a villager, Jaiveer, of misguiding people in the name of religion through instant messaging application WhatsApp. He said that the police had been informed about the same. Some of the villagers

are backing the family, saying they are being threatened without any reason.

According to police, there is peace in the village and one person, Jaiveer, was playing mischief using WhatsApp. They said that the accused was produced before the court following which he was sent to jail. The police also assured that they would not let the situation get out of control.

Shocking! 80-yr-old woman raped in Pune, accused absconding

In a shameful incident, an eighty-year-old woman was raped at her home in Pune's Talawade. The incident took place on January 13. PUNE: In a shameful incident, an eighty-year-old woman was raped at her home in Pune's Talawade. The incident took place on January 13.

Republic Day: PM Modi pays tribute at Amar Jawan Jyoti



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the three Service Chiefs paid tribute at Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate in Delhi on the occasion of 69th Republic Day. The Amar Jawan, the immortal soldier, is symbolised by a

reversed rifle standing on its barrel and crested by a soldier's helmet. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Modi had greeted the nation on his Twitter handle. Republic DayFor the first time ever,

leaders of 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries – Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Laos and Brunei will grace the Republic Day parade as chief guests in the national capital. The nation is today celebrating the 69th Republic Day, the main function will be organised at Rajpath in the national capital where President Ram Nath Kovind will take the salute of the parade. Under the custom to host a leader of a foreign country as the chief guest at the parade, this year, in a first, leaders of 10 ASEAN countries are the Chief Guests.

Twitter launches 'India Gate' emoji ahead of Republic Day

Twitter launches 'India Gate' emoji: Twitter on Wednesday launched a special #RepublicDay emoji ahead of Republic Day celebrations in the country. Available in nine languages, the emoji that represents "India Gate" will be live until Monday, January 29. "Twitter is delighted to join the celebration with a customised emoji of the India Gate. This national symbol in the emoji serves as a reminder of unity as the country joins in the public conversation on this day," said Mahima Kaul, Head of Public Policy and Government, at Twitter

India. Twitter launches 'India Gate' emojiThe "India Gate" emoji design holds a special significance as the Prime Minister visits the Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate every year to pay tribute to the martyrs before the annual Republic Day parade begins. "#RepublicDay Parade will showcase might of the Indian armed forces and indigenously developed defence equipment along with the country's cultural heritage," Defence Minister's official Twitter handle @DefenceMinIndia tweeted, using the new Twitter R-Day emoji.



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Trump **APOLOGISES** for Britain First retweet

US president tells Piers Morgan 'it was done because I'm a big believer in fighting radical Islamic terror' - and insists he's 'the least racist person that anybody's going to meet'

Donald Trump has apologised for retweeting videos posted online by Britain First and said he did it because he is a 'big believer in fighting radical Islamic terror'.

The 71-year-old was speaking to Piers Morgan in Davos, Switzerland, and eventually said he would apologise if the far-right group is seen as being 'horrible and racist'.

It comes after Trump landed himself in hot water after he retweeted three clips which purportedly showed 'anti-Muslim' material.

They were initially posted by British nationalist Jayda Fransen, who has been convicted of hate crimes, and Theresa May publicly condemned the US President. He was asked about the controversial retweets during the interview, which was aired on Good Morning Britain, and said he did not know who Britain First were when the messages were posted last November.

Trump said that he retweeted the videos because he is a 'big believer in fighting Islamic terror' and also said he is the 'least racist person that anybody's going to meet'.



The President, who also met Mrs May at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Thursday, said: 'I know nothing about them and I know nothing about them today. Other than I read a little bit. 'I guess, again I'm in the United States, so I didn't read as much about it, perhaps it was a big story in Britain, perhaps it was a bit story in the UK.'

'But in the United States it wasn't a big story. I did a retweet. When you do your own tweeting, or you do your own social media, it's fine. 'When you do those

retweets it can cause problems, because you never know who's doing it to start off with.

'I don't know who they are, I know nothing about them, so I wouldn't be doing that. I am, as I say often, the least racist person that anybody's going to meet.

'Certainly I wasn't endorsing anybody. I knew nothing about them. They had I guess a couple of depictions of radical Islamic terror.

'Radical Islamic terror, whether you like talking about it or not Piers, it's a fact.

'You look at what's going on in UK and you look at what's going on all over the world, you can try and shield it.'

Given the amount of offence, Trump was asked if he regrets the retweets.

He added: 'Look, it was done because I am a big believer in fighting radical Islamic terror. This was a depiction of radical Islamic terror.

'Here's what's fair, if you're telling me they're horrible people, horrible racist people I would certainly apologise if you would

like me to do that.

'I know nothing about them. I don't want to be involved with [these] people, but you're telling me about these people because I know nothing about these people.' Before the interview, the old friends were filmed joking together and Morgan shouted: 'Mr President!'

Trump replied: 'Man, I've missed you. Nice to see you, you doing well?'

When asked if he had been 'busy', Trump responded: 'A little busy but that's okay, it's good to be with you.'

And when they finally sat down to discuss his first year in office, Trump also revealed he has a 'very good' relationship with Mrs May and added that the US 'will come to Britain's defence is anything should happen'.

He added: 'I can tell you I have a very good relationship with your Prime Minister who I just left.

'She's been doing a very good job. We actually have a very good relationship, although a lot of people think we don't.

'I support her, I support a lot of what she does and a lot of what she says and I support you militarily very much.

Trump declares the U.S. is 'open for business' in Davos, as he tells global bigwigs 'America First does not mean America alone'



President Donald Trump told world leaders and bigwigs gathered in Davos the U.S. was now 'open for business' – then promised his 'America First' agenda didn't mean the U.S. would go it alone.

But after an invest-in-America pitch that had lines that could have been cribbed from a governor's trade mission, Trump drew audible gasps from the crowd when he reached for his 'fake news' broadside against the

press.

Trump vented in a brief question-and-answer session about 'how fake the press can be' then observed 'the cameras start going off in the back.' The line led to gasps, 'oohs,' and even some boos from the crowd, who otherwise listened quietly to his remarks.

In his speech, Trump told business leaders: 'I believe in America. As President of the United States, I will always put America First. Just like the leaders of other countries should put their countries first. But America First does not mean America alone,' Trump said, in an excerpt released by the White House. He dialed back

some of his occasional denunciations of trade deals that he says 'rip off' the U.S.

'Now is the perfect time to bring your business, your jobs and your investments to the United States,' Trump told the audience.

'We are all stronger when free, sovereign nations cooperate toward shared goals and they cooperate toward shared dreams,' the president said.

Trump spoke to world leaders on the second day of a trip to the global confab.

He made several references to his dinner Thursday with top European CEOs, calling them an 'incredible group.'

'But I think I have 15 new friends. So this has been really great what you've done and putting it together, the economic forum,' he said.

Before he addressed the conference in what was billed as a 'keynote' speech to an event he dominated by showing up, a large Swiss band of horns and woodwinds took the stage.

'I am aware that your strong leadership is open to misconceptions and biased interpretations,' said World Economic Founder Klaus Schwab – a remark that drew some hisses in the crowd, who threw praise in Trump's direction several times Friday.

U.S. congratulates India on Joining Australia Group



Washington D.C. [U.S.A.] Jan. 24 : – The United States has congratulated India on becoming the newest member of the Australia Group, an informal forum that seeks to prevent the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. U.S. Department of State Spokesperson Heather Nauert said, “This latest accomplishment underscores the Indian government’s excellent non-proliferation credentials and commitment to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including by regulating the trade of sensitive goods and technologies. Its accession bolsters the effectiveness of the regime’s non-proliferation efforts.” U.S. congratulates India The Australia group, initially consisting of 15 members, held its first meeting in Brussels, Belgium, in September 1989. With the incorporation of India on January 19, 2018, it now has 43 members, including Australia, the European Commission, all 28 member states of the European Union, Ukraine, and Argentina. The name comes from Australia’s initiative to create the group. Australia manages the secretariat.

International aid agency office attacked in Afghanistan



Attallah Khogyanaï, spokesperson for the Nangarhar provincial government. Images showed a huge plume of thick black smoke rising from the compound and people fleeing from the area. The area was cordoned off by security forces. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack. A Save the Children spokesperson told the BBC in a statement that the group was “devastated”. “Our primary concern is for the safety and security of our staff. International aid agency” There are several other aid agencies in the area along with government offices. Save the Children carries out education, healthcare and protection work for children in Afghanistan. Charity groups continue to work under tough conditions in Afghanistan, facing regular attacks and kidnappings. In October last year, the International Committee of the Red Cross announced it would be “drastically” reducing “its presence and activities” in the country after several attacks and the killings of seven of its staff members.

Kabul, Jan 24, Insurgents on Wednesday attacked the headquarters of an international aid agency in Afghanistan’s Jalalabad city, injuring 11 people, a government official said. The attack, still ongoing, began at 9.10 a.m. when the attackers detonated explosives before storming the offices of the Save the Children aid agency in the eastern Afghan city. According to the BBC, the assault began with a suspected suicide car bomb blast at the entrance of the agency’s compound. Gunmen were now said to be using machine guns and RPGs from higher floors in the building. International aid agency “Eleven injured so far taken to hospital from the site,” said

NASA astronauts conduct first spacewalk of 2018

Washington, Jan 24, Two NASA astronauts on Tuesday conducted the first spacewalk of the year while working on a robotic arm. Astronauts Scott Tingle and Mark Vande Hei, crewmembers of the Expedition 54 aboard the International Space Station (ISS), spent about 6.5 hours outside the space station. “This is going to be a lifetime memory for sure, and I’m looking forward to getting out there and fixing up the systems that we’ll be working on,” Tingle who conducted the first spacewalk of his career, was quoted as telling Space.com. NASA astronauts The two astronauts were tasked with replacing one of the two “hands” on the end of Canadarm2 known as latching end effectors (LEEs), because the old one (LEE-A) had suffered from wear and tear. The LEEs are identical grappling devices which are used to latch on to incoming cargo spacecraft, located at opposite ends of Canadarm2, each weighing about 440 lbs (200 kilograms) and measuring about 3 feet (1 meter) long. They also allow Canadarm2 to move around outside of the station in an inchworm-like motion, the report said. NASA astronauts The two astronauts replaced LEE-B with a spare that has been stored outside the ISS since 2009. They will likely have a few minutes of downtime in between tasks, Tingle said. “I do expect a little bit of time to kind of look down at the Earth and look up at the stars and the moon and whatever else we can see there,” he noted. This will be the 206th spacewalk conducted by astronauts at the ISS.

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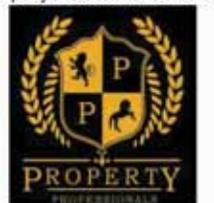
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If it was not for each and every one of you today who have supported our endeavours to become a reliable source of information, we would not have been able to voice our appreciation today. We as a family will continue to move forward with every article 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**

Bitcoin: What does the future hold for cryptocurrencies, are they here to stay?

What a year 2017 had been for cryptocurrencies, especially Bitcoin, which had recently hit the USD 20,000 mark in mid-December 2017 before crashing down to USD 11,000 and then bouncing back to hover around the USD 13,500 to USD 15,000 mark since start of the new year 2018.

As of today, the price of Bitcoin reached USD 11,381 due to regulatory pressure from China and South Korea and due to the comments made by Mike Bell of JP Morgan claiming that governments could ban cryptocurrencies.

Nevertheless, not a day goes by when one does not hear about cryptocurrencies in the mainstream media. Bitcoin sceptics think that it is a ponzi scheme and that the bubble is popping while supporters think it is the greatest innovation to happen in a really long time and the downfall is just another blip.

But, the recent introduction of Bitcoin futures at Chicago Mercantile Exchange and Cboe Global Markets Inc. has definitely

made it easier for the hedge funds and other institutional capital to enter the markets and bet against the Bitcoin. Importantly, it has set a path for Bitcoin to break the chasm and to move towards the mainstream adoption.

Will 2018 see Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies become part of normal retail investors' portfolios on a wide scale? Whether it would happen and if it happens, how quickly will it happen is anyone's guess.

Is Bitcoin going through the NetScape moment?

More than 20 years ago, Netscape, a Silicon Valley based company launched a web browser called Netscape Navigator and debuted its IPO (Initial Public Offering). The IPO was a success and made millions for the founders, and the web browser facilitated access to millions of people to experience the Internet for the first time.

Essentially, Netscape was primarily responsible for the Web to break the chasm and become

part of mainstream adoption.

Consider this - In 1995 there were around 16 million internet users and a year later there were 36 million users. Today, it is estimated that there are 3 billion+ internet users in the world.

As more and more people interact with blockchains and cryptocurrencies, Bitcoin is being compared to the Netscape of 90's, signalling the evolution of a new industry.

When new technologies like blockchain and Bitcoin begin to emerge and show signs of early success either in terms of increased usage or the capital pumped in by the early investors, three things begin to happen in the market: It draws greater number of new users (including merchants) There is an increase in demand Existing investors hold on to it anticipating further price increase

A combination of these three factors results in a price surge. Further, the fact that Bitcoin is limited in number adds to the price rise.

The newly increased market



cap further attracts new investors, both retail and institutional, and the loop repeats itself. This is exactly what has been happening with cryptocurrencies, especially Bitcoin.

I cannot exactly narrow down one particular event that can be identified as Bitcoin's Netscape moment but I can point out a series of important triggers that have taken place in the year 2017 that are responsible for the explosive growth of Bitcoin as seen

In addition to all the above events, one significant aspect that has contributed to the growth

of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies has been the positive behavioural change in the adoption of these cryptocurrencies by merchants and companies. If you cannot walk into a supermarket and buy groceries with these digital currencies, they would be of no value.

Today, Microsoft, PayPal, Tesla, WordPress, Shopify, Virgin Galactic, Expedia, Whole Foods, Subway, PWC, EY, Bloomberg, and many more companies and merchants accept Bitcoin for payment, displaying the expanding nature of the currency.

Bank Of America's Poorest Customers To Be Charged For Checking

Just over a month after Republicans pushed through a sweeping corporate tax cut from which Bank of America stands to gain billions of dollars, the bank is set to start charging its poorest customers \$12 a month for the privilege of having a checking account.

The charge, implemented earlier this month, applies to customers with an "eBanking" account, which was free for anyone who didn't receive paper statements or use bank tellers. Bank of America has phased out eBanking and transferred those customers to "core checking accounts" that require them to contribute a direct deposit of at least \$250 a month (that's \$3,000 a year) or keep a minimum daily balance of at least \$1,500 to avoid the \$12 monthly fee. Most national banks with a physical presence have similar requirements for free checking accounts, according to a comparison tool on Bankrate.com. Credit unions and online-only banks, however, often don't have a monthly charge.

While \$12 a month might seem manageable, that's not the case if you can't meet the new minimum qualifications for a free account in the first place, NPR's Steve Inskeep notes: The timing of the bank's decision, right on the heels of a massive Republican-backed



corporate tax cut, drew outrage across the internet. A Change.org petition protesting the bank's decision had more than 86,000 signatures by Wednesday afternoon.

Among U.S. banks, Bank of America is one of the largest beneficiaries of the corporate tax cut, according to an analysis the investment bank KBW shared with HuffPost. Analysts at KBW predict Bank of America's earnings will increase 17.8 percent in 2018 once the tax cut is factored in, compared to an expected 13 percent earnings increase for banks overall. Assuming KBW's estimates hold, that means the bank could pocket an additional \$3.8 billion or so in 2018. (Bank of America turned a \$21 billion profit in 2017.) Bank of America spokeswoman Betty Riess told HuffPost the termination of eBanking isn't "new or recent," despite what it seems. The bank stopped offering the account five years ago and has been slowly migrating customers into different accounts ever since, she said. Riess couldn't say how many

eBanking customers were affected by the final account closures this month. For fee-conscious customers who don't meet Bank of America's minimums, Riess noted the bank offers a "SafeBalance" checking account with a \$4.95 monthly fee, but it doesn't allow for overdrafts. Lack of access to traditional banking services forces marginalized people into the hands of even riskier financial institutions, like predatory lenders, which exacerbates poverty, says Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, a nonprofit organization that fights inequality.

"Poor people who are denied access to traditional bank services are left vulnerable to costly check-cashing outlets, pawnshops and other predatory services," said Kristen Clarke, the group's president and executive director, in a statement. "By pushing poor people into the dark world of alternative financial services characterized by higher fees and exorbitant interest rates, low-income communities are at risk of being thrust into further economic distress."

Clarke said the bank's action would disproportionately affect African-American and Hispanic consumers, who have historically been excluded from banking services at higher rates.

This 18-year-old bitcoin millionaire is traveling the world recruiting

18-year-old Erik Finman made headlines last year when the value of his bitcoin holdings hit the \$1 million mark - meaning he won a bet with his parents and didn't have to go to college.

Now, thanks to the recent surge in the cryptocurrency markets, Finman's personal bitcoin hoard is worth about \$4 million, even after the slump of the last few weeks. And he's diversified into other cryptocurrencies, as well as more traditional investment vehicles - he's even started a 401(k) retirement account.

And yet, Finman is disappointed with the state of cryptocurrency, he tells Business Insider. The cryptocurrency boom has brought with it an upswing in scams and dirty dealings. And the bitcoin community, in particular, is too caught up in its own self-interests to modernize the underlying technology so that it can deal with the increasing crush of users, he says. He refers to the larger cryptocurrency market as "corrupt," and says that it's led to most cryptocurrencies serving more as an asset, like gold, rather than a politics-free replacement for money, which was the original idea. He suggests that the first wave of digital tokens might be about to buckle under its own weight - paving the way for something new. "You're seeing the first generation [of cryptocurrency] live and probably die," says Finman. Here come the 'crypto whales' Finman's next project is bringing on that next generation. He tells us that he's been flying around the world, recruiting a "consortium" of fellow bitcoin millionaires around the world (he says that they call themselves "bitcoin whales"), from Dubai to San Francisco. And within the next few months, Finman says, they're going to debut their master plan for a new cryptocurrency.

How Did They Find Way Into The System?

Signs of a rot showed earlier too. This time, judges have painted themselves into a corner. After all, selection to the superior judiciary hasn't ever been foolproof.

The judiciary, specially the Supreme Court, is a much respected and admired institution in our country. We, as a nation, are so proud of it that we dislike even questioning its set-up and working, even though many of us know that its functioning is far from ideal. We like to believe that the Supreme Court is a haloed temple of justice with judges being its erudite high priests. Proclivity to be over-questioning or over-critical of the courts in general and the Supreme Court in particular is also curbed by the salutary effect of the provisions for contempt of courts! So, on both measures—carrot and stick—we believe, like to believe, are conditioned to believe and fear believing otherwise, that the wisdom and integrity of the court and its judges are beyond reproach.

It is in this background that the recent press conference by four senior-most Supreme Court judges came as a huge shock to everyone. The common man, not over-acquainted with the working of the judiciary, was plainly rattled to see the self-generated halo around the Supreme Court slip, more than a little. To others, such as lawyers and those more familiar with the Constitution and functioning of the judiciary, the shock was of a different kind. It was long known that severe ills beset our judiciary, but what actually happened on January 12 was not expected. On the flip side, the initial silver lining to this unprecedented event was a belief—it proved only to be fleeting—that the judiciary was in the throes of severe self-correction and that significant reforms would follow, soon. Such a drastic measure, one would have thought, could only have been to usher in some much-needed correction in the functioning of the judiciary. However, the judges, unbelievably, backtracked from the theatrics the very next day. Now, suddenly, there were statements that there “was no crisis” and that “matter would soon settled”. If that indeed was the case, the lesser the need to



have made a spectacle of Supreme Court judges seeking redressal by public exposure, at a press conference, of issues related to court management! First, talk of selling one's soul, manipulation of other kinds and hinting at mischief in CBI judge B.H. Loya's death—and the next day, business as usual!! Difficult to say which was more shocking: the denudation or its immediate retraction? So what really happened? I guess, no one will ever know the truth. However, beyond the headlines and rumour-mongering to which the spectacle richly lent itself, there is, indeed, an important and obvious message in the episode: all is far from well in our judiciary. The danger is that, like in the past, this incident may also simply archive itself and fail to be a watershed to serious introspection by all stakeholders, regarding the set-up and working of the superior judiciary. Anyone, least of all the judiciary -its-elf, who overlooks this convulsion, and sweeps it under the carpet, on the pretext of preserving the propriety and image of the Supreme Court, and fails to diagnose and treat the underlying malaise, would be no friend of the judiciary.

In the past, we have turned a blind eye to lesser symptoms of things being seriously amiss. We failed to learn from incidents such as in the case

of Justices V. Ramaswamy, P.D. Dinakaran, Soumitra Sen, B.K. Roy, J.B. Pardiwala and last, but not the least, Justice C.S. Karnan. How did judges such as these manage to get appointed and make their way up the ranks? These are the ones who came in public gaze but there are many more under the radar line. A small but growing number of judges of dubious calibre and integrity—and a huge capacity for intrigue—are giving the many judges who labour manfully to discharge a constantly increasing burden of administering justice a bad name. Indeed, an honest, upright, hardworking judge is the biggest victim of the falling image of the judiciary. “The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity”. This finds true mirror in our judiciary. Good, upright judges are steadily being overwhelmed by more politicised and intrepid of their colleagues, who are more given to intrigue than discharge of a constitutional calling. The moot question is, how did such judges find their way into the system, today held hostage by them? The answer is simple. It is known to most, but acted upon by none.

The process of selection of judges to the superior judiciary is not foolproof. Certain undeserving candidates have made the rank as judges. The big-

ger problem is that there is no effective way to deal with such judges. Not only such judges tarnish the image of the judiciary with their unbecoming actions, they also help pull in and have selected more of their own sort. The general public is scared to complain about such judges, and even if complaints are made these are never acted upon. Meanwhile the “rotten apple” judges make their way up the judicial ranks and may become chief justices of High Courts or even be elevated to the Supreme Court. The higher such a judge goes, the more harm to the system he can cause. Even if the judges' colleagues know or suspect his integrity or capacity, there is not much anyone can do.

This is the biggest bane of the judiciary. The shield of a protected tenure, of immunity from prosecution and accountability to no one—all necessary adjuncts of a free and independent judiciary—perversely work to the benefit of the judges who got “wild card” entries to constitutional appointments. So, once an undeserving judge is appointed, one has to live with the consequences—with no redress. In this regard, the case of Justice Karnan is worth noting. In its course, some journalists attempted to find out on what basis he had been

appointed. All senior judges spoken to said that though they had recommended his name, it was possibly done only verbally. None could specify the outstanding qualifications on account of which Justice Karnan was appointed. It took a seven-judge Supreme Court bench to bottle the genie they themselves had created. He was held guilty of criminal contempt of the court and sent to jail for having lowered the authority of the court and obstruct the administration of justice. Purely from a legal perspective, now. What would have happened if four citizens of the country had held a press conference and denegated the Supreme Court by casting aspersions on the institution itself as well as individual judges? Surely, they would have been held guilty and punished for criminal contempt of the Court. The troubling question that arises is, how would one classify and deal with the January 12 press conference? Are, therefore, judges above the law they themselves administer? Now consider another scenario. What if senior secretaries to the government or any generals do something similar? Would they have been allowed to get back to office next day and continue as if nothing at all had happened? Or is it that no one can interfere with the working of the judiciary, other than, ironically, the judges themselves?

Alas, the unprecedented public venting has done nothing other than add another dimension to the many systemic ills of the superior judiciary. And the judiciary has none to blame, but itself. Having taken on the complete onus of appointing, transferring and promoting judges, the superior judiciary cannot today pass the buck to someone else or sermonise about good administration. The judiciary has painted itself into a corner. The nation will be watching closely—and judging—as it tries to extricate itself out of an imbroglio entirely of its own making.

Fox News hosts ramp up 'deep state' conspiracies

As the network escalates its attacks on the FBI, mainstream conservatives say it is endangering U.S. institutions.

As Fox News opinion hosts have grown increasingly conspiratorial in the past week — going to ever-greater lengths to defend President Donald Trump — other conservative commentators are expressing alarm at what they describe as a rising threat to both their movement and the country.

Those concerns seemed to come to a head Thursday night, when Fox host Sean Hannity was widely mocked for his logic-bending dismissal of The New York Times' report that Trump had sought to fire special counsel Robert Mueller.

But Hannity's coverage was just part of a wider trend, observers say. For the past week, Fox News opinion hosts have seized on claims by some Republican lawmakers about a "secret society" at the FBI and "deep state actors" to fashion unproven narratives designed to protect Trump and delegitimize Mueller.

On Wednesday night, Hannity told viewers, "The constitutional violations are severe and historically unprecedented in this country. You have deep state actors using and abusing the powerful tools of intelligence we give them to protect this country."

On Tuesday, Fox Business Network host Lou Dobbs said, "It may be time to declare war outright against the deep state and clear out the rot in the upper levels of the FBI and the Justice Department." Also on Tuesday, Steve Doocy credulously reported on "Fox & Friends": "Lawmakers outraged as bombshell texts from that anti-Trump FBI agent and his girlfriend suggest a secret society within the agency meant to perhaps discredit the president."

Some Fox News reporters and news anchors have pushed back on those narratives, but it's the opinion hosts who occupy the key morning and prime-time slots, when the most viewers tune in. "The network is increasingly engaged in a misinformation campaign aimed directly at the American people for the purposes of sowing confusing and spinning a web of protective armor around the president, who is being investigated," said Steve Schmidt, the Republican political strategist who ran John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign.

Schmidt, who is also an analyst for MSNBC, said he's noticed a marked shift on Fox in



the past week, as commentators have ramped up their attacks on institutions, like the FBI, once sacred to conservatives.

"This is not normal. Not healthy in a democracy," he said.

Stuart Stevens, the Republican who served as chief strategist for Mitt Romney's 2012 campaign, had a similar view.

"In the 1960s, some rich white radicals attacked the justice system, ranted about government conspiracies and called for violent opposition," he wrote in an email. "They called themselves Weathermen. Now the same is happening, and they call themselves conservative commentators. But it's equally nutty."

Jennifer Rubin, a conservative columnist at The Washington Post, noted to POLITICO that the points being made on shows like "Hannity" and "Fox & Friends" echo those being reportedly pushed by Russian bots on social media.

"When they turn on a dime and begin adopting the same position as Russian bots and start attacking the FBI, we've gone to a whole new level of crazy," she said.

"It's almost like Fox has become the RT, the Russia Today, for the administration and the Kremlin," she added. Those comments were made to POLITICO on Thursday afternoon, before the Times' scoop that Trump backed off from firing Mueller only when White House Counsel Don McGahn threatened to resign.

Fox News spokespeople did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

The Times story broke during Tucker Carlson's 8 p.m. show, though the host barely touched on it. In the following hour, Sean

Hannity initially dismissed the report, telling viewers that the paper was "trying to distract you." Later in his show, though, he acknowledged that Fox News reporter Ed Henry had confirmed the reporting. Referring to Trump, Hannity sheepishly added, "Does he not have the right to raise those questions? You know, we'll deal with this tomorrow night."

Hannity then transitioned to coverage of a car crash.

"Fox & Friends," widely regarded as a favorite show of the president, also cast doubt on the Times story Friday morning, as host Pete Hegseth opined, "You look in the first paragraph, all of this reporting based on four people who are told of the matter."

Fellow host Ainsley Earhardt added, "It's something we have to tell you have about because it is a headline on The New York Times. What do you think about that? Do you even care?"

In a Thursday interview on CNBC, Bill Kristol, the Weekly Standard editor who was a Fox News analyst from 2002 to 2012, alleged that the channel has become increasingly conspiratorial over the past several years, saying, "Seventy-five percent of it seems to be birther-like coverage of different issues." Rubin said, though, that the most recent commentary is beyond anything that's aired on the network in the past. "The substance of what they're saying and the conspiracy theories that are being floated are so much weirder and so much less credible than simply taking a suspicious view of the events leading up to Benghazi or questioning the motives of President Obama. There was once upon a time some factual basis for what they were looking at — some may have been

drawing unreasonable conclusions and some may have been exaggerating, but here they appear to be making stuff up from whole cloth, so I do think it's worse." The main catalyst for Fox's shift has been stories revolving around text messages sent between FBI agent Peter Strzok and FBI lawyer Lisa Page, in which they express critical views of Trump. Both were previously involved in Mueller's investigation, though they no longer are.

GOP lawmakers appeared on Fox News early in the week, trumpeting a text that they said proved that Page and Strzok were part of a "secret society" within the FBI determined to bring down the president. But when the text became public on Wednesday, it became clear that the phrase "secret society" had been used in a tongue-in-cheek way. Fox News hosts also seized on the FBI's admission that five months of Page and Strzok's texts between December 2016 and May 2017 were missing as proof of foul play. But on Thursday, reports emerged that the texts had been recovered. On Tuesday, Fox News host Jeanine Pirro tweeted a link to a story about Page and Strzok and the "secret society" claims, writing, "I've said it before - THEY NEED TO BE TAKEN OUT IN CUFFS."

Throughout Tuesday and much of Wednesday, the texts were a constant source of discussion on Fox News, with video of interviews on the topic with Republican Reps. Trey Gowdy and John Ratcliffe, as well as Sen. Ron Johnson, running frequently. "And that secret society — we have an informant talking about a group that were holding secret meetings off-site. There's so much smoke here,

there's so much suspicion," Johnson, a Wisconsin Republican, said in his Tuesday interview.

Charlie Sykes, a longtime conservative radio host and MSNBC contributor, said he believes the recent ramping-up of Fox News hosts' rhetoric is due to the Mueller probe gaining intensity.

In the past week, news has emerged that Mueller has interviewed Attorney General Jeff Sessions and former FBI head James Comey. Whether and when Trump would speak to the special prosecutor has also been in the news. Sykes believes that Fox News hosts' campaign to protect Trump — echoed throughout conservative talk radio — will have long-lasting effects. "Long term, you've done tremendous damage to a number of institutions that we used to respect," Sykes said. "You're seeing the delegitimization of the news media, the delegitimization of law enforcement, of the intelligence community, perhaps of the federal judiciary. Long term, this will have consequences." Schmidt agreed, saying, "If you don't understand the threat that this poses institutionally to liberty in this country, you don't understand what that threat is."

"You haven't seen an unleashing of unmoored, crazy accusations with a witch-hunt trial atmosphere attached to it since you've been in the heart of the McCarthy era and the Red Scare in the 1950s," Schmidt added. Rubin, the Washington Post columnist, also noted the feedback loop that's formed between Republican members of Congress promoting "deep state" theories and the network's hosts. Johnson, Gowdy and Ratcliffe's appearances gave them valuable airtime in front of the conservative base, while the network gained fresh fodder for discussion.

"You have people who haven't been known to be crackpots in the past, like Sen. Johnson, suddenly saying the most ridiculous sorts of things," Rubin said. "So the behavior seems to be spreading from the few to the many, and I think they do take great energy from one another." Later on Wednesday, after it became clear that the phrase "secret society" had been used in jest, Fox News hosts stopped referencing it quite as often. That does not mean they abandoned their conspiratorial outlook, though.

Why Vicky Gounder was Punjab's most wanted gangster

Vicky Gounder was killed in an encounter on Friday evening near the Punjab-Rajasthan border.

Punjab's most wanted gangster Harjinder Singh, alias Vicky Gounder, who was shot dead in a police encounter along with two other gangsters on Friday, carried a cash reward of Rs 10 lakh on his head.

At 28, he was wanted in 15 cases of murder, kidnapping and robbery in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

A native of Sarawan Bodla village of Muktsar, Gounder belonged to a gang formed by another history-sheeter, Jaipal Singh of Ferozepur. With Singh in hiding, Gounder was his front man.

Gounder and his gang killed Sukha Kahlwan, a rival gangster from Kartarpur in Jalandhar, in January 2015 when he was being taken back to the Nabha jail from a court hearing in Jalandhar. The audacity of the

Gounder was for all to see as he filmed the killing and danced around the body of Kahlwan while holding the policemen hostage at gunpoint near Phagwara.

Gounder was arrested in Ropar for killing Kahlwan in December 2015.

The gangs remained at loggerheads and their rivalry continued to play out in posts on Facebook with supporters issuing threats.

Gounder escaped from the Nabha jail in November 2016. Punjab Police had intelligence inputs that he was in touch with extremist groups in Jammu and Kashmir after the jailbreak.

Though the police were on his trail, Gounder eluded arrest. He had hideouts in Jalandhar, Moga, Mansa, Gurdaspur in Punjab besides Sri Ganganagar in



Rajasthan and Yamunanagar in Haryana.

He was spotted in Mansa in December 2016 and again in February 2017. Punjab Police got a tip-off that he was hiding in an NRI's house in Moga but he managed to flee minutes before the police's arrival.

In April 2017, he shot dead three members of a rival gang in Gurdaspur as he became active in Punjab's Majha region.

Additional director general of police (ADGP), intelligence, Dinkar Gupta said the cops were on Gounder's trail and got a tip-off on Friday that he was hiding along with another gangster, Prema Lahoria, near the Punjab-Rajasthan border.

"We were on his chase for months. Acting on a tip-off, we raided the hideout on Friday. Gounder, Lahoria and the third gangster Sukhpreet Singh started firing at the police

team. The cops fired back and the three gangsters were shot. Gounder and Lahoria died on the spot, while Sukhpreet died in Abohar civil hospital," Gupta said.

Gounder is a co-accused in the murder of gangster Jaswinder Singh Rocky, who was gunned down near the tourist resort of Timber Trail in Himachal Pradesh's Parwanoo town on National Highway 22 on April 30, 2016.

Bridging the many interpretations of the Ramayana across Southeast Asia and India

From the Ramakien in Thailand to the Ramaker in Cambodia, the eclectic interpretations of the story in Asean countries are worth recounting

In the 15th century, the capital of Thailand was a city called Ayutthaya, which is Ayodhya in the local language. When Burmese soldiers overran this city in the 18th century, a new king rose. He called himself Rama I, established the city we now known as Bangkok, wrote the epic Ramakien, which is Ramayana in the local language, made it the national epic, and had it painted as murals on the walls of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, patronised by the royal family. Though he was a Buddhist, the king established his royal credentials by identifying himself with the mythical Ram.

In those days, long before British Orientalists and the colonial divide-and-rule policy, no one distinguished between Buddhism and Hinduism. Ram was as much a hero for Buddhists of Southeast Asia as he was for the Hindus of South Asia. Soon he became a role model for local kings. This legitimising of kingship through Ramayana began more than 1,000 years ago: in a stone inscription from Burma in the Mon language, dated to the 11th century, King Kyanzittha of Bagan dynasty proclaimed that in his previous existence he was

a close relative of Rama of Ayodhya.

In the Angkor Wat ruins, built in 12th century Cambodia, in the corridor adjacent to the one depicting the royal procession, one finds carved episodes from Ramaker, the Khmer retelling of the Ramayana. Murals based on the Ramayana are also on the walls of the royal palace complex in Phnom Penh. One story catches our eye. We see Hanuman stretching himself, from the edge of a broken bridge to the shores of Lanka, enabling Ram on his horse-driven chariot and Ram's grand monkey army to cross the sea effortlessly. This story is not found in the Ramayana that Indians are familiar with. And it vaguely reminds us of the Jataka story in which monkeys escaped the king's hunters by running across the back of the monkey-king who stretched himself between two trees. We realise this is a unique Southeast Asian twist to the tale, perhaps a Buddhist innovation, or perhaps a Chinese one, inspired by the story of the Monkey-king Sun Wukong who terrorised the Taoist gods, but who was compelled by the Buddha to help a Buddhist monk Xuanzang travel to India and find original Buddhist scriptures. As in

Thailand and Burma, kings of Cambodia today follow Theravada Buddhism. But centuries before, they followed Mahayana Buddhism. And before that they practised Hinduism. These religions originated in India and reached Southeast Asia via Odia and Tamil sea merchants who took advantage of the monsoon winds to make their annual trip there. They exchanged goods and shared stories. It is said that at night, the ship's cloth sails illuminated by lamps inspired the storytellers to create the art of shadow leather puppet theatre, which explains why shadow puppetry thrived along the Coromandel sea coasts and across most of Southeast Asia, as Ravan-chhaya in Odisha and Wayang in Indonesia, for example.

Direct transmission stopped around 1,000 years ago, around the time that Buddhism waned in India, and sea travel became taboo, with Hindus fearing it would result in loss of caste. Trade was outsourced to Arab sea merchants who also took Islam to Southeast Asia. We can be quite sure of this because the Ramayana found in Southeast Asia lacks the bhakti flavour so integral to the Indian Ramayana, first made explicit in the 9th



century Tamil Kamba Ramayana.

Preference for power over piety is evident when one studies the many Southeast Asian depictions of Hanumans. He is more monkey-like and more aggressive, lacking the serene grace given to him in Indian temples. Most disconcerting to the devout Indian Hindu is watching the Southeast Asian Hanuman behaving like a mischievous rake who enchants women, including Ravana's sister Surpanakha and his wife Mandodari. One of the most common stories told is that of how Hanuman charms and changes the mind of Suvarnamaccha, the mermaid daughter of Ravana, who steals the rocks used by the monkeys to build a bridge to Lanka. In another story, he outwits

Vibhishana's daughter, Benjkaya, a sorceress who takes the form of Sita's corpse to make Ram turn back.

In the Kakawin Ramayana of Java, while the first part of the story is true to Valmiki's Ramayana, it is the second which is more popular as it deals with the adventures of the local comic hero, the misshapen guardian god Semar and his three odd sons. The Malaysian Hikayat Seri Rama gives more importance to the decisive Lakshman and is more sympathetic to Ravana while making Ram appear aloof and imperious. These local innovations are further evidence of a long rupture in cultural connection between India and Southeast Asia, one that the current Indian government is determined to rectify.

Padmaavat row: Make fringe groups, such as Karni Sena, pay for destruction of public property

States must stop fringe groups like Karni Sena from spreading violence and breaking law and order

The Rajput Karni Sena is by now notorious for its mindless obstructionism and lawlessness in its protest against the release of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's movie Padmaavat. It is mindless because the protesters have refused to see reason in the fact that the movie has been seen and certified by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). It is lawless because of the sheer havoc it is wreaking over a swathe of North and West India. In the process, the once obscure organisation now regularly hits the headlines. Perhaps that was the objective all along.

The sena and similar fringe outfits believe that the movie hurts Rajput pride by showing Queen Padmini in poor light. The protesters have refused to see

reason, even after the Supreme Court stayed the decision of four states — Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan — to ban the release of the movie. Reacting to the SC order passed on January 18, Lokendra Singh Kalvi, the sena's chief, told news agency IANS: "We will not allow the film to be released at any cost. The Supreme Court has directed the state governments to ensure release of the film, but not to us (Karni Sena)." This is brazen disrespect to the top court and judiciary. The state governments concerned cannot sit idle in the face of threats of violence and mass suicide, as threatened by women in Rajput groups. Interestingly, though, two of the states have chosen to react by filing

allowing them to ban the film. In many of the protests across India, the state governments have done little to stop the vandalism of public and private property including buses, cinemas, and malls. On Saturday, four public transport corporation buses were torched in Gujarat. Reacting to the lawlessness a senior state minister said such protests were "natural".

Groups that led such protests must be held responsible and made to pay for the damage caused. The Punjab and Haryana High Court's observation in a similar case is noteworthy. In August 2017, when deadly violence broke out in Panchkula, Haryana, after the CBI court's verdict against Ram Rahim Singh, the high court ordered that the money be recovered from the Dera

Sacha Sauda, the organisation Singh was heading. In November, the court asked the Centre to form courts in every state to fix accountability for vandalism during protests and compensate the victims. This should also be followed in cases of violence relating to the protests against Padmaavat.

On Tuesday the apex court will hear Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh governments' plea requesting a modification on its order. Irrespective of the outcome of that, the state governments where protests are taking place must safeguard the rights of the film exhibitors and uphold the freedom of the agitators to hold peaceful protests. However, there must be zero tolerance towards violence.

The Chief And His Court

Were there any here, to judges questioning a chief justice? Some say maybe one or two judges had approached prior CJIs. Once, a former A-G did indeed approach one. But even so, it had been made public only much later. Nor had a refusal met with the fate it did that day. Rebellion, mutiny, trade unionism, anarchy...it was described variously, that unbelievable sight of four Supreme Court judges with media microphones in front of them. All the appropriate things were said all around. To the effect that, behind the particulars of what was said—or its motivations—the deep internal impulse for the judiciary's independence from control of the political executive must be sacrosanct.

The press conference was a break in tradition, without precedent. But it appears to have been within the guidelines for judicial conduct since there was no political comment, though the atmosphere was politically charged. Judges are not strangers to media coverage. Justice Jayant Patel's resignation was placed in the public domain. Delhi HC judges had 'unofficial' chats with reporters against the transfer of Justice Rajiv Shakdher. But this was no belligerent Justice Karnan, holding court in his living room and sending legal and contempt notices to SC judges. Nor were they novice judges. The average judicial experience of each is around two decades, with the same number of years spent practising law before

becoming judges. And among them was the next CJ, making it more than a "family tiff".

The Trigger

CJI Dipak Misra had marked a petition for hearing by a bench. The petition sought a probe into the death of CBI judge B.H. Loya, who was conducting the trial into the alleged fake encounter of Sohrabuddin Sheikh—a trial where BJP party chief Amit Shah was then one of the accused (he has since been discharged). The CJI marked this petition to a court comprising Justice Arun Mishra, skipping past nine other judges. This could be seen as a trigger because, out of three recent SC decisions (detailed below) that invited some adverse public comment, two had been marked to Justice Mishra. This was only one of the things that didn't sit well with the four puisne judges—Justices Jasti Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Kurian Joseph and Madan Lokur. As everyone incredulously coped with the idea of a judicial mutiny, at least four former (including SC) judges weighed in with support for the four judges, as did a section of media and public opinion. Many questioned the move as politically motivated. At the time of writing, efforts at a resolution, at informal and customary meetings (at one of which Justice Arun Mishra reportedly broke down), had still not borne fruit. Pending a final decision, the CJI has excluded the four from some important cases, including the Aadhaar case being heard by a

Con-stitution bench. Master Of Roster

These developments follow a November 10, 2017, judgement by a Constitution bench that was led by CJI Misra and comprised Justice Arun Mishra among others. This bench had decided, amid chaos as lawyers for petitioners such as Prashant Bhushan were heckled and not heard, that the CJI was the "master of the roster". Which meant he alone could decide which judge(s) would hear which case. This too has a backstory, which continued unravelling even after the January 12 press conference on the lawns of Justice Chelameswar's

Tughlak Road residence. Citizens for Judicial Accountability and Reform (CJAR) and lawyer Kamini Jaiswal had filed petitions on November 8 and 9, 2017, respectively, seeking a probe led by a former SC judge into allegations of corruption against the highest judiciary. Before this, the CBI had arrested former High Court judge I.M. Qudusi for soliciting and accepting bribes in a case related to the deregistration of a medical institute, apparently to fix the judicial outcome. CJAR and Jaiswal felt the government could use the CBI probe to lean on the CJI, because he had heard the medical institute cases.

Both petitions were dismissed subsequently by a bench of Justices Arun Mishra and R.K. Agrawal, who also imposed heavy costs of Rs 25 lakh against CJAR. Since then, transcripts of alleged telephonic conversations between Qudusi and other accused have been leaked to the media. These allegedly show they had fixed the benches. On January 16, four days after the 'mutiny', CJAR filed an internal complaint against the CJI with the five seniormost judges after the CJI. Meanwhile, Qudusi has asked the CBI court to probe the leak of the transcripts.

Modi's speech at Davos

Just what the audience wanted to hear

Chinese president Xi Jinping spoke in Chinese at the plenary in 2017 – it was evident that Modi had addressed the concerns of at least this audience.

Given the preponderance of business leaders at the event, it was always clear that Modi would pitch India and India's economy strong, and he did not disappoint. "An inclusive, progressive, India will continue to be the good news in an otherwise gloomy world," the Prime Minister said, echoing numbers released by the International Monetary Fund that show that the country will be the world's fastest growing major economy in 2018. India would be a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, he added, as he rattled off the various reforms undertaken by his government, including the Goods and Services Tax, and recent changes in Foreign Direct Investment rules. India, he said had replaced "red-tape" with the "red-carpet" and is open for business. The tougher task before the Prime

Minister was to find common cause on larger issues. He did so by picking three issues on which most right-thinking people have similar views: climate change, terrorism and protectionism. The Prime Minister listed India's long standing commitment to the environment (from a cultural belief in humans being "children of the earth" to a very real target of 175 GW from renewable energy by 2022); the threat that terrorism poses to humanity; and the fading lustre of globalisation. India will remain open, Modi said, even as he emphasised that the country did not have any imperialistic aspirations.

It would have been good to hear some specifics of how India hopes to work with other countries to tackle the current wave of protectionism, but plenary speeches usually tend to be about intent and direction, not details. And from that perspective, Modi's speech at Davos was just what the audience wanted to hear.

Delhi's Pollution Is Putting The Poorest At Risk

two children and hundreds of others who lived in the slum. Land rights activists allege that the eviction was a part of Clean India, a program championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to spruce up his country's image and promote cleanliness, in part by clearing out slums such as Pul Mithai.

Forced to live on the street, Farida and her family are now even more exposed to the city's notorious air pollution, which this year reached record highs, forcing the government to shut down schools and airlines to cancel flights. The air pollution has given Farida a permanent cough and makes her children's eyes burn and water. But Farida, who asked that her last name not be used, has nowhere to go or any way to protect herself or her children against the fumes. She now lives under a busy elevated highway, where she has fashioned beds from bits of plastic and string among the debris of broken furniture, torn tarpaulin and broken bamboo. Trucks belch out thick clouds of smoke as they drive by on their way to the market, and the air is dank with the smell of urine and burning plastic. "Sometimes the whole place smells of petrol," she said. But "what choice do we have?"

Pollution recently reached record highs in Delhi, with some parts of India's capital reporting levels in early November that were almost five times those considered "unhealthy" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The pollution sparked a political crisis and brought hundreds of people to protest outside parliament.

The government issued a health warning, suggesting that people stay home or carpool to work. But while more affluent

Delhi residents could buy air purifiers, wear masks or stay indoors, the homeless had no such choice, and faced increased risk of respiratory problems, bronchitis and even possibly tuberculosis as a result of the pollution.

One in six deaths worldwide is caused by pollution, according to an October report in the Lancet medical journal. Diseases caused by pollution were responsible for an estimated 9 million premature deaths in 2015, according to the report, "three times more deaths than from AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria combined and 15 times more than from all wars and other forms of violence."

It added, "In the most severely affected countries, pollution-related disease is responsible for more than one death in four."

The same study ranked India as the country with the most pollution-related deaths in the world that year. With 2.5 million people dying early because of pollution, India accounted for 28 percent of the world's pollution-related deaths.

Indians from low-income groups, predictably, have taken the biggest hit. According to the report, 92 percent of pollution-related deaths in India in 2015 occurred in the middle and low-income groups of the country.

The country's millions of poor and homeless are disproportionately affected by pollution: They are more likely to live near its sources, they have less access to good health care, and any air pollution-related health problems may be exacerbated by other issues they face, including malnutrition and lack of access to clean water. The number of homeless people in

Delhi, a city of 11 million people, is disputed and politicized. The Housing and Land Rights Network, an Indian NGO, estimates the population is between 150,000 and 200,000 people, though the figure could be much higher.

In addition to being exposed to factory emissions, burning fields and car exhaust, the homeless and those who live in the slums often light fires to cook or keep warm, sometimes burning plastic or rubber such as discarded tires, the fumes of which are highly toxic. But the central and state governments have done little to protect the city's homeless from pollution, several grassroots activists argue. For a few weeks in 2016 and 2017, the Delhi government floated a scheme to cut down on vehicular pollution in the city. During this period, cars with odd registration numbers and even registration numbers were allowed to drive on alternate days.

But despite the government's claims of success, the scheme's effect on the city's levels of pollution was disputed and inconclusive, and the program was eventually shelved.

In November 2017, amid spiraling pollution, the Delhi state government attempted to sprinkle water from helicopters to absorb pollutants and dissipate the smog. But the smog cover was so dense that the helicopters couldn't take off.

Commenting on the evictions at Pul Mithai, Ashok Pandey, member of an NGO that works on land rights, said, "Not only is the central government not doing anything for the homeless, now they are taking away the little they have built

themselves. How are infants and old people supposed to survive in cold and pollution?" One December evening last year, the stinging stench of burning rubber and tar hung heavy on the air around the popular Islamic Nizamuddin shrine in south Delhi. The broad sidewalks in the area were dotted with small groups of people, many huddled around small fires. "These are the unsavory choices they have. You either freeze in the cold, or you bury yourself in toxic smoke to stay alive," said Armaan Alkazi, a researcher with Centre for Equity Studies, an NGO involved in research and advocacy for social justice.

Alkazi said the levels of pollution is directly connected to the number of people with tuberculosis. The Indian Medical Association has also said that air pollution, along with malnutrition and overcrowding, is responsible for the persistence of tuberculosis in India, and has raised concerns about the emergence of a drug-resistant strain of the disease.

At Nizamuddin, a small queue of women cradling wailing and wheezing babies had formed in front of the van. Imamat Hussain Naqvi, a doctor who has volunteered his medical services to help people like these for the past year, said that when Delhi was reeling under pollution, he estimated that the number of patients at these vans who complained of severe coughs almost doubled. They "only come to us when it becomes unbearable. Unlike us, who are ... constantly reading about pollution, they don't know what's going on and hence don't take precautions," he said.

Nationalism Made In USA

That the US Ambassador has raised this issue at this juncture indicates that the Americans are more hopeful that this -request will not be shelved as in the past. After all, military cooperation, which is at the heart of the US-India strategic -alliance, has made significant progress under the Modi government.

In 2016, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) was signed, which will enable the US Air Force and Navy to use Indian bases and ports to service, refuel and repair planes and ships. In 2017, the US designated India as a "major defence partner". The US Pacific Command is already treating India as a major partner, if not an ally, in the Asia-Pacific, which it now refers to as the Indo-Pacific region.

Ever since the US-India Defence Framework Agreement was signed in June 2005, step by step, the Americans have steadily worked to enlist India as a strategic ally and military partner. Except for a brief interregnum when the Left was able to block progress in this direction, the

Americans have successfully chipped away at whatever resistance existed in the Indian -establishment. That the Juster offer has not raised many hackles is a sign of how India's subordinate relationship with the US is now sought to be normalised. The other major thrust of the United States is to sell more weaponry to India, something which was reflected in the speech by Juster, who listed out the weapon systems on offer.

India is mimicking the US in the defence sector in many ways. The US defence industry is totally in the private sector. Big corporations are the major arms manufacturers. The nexus between the Pentagon and the corporates led President Eisenhower to warn about the military-industrial complex (MIC) in 1961 in his farewell speech. This warning, of course, was not heeded and the MIC took on monstrous proportions.

The Modi government has embarked upon laying the foundations of such a military-industrial complex in India. It is rushing ahead with the

privatisation of defence production. Under the scheme for "strategic partners" in defence production, four sectors have been identified—submarines, fighter jets, helicopters and armoured fighting vehicles, including tanks. Private corporate houses are being selected as a strategic partner in each segment. They will tie up with foreign arms companies. Among the shortlisted corporate houses are the Anil Ambani (ADAG)

India-Asean ties: A cup half full?

Two, relations with select Asean countries such as Singapore have advanced more significantly than with others. Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are India's major trade partners in the grouping and efforts to diversify trade among other countries have not really succeeded. There is also a glaring imbalance in terms of connectivity. There are more than 400 flights a week between Indian cities and Singapore. The figure is 200 flights a week with Malaysia and Thailand respectively. In comparison, there are no direct flights between India and the

group, Gautam Adani group, Tata, Larsen & Toubro and others. Along with the privatisation of major defence PSUs, defence production is going to be handed over to a conglomerate of Indian and -foreign corporates. Thus, we have an MIC in the making in India. Even for the logistics agreement, the ADAG's Reliance company has entered into an agreement for repair and servicing of US warships at the Pipavav shipyard, which has been

largest and most important country in Asean, Indonesia. Similarly there are regular shipping links between Indian ports and Singapore and Klang (Malaysia) but few or none at all with other ports in the region. Despite longstanding and intimate cultural and historical links between India and South-East Asia and efforts to revive them, people-to-people relations remain sparse though Bollywood is a strong presence across the region. Three, security relations including in the critical maritime domain have lagged behind overall political relations. Security co-

-acquired by the company. This is a dangerous move as the US military is being allowed directly to get into contracts with Indian corporates for servicing its needs. The Modi government has no compunctions in enmeshing India in the geopolitical strategy of the US, thereby compromising the country's strategic autonomy and an independent foreign policy. This, in itself, is an indictment and exposure of Hindutva -nationalism.

operation with a few Asean countries is much stronger than with the rest. Asean countries would welcome an enhanced Indian maritime presence in the South China Seas as a hedge against an assertive China and to allay anxieties over prospects for a reduced US security commitment to the region. At the same time, they do not wish to be caught in an India-China cross-fire just as they fear the consequences of a sharpened confrontation between US and China. India will have to do some careful tightrope walking even as it expands its security profile in the region.

The right camera

In a market full of cameras, which one should you buy? We help you find the best

By JAVED ANWER

CONSUMERS never had this good. Earlier, the market for cameras was simple: for professionals, the option was a big and bulky single-lens reflex camera, while for mainstream consumers the right choice was the point-and-shoot.

Now, it is a different world. There are different types of cameras in the market. If you go to a website like Flipkart or Amazon, you will see categories like point-and-shoot cameras, DSLR cameras, advanced point-and-shoot cameras, zoom cameras, bridge cameras, mirrorless cameras and so on and so forth.

So, which is the right camera for you? The answer to this depends on what you want from your camera. In a way, almost all cameras out in the market right now are good enough. If your aim is to just click good photos on a sunny noon, you can pick any camera and get desired results. But it gets little tricky when you start adding words like low-light photography and wildlife photography. Before you buy a camera, make sure you know why you are buying it. Once you have made up your mind, here is what you should buy:

CAMERA FOR DAILY SHOOTING

Buy a point-and-shoot or a compact mirrorless camera for the daily shooting. DSLR cameras are very powerful but you don't need it. In fact, you will use a smaller camera more because it is easier to carry and use. Just keep it on auto mode and snap the photograph when required. No need to change lenses or fiddle with metering modes. Decide your budget and then choose a camera that has the brightest lens (lowest F aka aperture value) and biggest image sensor. Megapixels don't matter. Zoom doesn't matter. This

means if you are getting a camera that has one-inch image sensor, 10-megapixel image size, and F2.0 lens but only 3X zoom, you should buy it over a similarly priced camera that has 20-megapixel image size, 1/3-inch image sensor 30X zoom and F3.5.

FOR TRAVEL PICS

For most of the travel photography, mirrorless cameras when paired with two lenses are fantastic. One of these lenses could be a general purpose lens, possibly the one that came with your camera, and the other one could be a zoom lens for occasions when you may go to wide open areas like beach or big valleys.

But if this is an expensive solution, then go for the best point-and-shoot camera you can get in your budget. Also, do

take a look at the mirrorless cameras with fixed lenses and fixed focal length (no zoom). These are slightly expensive but the fixed lens is usually of very high quality.

FOR LOW-LIGHT PICS

Either you should buy a mirrorless or DSLR camera and pair it with a sharp (F1.8) lens. Or you can buy a compact camera with at least one-inch image sensor and sharp lens (F2 or lower).

FOR WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

There is no beating DSLR cameras here. These are the only cameras suitable for this kind of photography because only they offer the kind of focus system and controls that are

required. Mirrorless cameras are getting better but are not there yet. And don't even think about superzoom cameras. They are junk. Pair the DSLR camera with a zoom lens, something with at least 300mm reach, and you are good to go.

THE ALL-ROUNDER

For best results, you should buy a DSLR camera. Although it also means that you will have to spend money on lenses, and they are very expensive. Over the years, you may not realise but if you calculate you will find you spent ₹3-4 lakh on your photo gear. A DSLR camera, as noted earlier, is also bulky and requires a learning curve. If you take out the wildlife shooting from the equation, cameras like the Sony RX100 IV or a mirrorless camera with a sharp F1.8 or F2.8 lens work well as all-purpose cameras.



CAMERAS WE RECOMMEND

CANON IXUS 275 HS:

Sold for around ₹7,000, this is the cheapest camera we recommend.



NIKON P340:

A good buy for ₹17,000 because of its excellent F1.8 lens.

SONY RX100IV: The best, although also priciest compact camera.

SONY A6000: The best value for money mirrorless camera.

NIKON D750: Best value for money full-frame camera.

NIKON D3300:

Sold for ₹25,000, this is the cheapest DSLR camera we recommend.



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Excessive social media use reduces sleep among children

The research was conducted among the Canadian students aged between 11-20 years which revealed a dose-response relation between the over-use of social media.



According to a recent study published in a journal named Acta Paediatrica, the excessive use of social media can lead to reduced sleeping hours among children. The research was conducted among the Canadian students aged between 11-20 years which revealed a dose-response relation between the over-use of social media and the shorter sleep duration among the students.

There were in total 5242 participants in the study out of which 63.6% slept less than recommended and 73.4% students reported that they used social media for at least an hour per day. "The impact social media can have on sleep patterns is a topic of great interest given the well-known adverse effects of sleep deprivation on health," said senior author Dr. Jean-Philippe Chaput, of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute. He further added that electronic screen devices are pervasive in today's society and they are just starting to understand their risks and benefits.



Are you rich?

It's likely that you'll prefer short affairs over long-term relationships

Being wealthy may cause people to prefer having flings or short term relationships, a study has found.

Researchers studied the relationship preferences of 151 heterosexual male and female volunteers (75 men and 76 women) by asking them to look at pictures of 50 potential partners, and to indicate whether they would prefer a long or short-term relationship with each.

Then, they were shown a series of images of luxury items related to wealth, including fast cars, jewellery, mansions, and money. Finally, the participants revisited the images of their potential partners, and sorted them by their preferred relationship type again.

After viewing the wealth images, both male and female participants selected more partners for a short-term relationship compared to the original result - an increase of about 16%. "Evolutionary psychologists believe that whether someone prefers a short-term relationship over a long-term one depends partly on their circumstances, such as how difficult it might be to raise children as a single parent," said Andrew G Thomas, from Swansea University in the UK.

"When those circumstances change, we expect people to change their preferences accordingly. What we have done with our research is demonstrate this change in behaviour, for the first time, within an experimental setting," said Thomas, who led

the research.

After participants were given cues that the environment had lots of resources, they became more likely to select individuals for a short-term relationship. "We think this happened because humans have evolved the capacity to read the environment and adjust the types of relationships they prefer accordingly," Thomas said.

For example, in environments which have lots of resources, it would have been easier for ancestral mothers to raise children without the father's help. This made short-term mating a viable option for both sexes during times of resource abundance.

"We believe modern humans also make these decisions," Thomas said. The researchers also found that participants changed their relationship preferences after being shown a slideshow of dangerous animals, and videos of people interacting with infants.

"When the participants were given cues that the environment contained young children, they were more likely to select individuals for a long-term relationship," said Thomas. "Dangerous environments seemed to cause both men and women to choose more long-term partners, though some women chose more short-term partners instead," he said.

Questions a person should ask a partner before getting married



Before marrying a person, most of us discuss a lot of things related to money, future and family. But very few musters the courage to ask anything related to sex life. Maybe, the still associated taboo related to sex hinders people from speaking about that aspect of married life, but we need to accept the fact that problems in the bedroom can shake the foundation of a conjugal life. Hence, it is very important to be on the same page sexually (not just emotionally) with your life partner. Here are six sex-related questions you should ask your partner before taking the plunge... Do we really need to explain why it is important to get an idea of your partner's sexual health? Ask your partner if he or she had any sexually transmitted diseases (STD) in the past, and share your own history as well. Surprisingly, some people may not even have a clue if they are suffering from any STDs. Hence, it is a great idea to get a medical test done by both partners before tying the knot. Not all have compatible sex drives and if the difference is too great, it may

sometimes create problems in a relationship. Ask your partner a simple question: How important is the role of sexual compatibility in a marriage? This simple question will help both you approach a topic, which many are uncomfortable talking about. Having this conversation will definitely help you understand each other better.

For some, the past sexual experience of a partner may not

matter but a few might still be apprehensive about it. It's always a good idea to clear these doubts so that you can start your married life without any baggage from the past. You can always ask your partner if he or she wants to know about your past. In case, you too want to have an idea about your partner's past, let him or her know this. Most of us have some sexual fantasies that we

would love to indulge in some day. Some might even have kinky fetishes which might not be agreeable to another? It's a good idea to have an idea about a partner's sexual preferences and fantasies. However, don't judge a person based on his or her sexual preferences, but take your relationship to the next level only when you are comfortable to be part of such fantasies or fetishes.

Did you catch your partner lying?

While love just happens, it takes time to 'build' trust. Would not it be a wonderful world if we could trust people easily? Or, better still, once the trust is built, if it can never be broken? Between these 'ifs' and 'buts', we have to admit that trust is as fragile as a dream. So, when we catch the person we love most lying to us, our world comes to a halt. We may cry or keep mum, but the struggle to accept this fact is beyond anyone's imagination. So how should you deal with such a situation? Here are a few thoughts that you might like to ponder upon: Sometimes we fight to accept the fact that someone we love can lie to us. So, many people take the easy way to deal with it by feigning ignorance. But that's a big mistake. Acceptance is the first hurdle, after crossing which you will come across the next big

hurdle—confrontation. Once you are ready to confront the person, how should you approach the issue? Never use an accusatory tone. Instead of focusing on why your partner lied to you, you should tell the person how the lie had affected you and the relationship.

Doing so would encourage your partner to participate in a constructive conversation because when a couple starts playing the blame game, the guilty will only take a defensive stance. Be patient, listen and then speak. Although it's difficult to ask direct questions, but the road to discovery, be it anything, is never easy. Don't beat around the bush. Take a deep breath and ask whatever is troubling your mind. But be prepared that the answers could be very different from what you might be expecting.

Leaked Ferrari presentation drops details on super hot 488



Ferrari convened a gathering of dealers and special customers recently, and presented them with some of the specs on that special, monstrous version of the Ferrari 488 that's been percolating in public for nearly a year. Someone in the audience snapped pics of a few slides, those pics made their way to Ferrari Photo Page, and

presentationFirst, the coupe almost certainly won't be called 488 GTO. Ferrari owners in the Ferrari Chat forum have been wheedling their dealers for information, and several contributors to an 80-page thread attested that even the dealers don't know the name of the coupe yet. The presentation refers to it as "New V8 Sport Special Series." The slides also note the "highest horsepower increase vs donor car for a V8 special series," so watchers expect more than 700 horsepower from the 488's 3.9-liter twin-turbo engine; production numbers come in at 660 horsepower and 561 pound-feet of torque. The engine making all that fuss is an evolution of the racing unit in the Challenge car, is ten percent lighter than the production car motor, and can

produce a "unique track-like sound" as if Ferraris haven't been doing that since the 1960s. Leaked Ferrari presentationThe coming coupe gets more carbon fiber than ever seen in a Ferrari production car: the hood, bumpers, and large rear spoiler come in resin-soaked cloth, as do the dashboard, center tunnel, and the 20-inch wheels. Those wheels, dressed in Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 rubber, are 40-percent lighter than stock alloys. The cabin floor will be made of aluminum, with added lightness courtesy of less sound deadening and, thinner fixtures like side windows, and the omission of non-essential parts like the glove compartment. Leaked Ferrari presentationNew S-ducts in front and a GTE-inspired rear diffuser help increase aero efficiency by

20 percent over the standard 488. The "extremely direct steering ratio," "new race gearshift strategy" programmed into the seven-speed dual-clutch transmission, and new Sideslip management settings will contribute to either track-day superiority or overtime pay for the track-day tow-truck driver. The Ferrari Chat discussion says the vehicle won't have an active air brake, but the options sheet might offer a lithium battery and titanium exhaust. Apparently, dealers have forwarded a set of names to Ferrari for purchase consideration, and the braintrust in Maranello will decide which applicants will see this particular red. The rest of us will likely get our first look at it at the Geneva Motor Show in March.

Harley-Davidson Likely To Launch Three New Bikes

Harley-Davidson Likely Launch Three New Bikes: The iconic American marque recently trademarked three names which lead us to believe that we could see three new motorcycles soon Harley-Davidson Likely To Launch Three New Bikes According to reports, American bike manufacturer Harley-Davidson has filed a trademark for three new model names. Between December 7 and 21 last year, the company trademarked the names – the Bronx, 48X and Pan America – for exclusive use on its motorcycles.

In the past two years, both the Touring and the Softail range have received massive updates. However, the same cannot be said about the Sportster range, which is starting to show

its age. Hence, we think, the launch of three new models to refresh the range is a high possibility. Harley-Davidson Likely To Launch Three New Bikes The 48X, we believe, could be an upgraded version of the already existing Harley-Davidson Forty-Eight. As the motorcycle is already facing stiff competition from the new Indian Scout Bobber and the Triumph Bobber Black, this move only seems obvious.

As seen on the recent Milwaukee-Eight engine, the new engines powering

new bikes could switch to four-valve heads as well. Also, since Euro 5 emission norms are around the corner (from January 2020), Harley will have to update the engine in the Forty-Eight soon.

Harley-Davidson Likely To Launch Three New Bikes

We expect the Bronx to be an urban-focused bike that could possibly replace the Harley-Davidson Iron 883. The Pan America, on the other hand, is likely to be a Sportster-based tourer that could replace the Harley-Davidson 1200 Custom.

As the trademark office in the US has a 36-month 'use it or lose it' policy, we expect the three new Harley-Davidsons to debut sometime next year. Stay tuned for more updates.

French startup launches world's first hydrogen-powered bicycles



A French start-up has become the first company to start factory production of hydrogen-powered bicycles for use in corporate or municipal fleets. Pragma Industries, which is based in Biarritz, France and makes fuel cells for military use, has sold some 60 hydrogen-powered bikes to French municipalities including Saint Lo, Cherbourg, Chambéry and Bayonne. At about 7,500 euros per bike, and at least 30,000 euros for a charging station, the bikes are too expensive for the consumer market, but Pragma is working to cut that to 5,000 euros, which would bring their price in line with premium electric bikes. hydrogen-powered bicycles "Many others have made hydrogen bike prototypes, but we are the first to move to series production," said founder and chief executive Pierre Forte. The firm's Alpha bike runs for about 100 km (62 miles) on a two-litre tank of hydrogen, a range similar to an electric bike, but a refill takes only minutes while e-bikes take hours to charge. One kilo of hydrogen holds about 600 times more energy than a one-kilo lithium battery. Pragma also sells refueling stations that produce hydrogen through the electrolysis of water as well cheaper tank-based stations. hydrogen-powered bicycles The bikes, which look and ride the same as any normal bicycle, are aimed at bike-rental operators, delivery companies, and municipal or corporate bicycle fleets with intensive usage.





Sexual arousal makes a woman's brain react differently than a man's. Here's how
A recent McGill University attempted to study how men and women's brains reacted when aroused. Read on to know what they found.

Turns out, a woman's mind is much more complex than a male's when it comes to intimacy. According to a recent McGill University study, a female mind reacts much more and is more stimulated than a male one when aroused.

In the study conducted on 20 men and 20 women, each of the individuals

was shown erotic film clips while their brain vitals were scanned by two scanners. One of the scanners was an MRI machine that tracked stimulation in their brains. The other was a heat-seeking camera that measured levels of arousal through participant's genitals. While not massive, the recorded difference

between stimulation levels between male and female brains highlighted the consistent disparity between the two counterparts. "There were no brain regions in men with stronger brain-genital correlations than in women", the study stated, according to the Independent. While interesting, the sample size for the study was too

small, according to Qazi Rahman, a psychology lecturer at King's College London. He further added that more detailed research would be required to draw such certain conclusions. However, he did not deny the complexity of female arousal. The findings are published in the Journal of Sexual Medicine.



How to make someone fall in love with you

Five ways

According to science

You can't cast a spell on your would-be-lover. But you can take a cue from these researches and potentially up your chances of developing romantic feelings. After all, science knows best.

Look, we'll say up front that you can't 'make' someone fall in love with you. The feelings are either there or they aren't.

However, there are some scientific studies out there that explain how certain techniques or behaviours can actually increase your chances of falling in love with somebody. So, no, you can't cast a spell on your would-be-lover. But you can take a cue from these researches and potentially up your chances of developing romantic feelings. After all, science knows best.

1. Play hard to get

In a dream world, you could approach your crush, declare your love for them, and receive an honest appraisal of their feelings in return. But, unfortunately, things are never that

simple in real life. That's why people play games; specifically they play hard to get. According to the 'scarcity principle' invented by Robert Cialdini, objects that are rare, unique, or limited in time will make people desire them more. In one study of college students, four women were shown pictures of men they were told either liked them 'a lot,' 'an average amount,' or who 'were uncertain of their feelings,' and then we're asked to rate how attractive they found each photo. If you guessed that they found the 'uncertain of their feelings' guys the most attractive, you'd be correct!

2. Make googly eyes

We've all heard that 'eyes are the windows to the soul.' Never underestimate the power of eye contact. According to a 1989 study, participants who exchanged mutual and unbroken eye contact for two minutes reported increased feelings of passionate love for each other, even if they were total strangers.

3. Notice what hobbies and interests they have

While it's a romantic notion that opposites attract, science tells us that people tend to fall in love with those who are very similar to ourselves. Studies have linked similar backgrounds and similar levels of physical



attractiveness to the process of falling in love. So while it's a terrible idea to try to change yourself in order to have more in common with or please somebody else, if your crush is, say, a big GoT fan, and you've always been curious about watching that show, perhaps it's time to finally figure out what everyone means when they quote 'Winter is coming.'

4. Bond over an adrenaline rush

In 1973, a study found a connection between adrenaline rushes and sexual attraction. Test subjects were put in a scary situation (a shaky bridge), and then had to rate their feelings toward other participants. Compared to the control group who were on a safe, non-rickety bridge, the people who thought

their lives were in danger were much more attracted to their fellow test subject. Now, don't go finding a rickety bridge to stand on with your crush. But a roller-coaster date might be a perfect (and much safer) choice.

5. Try the '36 questions'

If you are friendly with the person you have your heart set on, why not try the '36 questions' made famous by Mandy Len Catron's modern love essay in the New York Times from 2015. In it, she describes love researcher Arthur Aron's 1967 study of interpersonal closeness that resulted in 36 questions that can make anyone, even two strangers, supposedly fall in love.



Eros Now announces launch of Eros Now Short Movies Series launch with Ayushmann Khurrana's Toffee directed by Tahira Kashyap



Eros Now. 2017 witnessed an emerging trend of short movies on OTT platforms, which have been widely appreciated by viewers. Recognizing the trend and its fast-growing popularity, Eros Now has launched Eros Now Short Movies to give budding filmmakers a platform to showcase their talent. Through this platform, Eros Now will aggregate and showcase the choicest Short Movies, one each month to its subscribers globally.

A beautiful story around two young girls with a social message, Toffee has already garnered critical appreciation at various festivals including the 30th Cinekid International Film Festival, Amsterdam, the 14th Bahamas International Film Festival and MAMI. Toffee was also nominated for the

Best Film at the Filmfare Short Film Awards 2018, a category specially created by the popular awards owing to its growing status. Commenting on the launch, Rishika Lulla Singh, CEO, Eros Digital, says, "Our aim is to constantly innovate and spot trends that stimulate the audience. We want to continue engaging our viewers with exciting content and formats and are very positive our short movies will deliver on our promise. Toffee, our first offering is an important and socially significant film and Eros Now is proud to collaborate with Ayushyammann and Tahira to kickstart the series with a film that will definitely connect and touch your heart". Actor-Singer-Composer-Lyricist turned

Producer, Ayushmann Khurrana added, "We are very happy to associate with Eros and showcase Toffee to a much wider audience on Eros Now. I commenced my acting career with Eros (Vicky Donor) and its almost prophetic to turn producer with them for this very special venture directed by Tahira. The film on child marriage is very pertinent and we are glad at how the audience has embraced the film". Debutant Director Tahira Kashyap added "Toffee, a film set in the 90s about two ten-year-old girls, their friendship, their insights into the world will take you on a nostalgic journey while it's still as relevant today. It's a film made with a lot of heart and we feel happy and blessed at the reception it has received".

Mumbai : Eros South Asian entertainment International, a leading global company in the Indian film industry, announced today the launch of Eros Now Short Movies on Eros Now, its cutting edge digital over-the-top (OTT) platform. The first of the short movies, produced by multi-talented artist Ayushmann Khurrana's Toffee, co-produced with casting director Mukesh Chhabra and directed by Tahira Kashyap premieres today on

Twinkle Khanna meets Malala for Pad Man promotion at Oxford University



Indian actor Twinkle Khanna met Malala Yousafzai at Oxford University while promoting her husband Akshay Kumar's upcoming movie 'Pad Man'. The two ladies posed with other students and faculty members of the prestigious university while holding sanitary pads. (Above pic) During media interactions, the Pakistani women's activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner praised the movie theme which revolves around menstrual awareness and women hygiene. Malala said that Pad Man has an inspiring message.

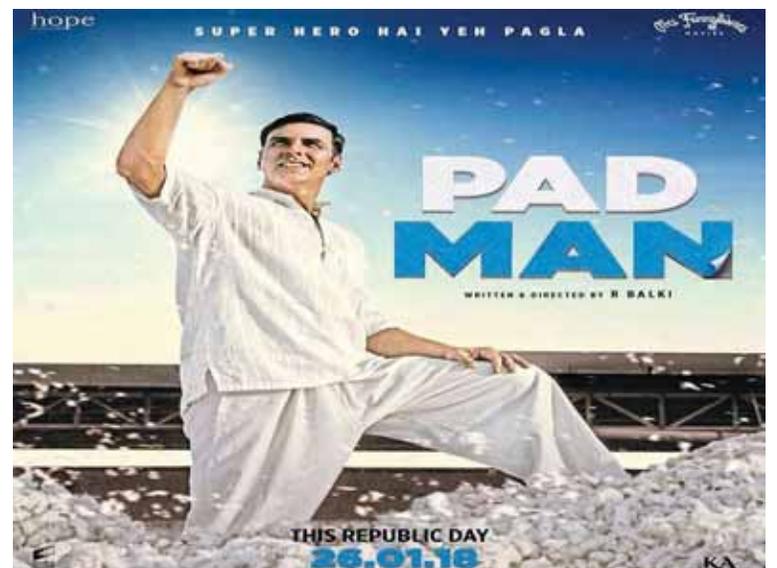
She said, "I'm really excited to see the film Pad Man... because the message behind the film is truly inspiring." Twinkle also spoke to the Oxford students in her speech. She complained that Indian school girls in villages have to sit with a rag cloth or a rolled-up sock or even wadded up newspaper between their legs. "Pads are still seen as a luxury item. It is odd that pads are taxed at 12 percent in India but brooms are tax free," she resented. Pad Man is Twinkle's maiden production. It stars

Akshay Kumar, Sonam Kapoor and Radhika Apte. Pad Man will now release on February 9, 2018. **PAD MAN** Opening February 9 Release Date: February 9 Director: R Balki Cast: Akshay Kumar, Sonam Kapoor and Radhika Apte Producer: Twinkle Khanna Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9ujx8vO_A Official Site: <https://www.facebook.com/PadManTheFilm/>

SYNOPSIS:

Pad Man is a fictionalized account of Padmashri Arunachalam Muruganatham, the man who revolutionized the manufacture of the low cost sanitary napkin in India. Lakshmi is a newly married, humble welder from a rural village in the heart of India. Lakshmi's incredible journey starts when he is shocked to discover that his wife uses an unhygienic cloth during her periods. Unable to afford a branded pad, he decides to make a sanitary pad himself. After several attempts, his irate wife refuses to be a part of his experiments. Lakshmi's love and concern for his wife, his determination to make the pad, leads him into situations that cause so much shock and

embarrassment that it compels his wife to leave him and his village to banish him. Lakshmi doesn't give up. His simplicity of thought, his resilience, his focus and his complete disregard for convention finally leads him to his destiny. A machine that can make a pad! The revolution that follows...from spreading menstrual hygiene, to empowering women, to starting mini cooperatives, to a vision of making India a 100% Pad using country, to accolades, to international glory and to a final resolution of his personal life, makes the rest of the feature "PAD MAN". His journey to make India a 100% pad using country goes on...even today.



Padmaavat movie review: Ranveer Singh shines as the tyrant, cynical ruler Alauddin Khilji

Padmaavat movie review: Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film is projected as a clash of ideas about love and war, and how they hold different meanings for different people. The film has Deepika Padukone, Ranveer Singh and Shahid Kapoor in lead roles.



Padmaavat

Cast: Deepika Padukone, Ranveer Singh, Shahid Kapoor

Director: Sanjay Leela Bhansali

Rating: 3/5

First things first.

Does Padmaavat cast aspersions on the Rajput valour? No.

Does it present the Rajputs of Mewar, who ruled in the 13th century, as heroes? Yes.

Does Karni Sena have reasons to oppose Padmaavat? No, unless they believe that Rajputs actually won against Alauddin Khilji.

Has Bhansali gone overboard in praising Rajputs? Kind of yes, though he claims Padmaavat is a work of fiction and mostly based on Malik Muhammed Jayasi's epic poem of the same name.

Last, the protests by the fringe groups hold any meaning after watching the film? A big no.

In fact, the film does what the Karni Sena stands for: Uphold the Rajput flag. Let's talk about the film now. How much do you know about Alauddin Khilji (Ranveer Singh)? To most, he was a tyrant, cynical ruler who wanted to win the Rajputana to be-

come India's most powerful king. Also, that he had a slave-cum-companion Malik Kafur (Jim Sarbh) and some quirks that probably made him an acceptable leader for the Afghans who were attracted to India's wealth.

Sanjay Leela Bhansali opens his most spectacular film, in fact one of Bollywood's glossiest till date, with Jalaluddin Khilji (Raza Murad) witnessing his young nephew's idiosyncrasies. Alauddin is asked to bring ostrich's hair, instead he brings a chain-cuffed ostrich. He dances with a mad abandon and shows scant respect for rules and women, including his new wife Mehrunissa (Aditi Rao Hydari).

It is but obvious that he would want to see Rani Padmavati (Deepika Padukone) after listening to a dejected priest Raghav Chetan wax eloquent about her beauty, comparing it to moon, ocean and solace. Padmavati, the princess of Singhal, is married to Rawal Ratan Singh (Shahid Kapoor) who lives by the Rajput code of ethics. How do we know? Because he keeps repeating them throughout the film. Needless to say that 'Rajput' is most oft-used word in the 163-minute film.



Oddly unmoving Review of 12 Strong by Rashid Irani

The story of a classified mission in Afghanistan, carried out not long after 9/11, should have made for riveting viewing, but it offers nothing new.

This is an earnest but curiously uninvolved account of a previously classified mission in which an elite American special forces team was deployed to Afghanistan in response to the terror attacks of 9/11. Under the leadership of a gung-ho captain (Chris Hemsworth), the titular dozen was tasked with wiping out a Taliban stronghold and disrupting the operations of their al-Qaeda allies. There are a couple of perfunctory family farewells and then the soldiers fly off into the desolate terrain. (Interestingly, locations in New Mexico stood in very credibly for the conflict zone). The US unit is working with an Uzbek warlord (Navid Degahban) and quickly adjusts to the new conditions. They confront their common adversary riding on horseback alongside Afghan rebels. Danish director Nicolai Fugisig offers nothing that hasn't been said more engagingly in other war films. Jingoistic posturing coupled with a thunderous soundtrack inure the viewer to the ceaseless carnage.

To be fair, some of the action scenes are photographed with genuine flair, but none of the actors make an impression. Not even Trevante Rhodes. You'd be better off watching his previous outing, Moonlight, instead.



My Birthday Song

Director - Samir Soni

Cast - Sanjay Suri, Nora Fatehi

Rating - 2/5

What would you do if you have one of the worst imaginable nightmares and wake up to find that you are living it bit by bit? That is the basic premise of Samir Soni's My Birthday Song and it is hard to find fault with it. As far as concepts go, this is a fairly intriguing one.

My Birthday Song is the story of an ad agency owner, Rajiv Kaul

(Sanjay Suri), who has a scary nightmare and wakes up to see parts of the dream being repeated in different settings and places through the day. Afraid that it will end the way his dream did – in catastrophe, Rajiv even tries to interfere and change the final outcome. Will he succeed? Is it just a nightmare or did he actually have a glimpse of what his fortieth birthday held for him? Is he a victim of a practical joke it is he a victim of someone's evil plans? Or, maybe, he is just imagining

My Birthday Song movie review A clever idea that fails to take off

Debutante director Samir Soni starts off with an amazing idea which is failed by its execution.

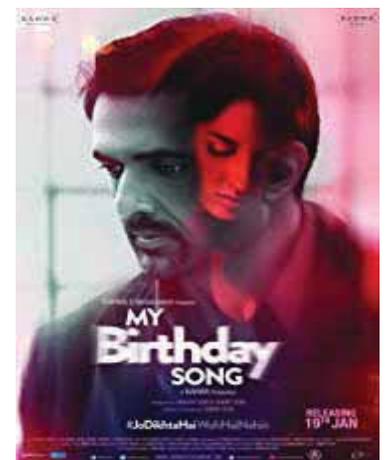
things?

The film keeps us engaged in the narrative, raising such questions with each turn of events and Sanjay Suri ensures he plays the protagonist with grace, confusion, fear and guilt. The actor has portrayed complex characters with elan before and My Birthday Song rides completely on his shoulders. The dialogues are mostly in English or English mixed with Hindi and that is in keeping with the milieu to which the characters belong.

It is the heavy-footed treatment of the film that fails it. It is so over-

dramatic that even the solid theme on which it is based gets lost. There is a concerted effort that every trope associated with a thriller -- shaky frames, strange camera angles and sudden jump cuts – is introduced in the film, making it repetitive and boring. My Birthday Song has Purab Kohli and Pitobash in guest appearances and both are wasted. The character of Pitobash is especially a forced addition for he is there only to spout dialogues on moral values and philosophy in a psychological thriller.

Debutante director Samir Soni



starts off with an amazing idea which is failed by its execution.

Eros International in association with Chinese film company E Stars Films Ltd to release Salman Khan's Bajranghi Bhaijaan in China

Mumbai: Eros International Media Ltd (Eros International), a leading global film company in the Indian film entertainment industry, has announced today in association with China's E Stars Films Ltd and Salman Khan Ventures that it will be releasing the multiple record breaking blockbuster Bajranghi Bhaijaan in China on 2nd March 2018 during the Chinese Lantern Festival.

Dubbed in Chinese, the first Salman Khan film to release in China, the film is expected to get a wide release across 8000 plus screens. The Indian drama directed by Kabir Khan stars leading Indian film actor Salman Khan as Bajranghi, an ardent devotee of Hindu deity Hanuman, and his arduous journey to reunite a six-year-old Pakistani girl - who somehow gets lost in India - with her parents, back to her hometown in Pakistan.

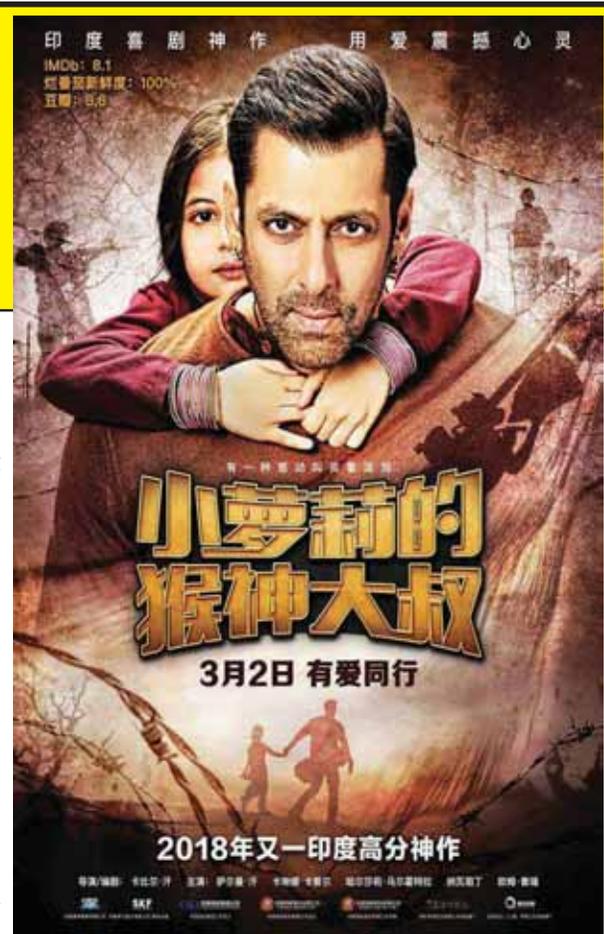
With China overtaking the US with the world's largest screen count with over 41,000 screens against 40,759 screens in the US and the recent suc-

cesses of Indian film releases in China, the studio and the makers are confident of Bajranghi Bhaijaan's box office potential in one of the most promising international markets for Indian films.

Speaking on the development, Jyoti Deshpande, Group CEO, Eros International said, "China has emerged as an important market and major box office earner for Indian films in recent years, what with the recent success of Dangal and we are delighted to partner with E Stars to showcase our film to China. Our Indo-China co-productions are still in the making which we are extremely excited about, meanwhile what better film than Bajranghi Bhaijaan starring one of India's most loved superstars that weaves the universal story of cross border friendship to release in a growing market like China. There are no international films releasing during that period in China so we hope to have a fantastic run at the box office in the world's biggest film market".

Allen Liu, CEO, E Stars Films Ltd added, "We are looking forward to partnering with Eros, one of the leading studios in India. There is high expectation and curiosity for the film post the success of recent Indian releases in China and the positive word of mouth Bajranghi Bhaijaan enjoys. We anticipate tremendous potential in this beautiful drama starring one of the most popular actors in Indian cinema in a film that speaks the language of emotions like courage and hope which are universal".

Eros released Bajranghi Bhaijaan across 4200 screens in India (the highest number of screens for a Hindi film at the time) and over 700 screens in the international markets on 17th July 2015. The film went on to break several records in the domestic and international markets including the fastest 100 crores for a Hindi language film, highest single day collection, highest first Monday collection, highest Eid weekend gross overseas and several more.



Bajranghi Bhaijaan is the first of the film associations Eros is exploring with China. Recognising the significant market opportunity in China, Eros and director Kabir Khan are once again coming together for a travel drama, The Zookeeper (working title) under its franchise studio, Trinity which will be shot in Hindi and Mandarin languages.

The Commuter movie review

Liam Neeson's final action movie is a ride you don't want to miss

The Commuter movie review: Liam Neeson reunites with director Jaume Collet-Serra for the final action movie of his career. We're going to miss his unique set of skills.

The Commuter
 Director - Jaume Collet-Serra
 Cast - Liam Neeson, Vera Farmiga, Patrick Wilson, Jonathan Banks, Florence Pugh, Sam Neill
 Rating - 3.5/5

You know, a lot has been written about some of the biggest director-actor pairs in modern cinema — Johnny Depp-Tim Burton, Leonardo DiCaprio-Martin Scorsese, Tom Hanks-Steven Spielberg — but God knows there's a severe dearth of material written about Liam Neeson and Jaume Collet-Serra.

Of course, as compared to those duos, Neeson and Collet-Serra are working on a much, much inferior level; they've exclusively stuck to B-movie thrillers, while the others have won Oscars. But in the genre of their choice, they're pretty unparalleled.

So it's fitting that for Neeson's self-declared final film in his surprise streak of late-period action movies, he'd reunite with the man responsible for giving him this new lease of life following the breakout success of Taken.

The Commuter is almost identical — at least in structure — to

their previous collaborations — Unknown, Non-Stop and Run All Night, all varying degrees of good. It's a film that's built on a clever premise, executed with absolute efficiency, but (in this case, quite literally) derailed in its final act because of some utterly preposterous writing.

By now, it's obvious that there's no point shooting holes in the plots of these movies. You'd only be ruining what is — as much as I detest saying this — were the mind to be slightly dulled, a reasonably enjoyable experience -- although even the slightest display of intelligence will almost certainly dismantle the very tracks upon which The Commuter runs.

It begins with a rather Twilight Zoney set-up: A mysterious woman approaches a daily commuter aboard a train with a proposition. The commuter (Neeson) has never seen her before, and he's been doing this trip twice a day for 10 years. The woman (Vera Farmiga, reuniting with Collet-Serra for the first time since the glorious horror movie, Orphan) proposes a 'hypothetical' scenario to Neeson. She gives him a choice: if he agrees to accept, he'd

have to identify one passenger on the train who isn't supposed to be on it, and he'd receive a \$100,000 cash reward. Something will happen to that unidentified passenger, but Neeson's character would not be made aware of it. His job would be to simply identify the person, and return to his mundane life.

However — and the woman doesn't tell him this — if he were he to accept the offer and fail, or in any way try and disrupt what has been set in motion, there'd be consequences: His wife and kid would be harmed.

And since Neeson's character was fired that very day (by the way, has there ever been a more fool-proof way to get the audience on the protagonist's side than to fire him from his job?), he accepts. Soon, like the characters in Richard Matheson's near-identical short story, The Box, which was later made into a film by Richard Kelly, Neeson's character realises that by compromising on his morals, he has been taken hostage by the mysterious woman. He is compelled to fulfil the task, or face the tragic consequences.

Now, I know what you're thinking

(at least, if you're fans of Neeson's recent action movies). This sounds an awful lot like Non-Stop, the only difference is that instead of a plane, it's set on a moving train.

And honestly, to an extent, it really is Non-Stop on a train. Like that movie, it's a fun little throwback to the locked room mysteries of Agatha Christie (how neat to have another so soon after the wonderful Murder on the Orient Express) and more overtly, the deftly plotted thrillers of Alfred Hitchcock (it leans more towards The Lady Vanishes than Strangers on a Train, though).

In the hands of Collet-Serra, The Commuter is an effortlessly mounted thriller that's infinitely better than those terrible Taken sequels. For instance, there is one action scene in particular that seems as though it is a direct response to that endlessly memed sequence from Taken 3 in which the visibly old Neeson leaps a fence with the aid of a dozen cuts: it's an entire fistfight that (with the obvious help of some seamless editing) is made to appear as if it were shot in one long take.

The same goes for the film's open-



ing credits sequence, in which they relate Neeson's daily routine with insight and grace uncommon to films such as this. This sort of attention to detail isn't something you'd ever really demand of movies like The Commuter, but nonetheless, the effort is appreciated. The Commuter isn't the blazing swansong every Liam Neeson fan would've hoped for — and to be quite honest, with these things, you never know; he might do another action movie sometime in the future. But it has, like it's central character, a workmanlike demeanour that's bound to please its fans. There are even brief moments of depth, if you're into that sort of thing: banks, and the evil they represent, is a recurring motif.

Sunny Leone's sizzling Instagram pictures

Sunny Leone is undoubtedly a bombshell in B-town. She was a part of Dabboo Ratnani's annual calendar and didn't fail to steam it up with an incredible photo shoot.

Taking to Instagram, Sunny posted a picture of her look from the shoot where she oozed oomph and sensuality. In the picture, the actress can be seen wearing a short apron with black knee-length boots and black lingerie. She can also be seen holding a mop in her hand and with a seductive expression.

Sunny captioned the sizzling click as, "This is my 'bad wifey' shot from Dabboo's calendar! Scrub scrub scrub!!!

Lol. Sunny Leone is one of the most active celebrities on social media. She not only has an envious body but also a gorgeous face that one can't get enough of. The actress is a treat for the sore eyes and is always camera ready. With her oomph, flawless beauty and charming demeanour, Sunny makes sure to leave the audience drooling over her pictures.

Here's another picture of the diva that you can add to your favourites. Sunny took to Instagram to share a picture where she's seen clad in a red one-shoulder top paired up with blue jeans. With her tresses let loose and minimal makeup, Sunny glows as usual and looks more stylish than ever. Sunny Leone has

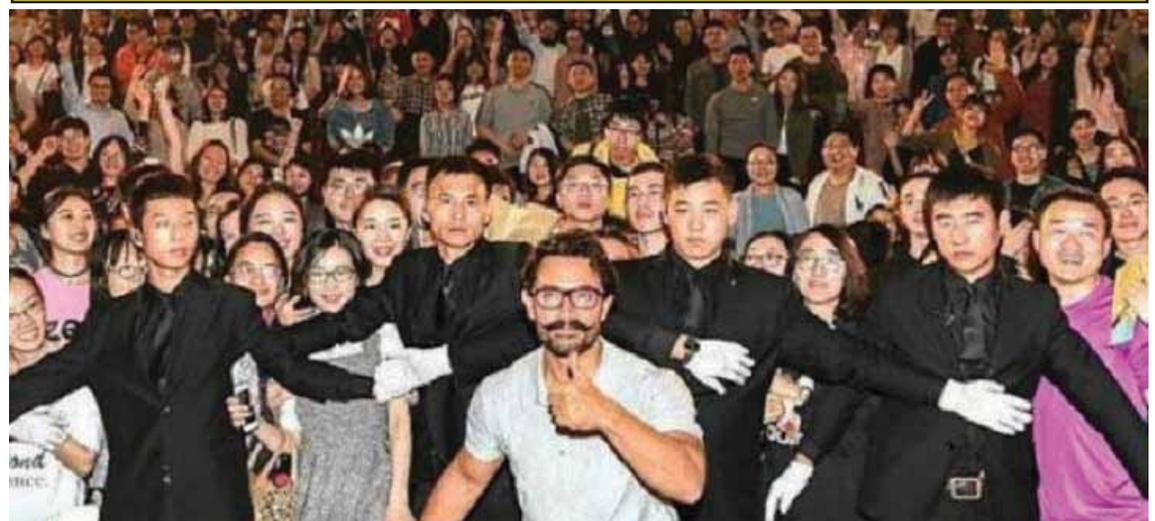
come a long way in Bollywood. Though she faces opposition and rejection from a lot of people even today, she still boasts of a huge fan following.

The actress not only entertains her fans with her films but also keeps them posted about her happenings in life through social media. Sunny recently shared a sun-kissed picture of herself on her Instagram handle and it is a total bliss. Donning a grey top and blue jeans, Sunny looks fresh as a daisy even sans makeup. With one side braided hair, she strikes a simple pose for the camera. On the work front, Sunny Leone was last seen in Arbaaz Khan starrer film 'Tera Intezaar'.



Aamir Khan looking to work with Chinese actors

Following the massive success of 'Dangal' in China, the Bollywood star is set to re-release 'Secret Superstar' in the country



Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan says it will be wonderful if Chinese and Indian talents make a film together. As one of the most recognised Indian actors in China, Khan has visited China twice since 2015. He said he felt Chinese and Indian people have many things in common when it refers to characters and social culture. "There are many Chinese actors who are very talented... I really want to do films with talents from China. Your Chinese talents and us Indians, we should make a film together. I believe it'll be wonderful," Khan told Xinhua news agency. "I would like to see a lot of collaboration between creative people from China and India, making stories that people from both countries would love to see. "I think it will bring the two countries closer. It will be wonderful for Indian audience to see Chinese actors and Chinese talents," he added. The actor's latest film Secret Superstar is

due to hit the screen on the Chinese mainland on Friday. The film tells the story of Insiya, a 14-year-old Indian girl who wants to be a singer. Khan was cast as a "funny" musician in it. "In Dangal, I'm very serious. In Secret Superstar, I'm very funny," he said. Dangal, Khan's last film in which he played a strict father with three daughters, was regarded as a black horse in Chinese box offices in 2017, raking in nearly \$190 million (Dh697 million), which surpassed any other Indian films' overseas earning, Xinhua reported. Khan, who also works as a film producer, director and television talk show host, produces one film each one or two years. "Half of my time is spent on my film work and half on my social work," he explained. Making a movie requires "lots of time" and "movies should be made from the heart", the Bollywood superstar said. "I'll try doing faster."



Urvashi Rautela Trolled For Sporting A Bold Black Outfit At Filmfare Awards 2018

It seems like there is no stopping trolls from putting out abusive, vulgar and hateful messages on social media, rattling women, especially celebrities, online and demanding that they dress or behave in a certain way.

The latest victim to online trolling and slut-shaming is model-turned-actress Urvashi Rautela.

Actress Urvashi Rautela was among the several Bollywood stars who attended the Jio Filmfare Awards 2018 on Saturday in Mumbai. The diva, who turned up the heat at the awards night, twinkled in a shimmery black Bellucci custom-made black gown that featured feathered full sleeves, a plunging neckline and a risqué thigh-high slit, at the

event. The B-town beauty oozed confidence as she pulled off the daring outfit with great panache and smiled as the shutterbugs clicked endless photos of her on the red carpet. Styled by Julie Shaikh, Urvashi opted for minimal makeup, long earrings from The Little Bauble Box and had her tresses pinned on one side to round off her look. Later, Urvashi took to Instagram to share photos of her look from the event, little knowing that many were waiting for an opportunity to take offence and post abusive and repugnant comments.

While some wrote that the dress was disgusting, others commented that she must opt for appropriate clothing and stop showing off her assets.