



**8** The terror Frankenstein: ISI-nurtured terror groups have come to haunt Pakistan

**9** Media and issues of responsibility

**18** Alia Bhatt to replace Kareena in 'Sadma' remake?

Indo-American Press Club to inaugurate new team on March 4

**Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, Publisher-Editor of The Indian Panorama is the new President**



**Mr. HR Shah, Chairman & CEO, TV Asia to be felicitated for conferment on him of Padma Shri**



Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, President, IAPC | Mr. HR Shah, Chairman & CEO, TV Asia

**HICKSVILLE, NY (TIP):** The Indo-American Press Club (IAPC) will inaugurate its new executive committee at a gala at Antun's by Minar here on March 4 in the presence of media personalities and community.

Prof. Indrajit Singh Saluja, Editor-Publisher of The Indian Panorama, will take over as President from Parveen Chopra, Managing Editor of The South Asian Times. The Chief Guest, Hon. George Maragos, Comptroller of

contd on Page 32

Indian Shot Dead by American Spewing Racial Slurs in Kansas

**OLATHE, KANSAS (TIP):** An Indian engineer was killed and two others injured when an American man opened fire on them after allegedly yelling "get out of my country", with the local police calling it as a "possible hate crime".

Srinivas Kunchubhotla, 32, working at the Garmin headquarters in Olathe, was killed in the shooting on

contd on page 32



Srinivas Kunchubhotla, 32 was killed in a shooting on Wednesday, February 22 night

# Trump calls deportations a 'Military Operation', as DHS goes in for Mass Deportations & Raids

**Plans to bypass Immigration Courts and short-circuit 'Due Process'**

WASHINGTON (TIP)

President Donald Trump, meeting with business leaders at the White House on Thursday, February 23, described his administration's moves to deport undocumented immigrants as a "military operation," a rhetoric that runs counter to what his administration has previously said but is in consistence with Trumps Campaign promises.

Trump has used a series of executive orders to chip away at the barriers to deportations and hire new law enforcement officials to spearhead the effort, using the Department of Homeland Security to live up to the President's tough talk on undocumented immigration during the 2016 campaign.

On Tuesday, February 21st, 2017 two (2) guidance memos were signed by Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly implementing the President's Executive Orders on immigration enforcement. Although much

contd on Page 32



President Trump described his administration's moves to deport undocumented immigrants as a "military operation,"

## Mexico voices 'Irritation' to Trump envoys



U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson (middle left) and Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray (middle right) are joined by Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly (L) and Mexican Secretary of State Miguel Angel Osorio (R) at a joint news conference in Mexico City on Thursday, February 23. Kelly assured senior representatives of the Mexican government that there will be no mass deportations or military enforcement against Mexican immigrants living in the United States.

Photo courtesy of Jose Mendez/European Pressphoto Agency

**"No use of military force in immigration operations," and "no, repeat, no mass deportations": Secretary Kelly**

**MEXICO CITY (TIP):** In a first and carefully worded rebuke senior Mexican officials have expressed "worry and irritation" about US policies during a visit by two of President Donald Trump's top envoys, who in turn seek to cool tempers after weeks of tension between the two neighbors.

contd on Page 32



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Third Session Puja	12:00AM - 3:00AM (Bhasm Abhishek)
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# UN To Create Counter-Terrorism Office; India's Syed Akbaruddin Welcomes move



"We greatly appreciate the Secretary General's initiative to promptly address the need to enhance coordination of the UN's Counter-Terrorism efforts," said Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations

## NEW YORK (TIP)

India has welcomed an initiative by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to create a new office for counter-terrorism and stressed the nations should not allow "turf battles" to "hobble" the proposal.

"Every day our collective conscience is being ravaged by terrorists in some part of the world or other. It is in this background of growing concerns, that we greatly appreciate the Secretary General's initiative to promptly address the need to enhance coordination of the UN's Counter-Terrorism efforts,"

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin said and appreciated SG's initiative to promptly address the need to enhance

coordination of the UN's CT efforts.

Akbaruddin quoted Bill Gates's speech at the Munich Security Conference where the latter drew attention to how unprepared we were to a new kind of terrorism - bio-terrorism. According to Gates, epidemiologists say that a fast moving air borne pathogens could kill more than 30 million people in less than a year.

Guterres mooted the proposal to move the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) Office and the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre out of the Department of Political Affairs and create a new office for counter-terrorism.

This office would be headed by a new Under-Secretary-General. The UN

Chief said the only objective of the new body is to improve efficiency in combating terrorism and not to change the different mandates in the field of counter-terrorism.

Akbaruddin said India welcomes the initiative and fully supports the proposal for creation of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, assuring all possible support in taking the proposal to its fruition. He however said that nations should not let differences impact the initiative and dent its credibility.

"So, let us not allow turf battles to hobble this initiative, if we have to maintain its credibility," he said during an informal meeting on strengthening of the capability of the UN system in implementing Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy here yesterday.

"As terrorism thrives on and is sustained by its trans-boundary networks for ideology, recruitment, propaganda, funding, arms, training and sanctuary, no single nation alone can tackle this menace decisively. There is no stronger case for more multilateral action, more coordination and more cooperation on any matter amongst all stakeholders than on terrorism," he said.

Akbaruddin said India envisages the Under-Secretary General for Counter-Terrorism to be able to take positions and speak on behalf of "all of UN" and develop a comprehensive narrative on terrorism including on all issues relating to counter-terrorism. He added that there are differing mandates of various UN bodies and if the counter-terrorism coordinator is to have credibility, the individual needs to be seen as the UN's voice on counter-terrorism issues.

"Such differentiation of mandates is only known to those in this room or those who use this building as work space. It will never be comprehensible to the ordinary people at large," the Indian envoy said.

# New Yorkers send a clear message - Activists drape Lady Liberty with 'Refugees Welcome' banner

A giant 'Refugees Welcome' sign was unfurled on the Statue of Liberty today [bit.ly/2IDm2uU](http://bit.ly/2IDm2uU)



**NEW YORK (TIP):** Activist scaled the Statue of Liberty and unfurled a red and white "Refugees Welcome" banner on Tuesday, just hours after the Department of Homeland Security unveiled its sweeping plan to deport undocumented immigrants across the U.S.

The banner, which measured 3 feet by 20 feet in length, was unrolled and dangled from the statue's observation deck, the National Park Service said.

The sign was removed more than an hour later after it surfaced, the Associated Press reported, but not before images spread like wildfire on social media.

According to CNN, an activist group called Alt Lady Liberty claimed responsibility for the banner. "Almost all Americans have descendants from somewhere else," the group told CNN. "Immigrants and refugees make this country great. And turning away refugees, like we did to Anne Frank, does not make us great."



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## Alaska Airlines names Charu Jain new Vice President and CIO

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** On February 16, Alaska Airlines board of directors named Charu Jain vice president and chief information officer (CIO) of Alaska Airlines.

Jain comes to the airline from IBM Global Business Services, where she led the team helping American Airlines integrate its IT systems. Prior to that she worked 20 years at United Airlines in progressive roles from programmer to senior managing director of airline operations technology and technology integration before leaving the company in 2012. As Alaska's CIO, Jain will lead a department of more than 400 information technology professionals.

"Charu's experience as both an airline executive and consultant is perfectly suited to help Air Group successfully integrate Virgin America from a technology standpoint," said Brandon Pedersen

Alaska Airlines executive vice president of finance and CFO. "Throughout her 24-year career, Charu has been able to blend thoughtful leadership with a focus on results and we're excited to have her onboard."

Jain has a bachelor's degree in economics from Lucknow University in India and an MBA in International Management at Lake Forest Graduate School of Management

## Pramila Jayapal Elected Vice Ranking Member of House Budget Committee

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Last week, Kentucky Congressman John Yarmuth, Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee, announced that Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (WA-07) will serve as the committee's Vice Ranking Member.

"I'm pleased to congratulate our new Vice Ranking Member Congresswoman Jayapal, whose years of experience in the private, non-profit, and public sectors will be invaluable to the committee as we prepare to take on a number of challenging issues this year," said Rep. Yarmuth. "I look forward to working with her and all of the outstanding Democrats on the committee as we fight to enact smart budget priorities that build upon the progress of the past eight years, protect Americans' health security, and increase economic opportunity for all American families."

"The budget, at the end of the day, is a powerful moral document," said Rep. Jayapal. "It reflects our priorities and investments as a country. With every budget we pass, we should be standing up for the working class, protecting those who are most vulnerable, and fighting income inequality. I am honored to have this opportunity to help show what Democrats stand for, and to organize and engage people across the country in standing up for that vision. I thank my colleagues for electing me as Vice Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee and look forward to working with them to put forth a budget that upholds our values."



*As Alaska's CIO, Jain will lead a department of more than 400 information technology professionals*



*Democrats on the House Budget Committee Feb. 14 elected Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., to serve as the committee's vice ranking member*

# Indian student's vision for glaucoma app wins national recognition

**WASHINGTON (TIP)**

**A** 17-year-old Tesoro High senior Shalin Shah was one of four teenage recipients of the Young Innovators to Watch award, a part of Mobile Apps Showdown at the CES convention, the largest technology trade show in the world. He created Lumos, an affordable mobile application that will screen a person's eyes for glaucoma. He developed the \$30 lens that goes with it.

It's the second time Shah has been honored by Living in Digital Times, the organization that runs the Mobile Apps Showdown.

He was chosen among 75 applicants from around the country based on the potential, creativity and sophistication of his invention. Judges included teachers, venture capitalists and software and hardware developers.

"When you watch enough of these, you can spot out the real deal," said Robin Raskin, founder and president of Living in Digital Times. "He is just an incredibly articulate, talented kid."

Shah spent months working on his mobile application, guided by Dr. Anand



*Shah, third from right, was chosen among 75 applicants from around the country based on the potential, creativity and sophistication of his invention*

Bhatt of UCI Medical Center. Normally, a glaucoma screening requires a doctor's visit and the use of an ophthalmoscope to view the fundus, the internal lining of the eye and measure the health of a

patient's retina.

Shah created a lens that attaches to a smartphone and takes a digital image of the eye. Results show on the screen in real time.

## INDIAN STUDENT WINS PRINCETON UNIVERSITY'S TOP HONOR

**PRINCETON, NJ**

**(TIP):** Neereja Sundaresan, an Indian origin student has been named one of the winners of the Porter Ogden Jacobus Fellowship, Princeton University's top honor for graduate students. The fellowships support their final year of study at Princeton and are awarded to one Ph.D. student in each of the four divisions (humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and engineering) whose work has exhibited the highest scholarly excellence.

Sundaresan, a Ph.D. student in electrical engineering who came to Princeton in 2012, has a bachelor's degree in electrical and computer engineering from Carnegie Mellon University. Through experimental study, her dissertation explores non-equilibrium condensed matter physics with photons.

Her adviser Andrew Houck, a professor of electrical engineering, said Sundaresan has excelled at expanding her base of knowledge, learning skills such as nanofabrication and quantum measurement, teaching and mentoring other students, and making exciting discoveries in the lab. "In short, Neereja is a superstar," Houck said. "She is a gifted experimentalist who can bring her talents to bear on many problems at once and can lead teams of researchers both within my group and across several research groups."

After graduation, Sundaresan plans to contribute to ongoing quantum computing research. "Through the course of my Ph.D. I will have gained a solid foundation for a meaningful career in research. ... As research in this field requires similar principles of device design, fabrication and measurement, I will be able to leverage the skills I've gained at Princeton while learning new ones," she said. "I think that these research initiatives will have broad and illuminating applications beyond the goal of universal quantum computation."



*After graduation, Sundaresan plans to contribute to ongoing quantum computing research*

## INDIAN-AMERICAN AUTHORS JOIN ANTI-TRAVEL BAN CHORUS

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Indian-American authors Jhumpa Lahiri and Anish Kapoor joined scores of other writers to oppose the controversial travel ban by US President Donald Trump, asking him to "rescind" his last month's executive order.

"In barring people from seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the US for 90 days, barring all refugees from entering the country for 120 days, and blocking migration from Syria indefinitely, your January Executive Order caused the chaos and hardship of families divided, lives disrupted, and law-abiding faced with handcuffs, detention, and deportation," about 70 eminent American writers and artists wrote to Trump.

They called on the US President to "rescind" his executive order of January 27, 2017, and refrain from introducing any alternative measure that similarly impairs freedom of movement and the global exchange of arts and ideas.

In doing so, the executive order also hindered the free flow of artists and thinkers and did so at a time when vibrant, open intercultural dialogue is indispensable in the fight against terror and oppression, the writers and artists said in a letter dated February 21.

Its restriction is inconsistent with the values of the US and the freedoms for which it stands, said the top US artists and writers under the banner of PEN America.

Among those notable signatories to the letter include Chimamanda Adichie, Margaret Atwood, Rita Dove, Jonathan Franzen, Khaled Hosseini, Azar Nafisi and George Packer.

According to the letter, the negative impact of the original Executive Order was felt immediately, creating stress and uncertainty for artists of global renown and disrupting major US cultural events.

"Oscar-nominated director Asghar Farhadi, who is from Iran, expecting to be unable to travel to the Academy Awards ceremony in late February, announced that he will not attend," it said.

Syrian singer Omar Souleyman, who performed at the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize Concert in Oslo, Norway, may now be prevented from singing at Brooklyn's World Music Institute in May, 2017.

The ability of Adonis, an 87-year-old globally celebrated poet who is a French national of Syrian extraction, to attend the May, 2017 PEN World Voices Festival in New York remains in question, the letter noted.



*Photo caption: Jhumpa Lahiri called on US President to "rescind" travel ban order*

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(Source: PTI)

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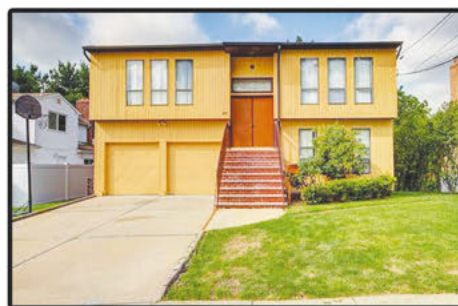
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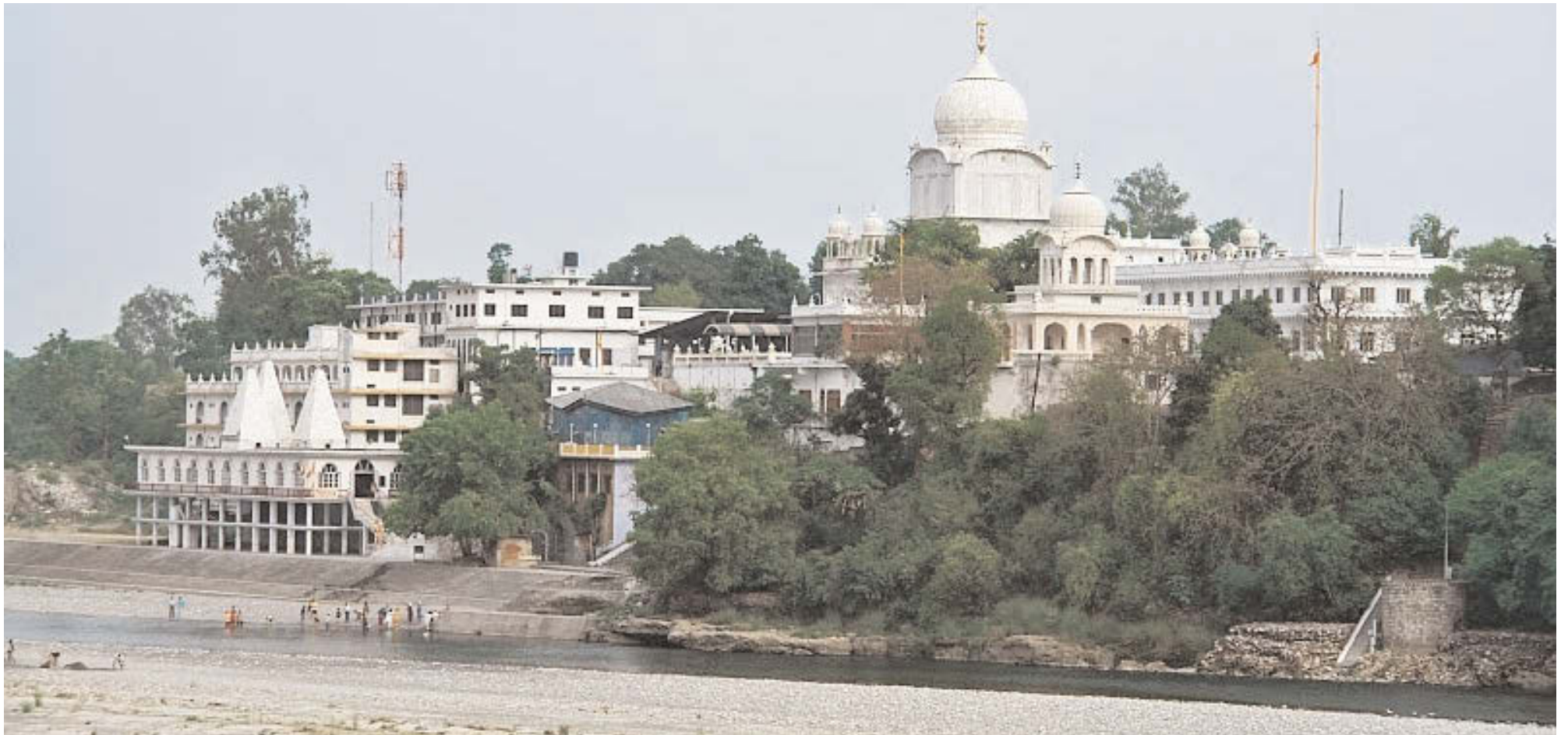
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# 'Huge blessing in small virtues'

BY MAJ GEN SPS NARANG (RETD)

Sheila Chaman, the one time most admired newsreader on Doordarshan and now a Delhi based freelance journalist sent me, the other day, a piece 'Huge blessing in small virtues' by Maj Gen SPS Narang (Retd). She came across the article in The Tribune, liked it and forwarded it to me. Thank you, Sheila.

The author's forceful narrative of a moving incident carries an extremely tender, human message which I am sharing with the readers of The Indian Panorama.



**L**ike a large percentage of secular Indians, I have an incident to share which may awaken the conscience of some of my fellow men.

The incident goes back to nearly a year, and even now evokes poignancy in my heart.

Last November, I was driving back to Dehradun from Chandigarh - a fascinating four-hour journey, with the added attraction of visiting Paonta Sahib Gurdwara. I had to break on the way to give myself and my car some rest. And what better than entering the abode of the Guru. Besides the soothing kirtan, it is the langar that one savors, seated on the floor among a multitude of people from all walks of life. Some partake of all meals as they have no means to satiate their hunger.

Breaking bread with them gives an indescribable spiritual high, and to experience this, one doesn't have to belong to any one religion. I, too, enjoyed the langar and came out to get on with my journey.

I stopped to buy some knick-knacks from a kiosk outside the gurdwara. Just then, I spotted a family of Gujjars (Muslims nomads who rear cattle in semi mountains and sell milk), in an intent discussion in front of a tea vendor. The family comprised an elderly couple, two middle-aged couples and four children. Three women were partially veiled. They seemed poor as the eldest gentleman (probably the father) counted coins and some crumpled notes.

Undoubtedly, the issue was how much they could afford to buy. They asked for three cups of tea and four samosas (popular Indian snack).

Gathering courage, I asked him, "Kya aap sab khana khayenge?" (would you all like to have food!!) They looked at one another with a mix of surprise, apprehension and a hurt self-respect.

There was silence. Sometimes, silence can be loud. The innocent eyes of the kids were filled with hope. "Hum kha ke aaaye hain," (we have eaten already) he responded.

There was an instant retort, "Kahan khayaa hai subeh se kuch bhi, Abba?" (we have not eaten anything since morning, Papa!!)

Hearing that, a dull ache in my chest caught me by surprise. The stern look in the eyes of the three men and the pleading moist eyes of the women said it all

I insisted that they come with me. They agreed, reluctantly. We entered the gurdwara (Sikh Temple of God)

A good feeling descended over me as I deposited their shoes at the jora ghar (Shoe deposit room in all Gurdwaras). The elders were awed by the architectural marvel.

However, there was fear in their eyes, which was understandable. They were entering a non-Islamic place of worship for the first time.

But the children couldn't care less, their innocent faces single-mindedly focused on food. Some onlookers flashed strange looks from the corner of their eyes. But then I followed the children, adopting their easy attitude as they excitedly chose head wraps of different colors. (everyone is supposed to cover their heads inside a Gurdwara).

Except for the eldest member, all accompanied me inside, and emulating me, bowed their heads and touched their forehead to the floor. Many others must have noticed, as I did, that these children went through this ritual with utmost reverence. They took Parshad (offering) from the Bhaiji (The Priest) who asked them if they needed more. The children gladly nodded.

We entered the Langar Hall and I took the kids along to collect thalis (plates).

They did it with joy, like only kids would. Seated opposite us was a newly-married couple. The bride, with red bangles accentuating her charm, asked the children to sit beside her, and two of them sat between them. The way she was looking after them, I could tell she would make a loving mother.

Langar was served, and though I had already eaten, I ate a little to make my guests comfortable. One had to see to believe how they relished it. The initial apprehension had vanished and they ate to their fill. I have no words to describe the joy I experienced.

We had nearly finished when an elderly Sikh and a youth with flowing beard (perhaps the head granthi and sewadar-

helper) sought me out.

I was overcome by fear, and more than me, my guests were scared. I walked up to them with folded hands.

He enquired, "Inhaan nu tusi le ke aaye ho? (Have you brought them in?)." I nodded.

The next question had me baffled, "Tusi har din path karde ho? (Do you say prayers every day?)." I almost blurted "yes", but it would have been a lie. So, with utmost humility I said "no".

Expecting an admonishment, he surprised me, "Tuhaanu tha koi lorh hi nahin. Aj tuhaanu sab kuch mil gaya hai ji (You don't need to. Today you have got everything)." I was flabbergasted. Was it advice or sarcasm? He added, "Inha nu Babbe de ghar lya ke te langar shaka ke tusi sab kuch paa laya. Tuhaada dhanwad. Assi dhan ho gaye (By bringing them to the Guru's abode for langar, you've got everything from God. Thank you. We are blessed)."

Then, with folded hands, he walked up to the elderly couple and requested them, "Aap jad bhi idhar aao to langar kha ke jaaiye. Yeh to uparwale da diya hai ji (Whenever you happen to pass through here, please come and have food. It is God's gift)."

I escorted my guests out of the Langar Hall. Just as we were about to pick our footwear, one of the children said, "Humme aur halwa do naa." (Get us some more sweet offering). We five went in to get more parshad.

Finally, as they were about to depart, the elderly lady whispered to her husband.

I enquired, "Koi baat, Miyaji?" (is there any problem, Mian Ji!!)

Almost pleadingly, he said, "Yeh keh rahin ki, kya aap ke sar par haath rakh sakti hain? (She is saying, can she keep her hand on your head!!) I bowed as she blessed me with tears in her eyes.

A wave of emotions swept over me.

Is it my imagination, or for real, that I often feel the beautiful hand of a Muslim lady, wrapped in purity and love, on my head?

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## GUEST COMMENT

## Mass deportations? The Trump Administration goes after immigrants

Despite judicial rebuffs on his ban on immigrants, President Donald Trump appears to be intent on waging war on the American society's most vibrant elements: the immigrants. The Department of Homeland Security is reported to have put in place plans "for aggressive enforcement of immigration laws." The only saving grace is that the new administration has denied reports that it intended to deploy National Guards to round up the undocumented immigrants in the United States. And, though the Trump administration has emphasized that it will keep intact President Obama's protection program for "dreamers", the overall message the immigrants across the board have heard from the Trump White House is one of intimidation and fear. Also, the potential asylum seekers stand discouraged and forewarned. America will no longer be the first choice of the prosecuted.

If President Trump has his way, the United States would be spending huge resources on making life simply difficult for the current and potential immigrants. The Trump White House wants to empower agencies like the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Custom and Border Protection, as well as to build up a wall along the southern border. On their part the administration officials insist that President Trump is simply asking for a vigorous enforcement of the existing laws and that the law-enforcement agencies will be targeting mostly "criminals" among the immigrants.

These caveats notwithstanding, President Trump has succeeded in making each and every immigrant edgy, nervous and fearful. The American law-enforcement agencies are neither known for their professional detachment nor for their racial broadmindedness. The leadership of the law-enforcing agencies remains with those who belong to "the Trump class", mostly subscribing to the ugly notions of white supremacy. The rest of the world has reacted adversely to these signals. But the new American President has made it clear that he is not going to allow himself to be distracted from those loony ideas and prejudices that in the first instance propelled him to the White House. Nor does he appear bothered at playing the bull in America's ethnic china shop.

(Tribune, India)

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## AS I SEE IT

# The terror Frankenstein: ISI-nurtured terror groups have come to haunt Pakistan



By G Parthasarathy

Pakistan's founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah, an Ismaili Shia by birth, proudly proclaimed, just prior to Pakistan's independence, that the country he founded on the basis of religion would not discriminate against any of its citizens on the basis of religion. While the eastern half of his country was divided on the basis of ethnicity in 1971, what remains of what he initially called a "moth-eaten" Pakistan, is now finding that religion could indeed tear the country apart. Born into a Shia family, Jinnah could well be regarded as a "kaffir" by many in today's Pakistan. Extremist Wahhabi-oriented groups, who since the days of Gen Zia-ul-Haq have received extensive support from the army, regularly target and kill those who are Shias, or even Sunnis, who are Sufi in orientation.

The most revered Sufi shrine in Pakistan, where thousands of people of all sects and religions congregate and worship, is the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar at Sehwan, in northern Sindh. The shrine, built in 1356, was established in memory of the 13th century Sufi, Saint Syed Usman Marwandi, popularly known as Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, whose ancestors were devotees of the Imam Hussein, the Prophet's grandson. Reza Shah Pahlavi, the last Shah of Iran, donated the shrine's gold-plated main gate. For today's jihadis in Pakistan, especially from groups like the Jaish-e-Mohammed, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), that have received, or continue to receive ISI support, Sufi shrines are heretical, with its worshipers fit targets for elimination. This is precisely what happened on February 16, when a fanatical suicide bomber entered the shrine in the midst of prayers and triggered explosives, killing 88 devotees and wounding over 250.

Not surprisingly, Pakistan reacted by passing the blame to others for its incredible follies in strengthening "militant Islam", ever since the days of the anti-Soviet jihad. This policy was followed by its backing of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the use of its "non-state actors" for its jihad in J&K and elsewhere in India. The TTP was a tool of the ISI used to wage jihad against the Americans and pro-government forces in Afghanistan, post 9/11. The situation in Pakistan changed when the army, led by the ubiquitous Gen Raheel Sharif, saw the TTP establishing a presence over large areas beyond its traditional habitat and launched large-scale operations against it. This was done without General Sharif's bothering to secure parliamentary approval. These operations led to escalating violence and displacement of nearly a million Pashtuns from their tribal homes, with many seeking refuge in Afghanistan. Thus, while the ISI continues to back the Afghan Taliban, the army is bogged down in a continuing conflict with the

**“With Pakistan on the back foot, the time has come for New Delhi to make use of the aversion for jihadi groups in Pakistan over the Sehwan outrage. A carefully crafted approach to relations with Pakistan needs to be adopted. New Delhi should remain firm on issues of terrorism by reiterating that there can be no question of reverting to business as usual till our concerns on Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India and Afghanistan are addressed”, says the author.**



TTP, some of whose cadres operate across the disputed Durand Line, separating Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The fact that Pakistan is still living in a world of delusion was evident from the reaction both by the government and the army chief, Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, to the Sehwan attack. In an effort to establish that no Pakistani groups were involved, the ISIS and then an allegedly Afghanistan-based group - Jamat-ul-Ahrar - were blamed by Pakistan for the outrage. Indiscriminate attacks against alleged terrorist locations in Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan immediately followed the attack. Over 100 alleged "terrorists" were killed within hours, with the army also mounting attacks on alleged terrorist "hideouts" along the border. Officials from the Afghan embassy in Islamabad were summoned to the army's GHQ and given a list of 76 "terrorists" said to be living in Afghanistan.

General Bajwa also called the American commander in Afghanistan, Gen John Nicholson, warning that continuing attacks across the border were testing Pakistan's policy of "cross-border restraint". PM Nawaz Sharif's adviser, Sartaj Aziz, spoke in similar terms to Afghanistan's National Security Adviser Hanif Atmar. A logical question would be whether Pakistan has done anything to prevent its jihadis, including the Taliban, LeT and the Jaish-e-Mohammed, crossing the Durand Line, the LoC in Kashmir, or the International Border with India? Is it not a fact that groups once nurtured by the ISI are executing terrorist attacks within Pakistan?

With Pakistan on the back foot, the time has come for New Delhi to make use of the aversion for jihadi groups in Pakistan over the Sehwan outrage. A carefully crafted approach to relations with Pakistan needs to be adopted. New Delhi should remain firm on issues of terrorism by reiterating that there can be no question of reverting to business as usual till our concerns on Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India and

Afghanistan are addressed. The cross-LoC strikes in September last year have set the precedent for India to appropriately respond to attacks on its soil by crossing established borders. Pakistan should be left in no doubt that it can no longer take Indian forbearance for granted.

The recent invitations to India and Iran from Russia to attend talks in Moscow, along with China, Pakistan and Afghanistan, on promoting political reconciliation in Afghanistan suggest that there is growing realization that appeasing Pakistan on any proposed "Afghan led" peace process is counterproductive. India would do well to use these developments for stepping up economic and military assistance to Afghanistan and expediting the operationalization of the Chabahar Port. Moreover, it would only be logical for adequate time to be given to the Trump administration to evolve its policies on dealing with Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Afghanistan and India.

Pakistan should be reminded that it has not fulfilled its commitment made by PM Sharif at Ufa for talks between DGMOs of the two armies to address issues of cross-border terrorism. The growing sentiments in Pakistan against the attack on its most revered Sufi shrine should be taken note of. The existing agreements with Pakistan on group tourism and visits to shrines could be utilized to promote visits of Pakistani pilgrims to Sufi shrines in India, together with visits by musical troupes devoted to Sufi music. New Delhi has done well to facilitate participation by Indian writers in the Karachi Literary Festival. Reaching out to people getting disillusioned with Wahhabi extremism and violence in Pakistan, while standing firm on terrorism, enhances our credibility internationally.

(The author is a career diplomat. He was High Commissioner of India to Pakistan in 1998-2000)

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# Media and issues of responsibility



By Markandey Katju

The Indian media display certain defects. These should ideally be addressed and corrected in a democratic manner. But if the media prove incorrigible, harsh measures may be called for.

The time has come when some introspection by the Indian media is required. Many people, not only those in authority but even ordinary people, have started saying that the media have become irresponsible and wayward, and need to be reined in.

Only a couple of days back I read in the newspapers that the Union government has issued some regulations regarding licenses for news channels, to which there was a lot of reaction. Under the Constitution of India, freedom of the media is part of the freedom of speech guaranteed by Article 19 (1) (a). However, no freedom can be absolute, and reasonable restrictions can be placed on it. One of the basic tasks of the media is to provide truthful and objective information to the people that will enable them to form rational opinions, which is a sine qua non in a democracy. But are the Indian media performing this role properly?

I may only mention certain defects in the functioning of the India media today.

## Twisting facts

One of the defects is that the media often twist facts. I would like to give an example.

One day, a leading English newspaper published on its front page a photograph of Justice Gyan Sudha Misra of the Supreme Court with the caption: "Supreme Court Judge says that her daughters are liabilities." This was a distorted and fallacious item of news, published on the front page.

Supreme Court Judges have to disclose their assets and liabilities. Against the liabilities column, Justice Misra had written: "two daughters to be married." Strictly speaking, it was not necessary to mention this because liabilities mean legal liabilities, for example, housing loan, car loan, and so on. Justice Misra's intention was obviously to say that she would have to spend on her daughters' future marriage. She has three daughters (no son), only one of whom has been married. Justice Misra never said, nor intended to say, that her daughters were liabilities. The news was false and defamatory, with the obvious intention of creating a sensation.

## Paid news

A second defect concerns the issue of paid news that has become prominent of late. In the 2009 elections, it was a scandal. How this vicious practice could be stopped needs to be discussed. Incidentally, in compliance with an order of the Chief Information Commissioner dated September 19, 2011, we have placed the 71-page report of the Committee consisting of Paranjay Guha Thakurta and Sreenivas Reddy on our website, [www.presscouncil.nic.in](http://www.presscouncil.nic.in) with the disclaimer that the Press Council had rejected this report at its meeting held on



April 26, 2010.

## Non-issues as real issues

A third defect is that the media often portray non-issues as real issues, while the real issues are sidelined. The real issues in India are economic, that is, the terrible economic conditions in which 80 per cent of our people are living, the poverty, unemployment, lack of housing and medical care and so on. Instead of addressing these real issues, the media often try to divert the attention of people to non-issues. Such as that the wife of a film actor has become pregnant, whether she will give birth to a single child or to twins, and so on. Are these the real issues facing the nation?

At a Lakme India Fashion Week event, there were 512 accredited journalists covering the event in which models were displaying cotton garments, while the men and women who grew that cotton were killing themselves at a distance of an hour's flight from Nagpur, in the Vidharbha region. Nobody told that story, except one or two journalists, locally.

Is this a responsible way for the Indian media to function? Should the media turn a Nelson's eye to the harsh economic realities facing over 75 per cent of our people, and concentrate on some 'Potemkin villages' where all is glamour and show biz? Are not the Indian media behaving much like Queen Marie Antoinette, who said that if the people had no bread, they should eat cake?

No doubt, sometimes the media mention farmers' suicides, the rise in the price of essential commodities, and so on, but such coverage is at most 5 per cent to 10 per cent of the total. The bulk of the coverage goes to showing the life of film stars, pop music, fashion parades, cricket and astrology.

## Tendency to brand

Here is a fourth defect. Bomb blasts have taken place near the Delhi High Court, in

Mumbai, Bangalore and so on. Within a few hours of such a bomb blast, many TV channels started showing news items that said that the Indian Mujahideen or the Jaish-e-Mohammed or the Harkatul-Jihad-e-Islam had sent e-mails or text messages claiming responsibility. The names of such alleged organizations will always be Muslim ones. Now, an e-mail can be sent by any mischievous person, but by showing this on TV channels and the next day in the newspapers, the tendency is to brand all Muslims as terrorists and bomb-throwers.

The truth is that 99 per cent of the people of all communities, whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Sikh, and of whatever caste or region, are good. But the manner in which such news is shown on TV screens and published in newspapers tends to create the impression that all Muslims are terrorists, and evil - which is totally false. The person who sends such e-mails or text messages obviously wants to create hatred between Hindus and Muslims, which is the old British divide-and-rule policy continuing even today. Should the media, wittingly or unwittingly, become part of this policy of divide-and-rule?

No doubt there are defects not only in the media but in other institutions also, for example, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, and so on.

There are two ways to remove these defects in the media. One is the democratic way, that is, through discussions, consultations and persuasion - which is the method I prefer. The other way is by using harsh measures against the media, for example, by imposing heavy fines on defaulters, stopping government advertisements to them, suspending their licenses, and so on.

In a democracy we should first try the first method to rectify the defects through the democratic method. For this purpose, I have decided to have regular get-togethers with the media, including the electronic

media, so that we can all introspect and ourselves find out ways and means to rectify the defects in the media, rather than this being done by some government authority or external agency.

I propose to have such get-togethers once every two or three months, at which we will discuss issues relating to the media and try to think of how we can improve the performance of the media so that it may win the respect and confidence of the people.

If the media prove incorrigible, harsh measures may be required. But in my opinion, that should be done only as a last resort and in extreme situations. Ordinarily, we should first try to resolve issues through discussion, consultation and self-regulation. That is the approach which should be first tried in a democracy. I, therefore, request the Union government to defer the implementation of its recent decision regarding news channel licenses, so that we can ourselves discuss the issue thoroughly, and ourselves take corrective measures.

Till now the function of the Press Council was only adjudication. I intend to make the Press Council an instrument of mediation in addition, which is in my opinion the democratic approach. For this purpose, I need help, cooperation and advice from the media.

India is passing through a transitional period in its history, from a feudal agricultural society to a modern industrial society. This is a very painful and agonizing period. The media must help society in going through this transitional period as quickly as possible, and by reducing the pain involved. This they can do by attacking feudal ideas, for example, casteism and communalism, and promoting modern scientific ideas.

*(This is the edited text of a speech delivered by Justice (retired) Markandey Katju*

*(Courtesy The Hindu)*

## 7 dead, 20 injured in bomb attack in Pakistan's Lahore

**LAHORE (TIP):** At least seven persons were killed and 20 others injured on Feb 23 in a powerful explosion that ripped through a building in a defence locality in this Pakistani city, the latest in a series of terror attacks in the country.

Panic gripped the area a little before noon when the loud explosion resonated across Z-Block in Defence Housing Authority area in Lahore.

"Seven persons have been killed and 20 suffered injuries," officials said.

The nature of the blast is yet to be determined and bomb disposal squad and forensic expert are collecting evidences from the spot.

"It appears to be a planted device," Punjab police spokesman Niyab Haider told PTI.

The Z-block market houses restaurants frequented by young couples.

Several vehicles were also damaged in the blast. The injured are being shifted to different city hospitals.

The latest blast came as security has been tightened across Pakistan after a recent wave of terrorist strikes killed more than 100 people.

On February 16, a suicide bomber killed 88 people at a famed Sufi shrine in Sindh province. Following the attack, the army launched an offensive against militants and claimed to have killed more than 130 terrorists across the country.

Earlier on 13 February, at least 14 people were killed in a suicide bombing near the Punjab Assembly. (PTI)

## Centre clears Rs 5,700-crore hydro project to be set up in Nepal

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The government on Feb 22 approved a 900 MW hydro power project to be set up in Sankhuwasabha district of Nepal at a cost of Rs 5,723.72 crore.

The decision to approve the Arun-III project was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Wednesday.

"The Cabinet today approved setting up of Arun-III project at an estimated cost of Rs 5,723.72 crore. The project is expected to achieve financial closure by September this year. The project will be implemented within five years," power minister Piyush Goyal told reporters at a briefing here.

The project is being implemented by a 100 per cent subsidiary of state-run SJVN Ltd. SJVN Ltd is joint venture between Central and Himachal Pradesh governments with shareholding of 64.46 per cent and 25.51 per cent, respectively. "Union Cabinet has approved the project and its investment. It was awaited. The project is being implemented by 100 per cent subsidiary of SJVN Ltd," SJVN Ltd chairman and managing director RN Misra said.

The subsidiary SJVN Arun-3 Power Development Company Pvt Ltd (SAPDC) was incorporated and registered on April 25, 2013 as a private limited company under Nepal's Companies Act. (PTI)

## Nepal to hold first local elections in 20 years

**KATHMANDU (TIP):** Nepal will hold its first local elections in two decades in May, the government has announced, a key moment in the country's fraught transition to democracy. The impoverished Himalayan nation emerged from a brutal decade-long civil war in 2006, which brought the end of the 240-year-old Hindu monarchy and transformed it into a secular republic.

But deep political divides have prevented it from implementing a new constitution that paves the way for elections, but which the minority Madhesi community says leaves them politically marginalised. "The government has taken a historic decision. The election will be held in a single phase across the country," Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal said following a late night cabinet meeting on Monday.

"Election is compulsory for safeguarding all agendas and implementing the constitution for the functioning of democracy." Local polls will be held on May 14, paving the way for provincial and then national elections later in the year. The Madhesis, who live in the densely populated Terai plains bordering India, want the constitution to be amended first and have pledged to protest against the polls. (PTI)

# Pakistan on equipment buying spree to fight militancy

ISLAMABAD (TIP)

**P**akistan has expedited efforts to acquire military equipment and weapons to combat militancy as a fresh bout of terror attacks have killed over 100 people.

At least three such deals with the US were reported in American media, which involve helicopters and military vehicles that would enhance the military's capability to pursue militants in difficult terrains, the newspaper Dawn said on Thursday.

Earlier this week, Pakistan concluded a deal with an Italian aerospace and defence firm, Leonardo S.p.A. for purchasing an unspecified number of AW139 helicopters. Deliveries are expected to begin in mid-2017. Despite uncertainty about bilateral relations under the Trump administration, Pakistan is also purchasing weapons from the US.

Last year, the US Congress stopped the sale of eight F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan but the move did not affect the weapons needed to combat terrorists.

The US media reported on Tuesday that Bell Helicopter would deliver three Bell AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters to Pakistan this year.

This will be the first of a total shipment of 12 helicopters. The remaining nine will arrive in 2018.

Pakistan ordered the first three helicopters in August 2015 and placed an additional order for nine helicopters in April last year.

A US department of defence notification said nine AH-1Z Viper helicopters would cost Pakistan an estimated \$170.2 million.

Pakistan's original request included the sale of 1,000 AGM-114 R Hellfire II



missiles as well.

Pakistan will also receive four Russian-made Mi-35M attack helicopters in 2017.

The US media noted that the Mi-35M was the export version of the Mi-24 gunship and was particularly suited for operations in mountainous terrain.

Pakistan Army Aviation could acquire up to 20 Mi-35Ms in the years ahead.

Islamabad is also considering the Turkish Aerospace Industries T-129 attack helicopter or the Chengdu Aircraft Industry Group Z-10 helicopter gunship as an alternative to the Mi-35M.

The new gunships would slowly phase out Pakistan Army Aviation's obsolete fleet of US-made AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters, the media reported.

Pakistan signed another \$35 million deal with a US firm, Navistar Defence, for manufacturing 40 mine-resistant ambush-protected MaxxPro Dash DXM vehicles.

The contract, awarded under US foreign military sales arrangement, includes manufacturing of various support items, logistics and technical support services.

At least eight persons were killed and 20 others injured today in a powerful explosion that ripped through a building in a defence locality in Lahore.

On February 16, a suicide bomber killed 88 people at a famed Sufi shrine in Sindh province. Following the attack, the army launched an offensive against militants and claimed to have killed more than 130 terrorists across the country. (PTI)

## Bacha bazi: Afghan practice of child sex slavery

KABUL (TIP)

**A**fghanistan is set to criminalise the practice of "bacha bazi", sexual exploitation of boys, with a slew of stringent punishments laid out for the first time in a revised penal code.

The move comes after an AFP report last year found the Taliban are exploiting the centuries-old practice, one of the most egregious violations of human rights in the country, to mount deadly insider attacks in the volatile south.

Powerful warlords, commanders, politicians and other members of the elite often keep "bachas" as a symbol of authority and affluence. Bachas, sometimes dressed as women, are often sexually exploited. They can also be used as dancers at private parties.

Bacha bazi is not widely seen as homosexual behaviour - popularly demonised as a deviant sexual act, prohibited in Islam - and is largely accepted as a cultural practice.

"Women are for child-rearing, boys are for pleasure" is a common saying across many parts of Afghanistan.

The ancient custom, banned under the Taliban's 1996-2001 rule, has seen a



resurgence in recent years. It is said to be widespread across southern and eastern Afghanistan's rural Pashtun heartland, and with ethnic Tajiks across the northern countryside.

Tight gender segregation in Afghan society and lack of contact with women have contributed to the spread of bacha bazi, rights groups say. Several other factors such as an absence of the rule of law, corruption, limited access to justice, illiteracy, poverty, insecurity, and the

existence of armed groups have also helped the practice spread, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) said in a report in 2014. AIHRC points out that Afghanistan's criminal law prohibits rape and pederasty, but so far there are no clear provisions on bacha bazi. "There is a gap and ambiguity in the laws of Afghanistan regarding bacha bazi and the existing laws do not address the problem sufficiently," the report said. (AFP)

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## Hindus concerned about fate of "Hindu Prayer Room" in Iowa's Grinnell College

**IOWA (TIP):** Because of significant physical changes and construction projects at Grinnell College Iowa, Hindus are worried about the fate of existing dedicated "Hindu Prayer Room" with 24-hour access.

Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement urged College President Dr. Raynard S. Kington and Trustees Chair Patricia Finkelman to ensure that spirituality and worship services of the Hindu students were not affected during this transition period.

Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, pointed out that if murti of Lord Ganesha, reportedly installed by a priest in the existing "Hindu Prayer Room", was moved to a new "Hindu Prayer Room"; administration should provide assistance to the college Hindu students group to reinstall it with proper ancient rituals by a priest.

Moreover, they expected the new "Hindu Prayer Room" be of the same (or bigger) size as the existing one, as it was one of the attractions for Hindu students to come to Grinnell, Rajan Zed noted. "The Scarlet & Black", student newspaper of Grinnell, in a news posted on February 17, however, wrote: "...the new building will feature a significant reduction in size of the Hindu Cultural Suite..."

Zed hoped that Grinnell would continue to recognize the intersection of spirituality and education and respond to the spiritual needs of Hindu students. Dedicated Hindu prayer/meditation room for rituals, quiet reflection, festivals and spiritual exercise helped in the personal growth of Hindu students.

Located in the "Center for Religion, Spirituality and Social Justice" (CRSSJ), which is relocating; the existing "Hindu Prayer Room" is reportedly accessible to students from eight am to 12 midnight every day when the College is in session, but by request, a student can have 24-hour access using their student ID to enter the building.

Meanwhile, Debra Lukehart, Vice President for Communications of Grinnell College, in an email response to Rajan Zed, wrote: "...transition plans have not yet been finalized.... The Hindu Prayer Room that is currently housed in the CRSSJ facility will necessarily move this summer..., but we expect a dedicated space will be identified."

## US, EU rift: Trump White House to rescue Indian-origin CIA agent

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The Trump White House is coming to the rescue of a CIA agent of Indian-origin who is being extradited from Portugal to Italy following a conviction for her role in kidnapping an Egyptian cleric, igniting another flashpoint in the growing rift between the United States and the European Union. Sabrina de Sousa, who was born in Goa and grew up in Mumbai before emigrating first to Portugal and then to the U.S. (she has dual citizenship of both countries), was detained in Lisbon on Monday night, in a case that has dragged on for nearly a decade. Portugal wants to comply with the Italian request for her extradition, following an European arrest warrant, for her alleged role in the 2003 kidnapping of an Egyptian cleric as part of a secret United States rendition program during the Bush administration.

De Sousa, who is now 60, says at the time Osama Moustafa Hassan Nasr, also known as Abu Omar, was kidnapped from the streets of Milan in February 2003, she was actually on a skiing trip with her son in Northern Italy. Nasr was taken to a military base and then moved to Egypt where he was allegedly tortured even as an Italian court convicted him on terrorism-related charges.

But in 2009, another Italian court sentenced 26 Americans, including de Sousa, in absentia of kidnapping and other charges related to the abduction. Most have since been pardoned and not one has done time in prison, but a dual citizenship appears to have put Sousa in European crosshairs. In October 2015, she was detained at Lisbon's airport on a European arrest warrant while attempting to travel to India, where she still has family. She was later released but ordered to remain in Portugal.

On Monday, she was detained for extradition to Italy after Rome press for compliance on an European warrant, even as the Trump administration expressed disappointment and said it would intervene in the matter.

"The US government's view is that this [conviction] was a violation of her diplomatic status," a Senior administration official told Fox News, adding, "We're very concerned and following the case closely... the highest levels of our government are trying to intervene on her behalf." (PTI)

# Meet Lt Gen McMaster, Trump's New National Security Advisor

**WASHINGTON (TIP)**

**H**erbert Raymond "H.R." McMaster has been picked to serve as President Donald Trump's new national security adviser. The active duty 3-star Army general is expected to have a relatively easy confirmation process, as he is widely respected in Congress.

### Here are some interesting things to know about the new NSA

1. Herbert Raymond McMaster, known as "H.R.," graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1984. In the mid-1990s, he worked as an assistant professor of history there.

2. He received a Ph.D. in U.S. history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He turned his thesis into "Dereliction of Duty," a 1997 book critical of the country's leadership during the Vietnam War.

3. McMaster is the first active-duty military officer in the national security adviser role since Gen. Colin Powell held the post during President Ronald Reagan's tenure, and he will remain on active duty.

4. McMaster was among Time magazine's 100 most influential people in 2014.

5. McMaster, served twice in Iraq, is a combat veteran who was awarded a Silver Star in the first Gulf War for his commanding of a tank during the Battle of 73 Easting.

6. He was twice passed over for promotion to general before finally earning the rank; some say his outspokenness and questioning of authority led to the delay in his career advancement.

7. He was a national security affairs fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University from 2002 to 2003.

8. McMaster was critical of the



McMaster (left) with President Trump

Vietnam War and wrote a well-known book in 1997, titled *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam*. He criticized the U.S. government for the Vietnam War and argued that the Joint Chiefs should have pushed back against President Lyndon B. Johnson.

"We must address the question of responsibility for one of the greatest American foreign policy disasters of the twentieth century," he wrote in the book.

9. McMaster served as the director of the Army Capabilities Integration Center before being appointed the national security adviser, the Associated Press reported.

### Reactions on the choice

Arizona Sen. John McCain, who has been critical of other aspects of Trump's administration, called McMaster an "outstanding choice" and a "man of genuine intellect, character, and ability."

"I could not imagine a better, more capable national security team than the one we have right now," said McCain, a

veteran who was held for more than five years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam.

"H.R. is the most bull-headed, nicest, smartest, most ego-free person I think I have ever met," says retired Army Col. John Nagl, who has known and worked with McMaster for more than 20 years.

"He is absolutely dedicated to taking care of America's national interests," adds Nagl. "Razor-sharp, and actually every once in a while even a little bit funny."

As a soldier, Nagl says McMaster is the most demanding trainer of forces, and "the best implementer of both tactics and strategy, and the best military leader, I think, of his generation."

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Devin Nunes congratulated McMaster on his appointment.

"With his history of questioning the status quo and infusing fresh thinking and new approaches into military affairs, Lt Gen McMaster will make a fine addition to the Trump Administration's national security team," Nunes said.

## Donald Trump's immigration plans could impact 3 lakh Indian-Americans

**WASHINGTON (TIP)**

**N**early 300,000 Indian-Americans are likely to be impacted by the Donald Trump administration's sweeping plans that put the nation's 11 million undocumented immigrants at risk of deportation.

President Donald Trump has laid the groundwork for potentially deporting millions of undocumented immigrants+ by issuing new guidance that drastically broadens the ways in which federal immigration laws should be enforced.

"The department no longer will exempt classes or categories of removable aliens from potential enforcement," the department of homeland security (DHS) said in an enforcement memo.

"Department personnel have full authority to arrest or apprehend an alien whom an immigration officer has probable cause to believe is in violation of the immigration laws," it said.

The department of homeland security has issued two enforcement memos, which among other things, tighten deportation of illegal immigrants.

The emphasis is on criminal aliens, though, but opens up the door for others too.

Indian-Americans+ as per unofficial figures account for nearly 300,000 illegal aliens.

According to the memo, the DHS secretary has the authority to apply expedited removal provisions to aliens who have not been admitted or paroled into the US, who are inadmissible, and

who have not been continuously physically present in the US for the two-year period immediately prior to the determination of their inadmissibility, so that such aliens are immediately removed unless the alien is an unaccompanied minor; intends to apply for asylum or has a fear of persecution or torture in their home country, or claims to have lawful immigration status.

The memorandum said when illegal aliens apprehended do not pose a risk of a subsequent illegal entry, returning them to the foreign contiguous territory from which they arrived, pending the outcome of removal proceedings, saves the government detention and adjudication resources for other priority aliens. (PTI)

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# THE SUM OF ALL FEARS - THE REAL DONALD TRUMP AND RUSSIA'S PUTIN

Karan Beri

The undeserving Donald Trump pretty just keeps on proving to America that his presidency was just going to be a pathetic continuation of his presidential campaign, squashing all hopes that he might suddenly come to his senses and start acting like a responsible adult who must now lead a country.

Donald Trump's weird relationship with Russia has been problematic and suspicious from the beginning of his presidential campaign.

Never before had we seen a President praising a leader of another country like the way Trump gushed about Russian leader Vladimir Putin or admitting that our country the United States of America is not so innocent.

Trump continued effort to defend Russia as reports of the country's interference in the U.S. election started to be released. There were red flags everywhere, and they continue to pop up again and again while Trump continuously tried to distract Americans from it with his Twitter temper tantrums about "fake news."

Another concerning report has just been released by CNN, and this makes Trump and his team look even more suspicious than before.

Apparently, the White House has requested that the FBI "publicly knock down media reports about communications between Donald Trump's associates and Russians known to US intelligence during the



Donald Trump's weird relationship with Russia has been problematic and suspicious from the beginning of his presidential campaign

2016 presidential campaign." The report states: "White House officials had sought the help of the bureau and other agencies investigating the Russia matter to say that the reports were wrong and that there had been no contacts, the officials said. The reports of the contacts were first published by The New York Times and CNN on February 14."

That certainly sounds shady - and the FBI knows it. According to the report, the FBI shot down the White

House's request and said no. For Trump's team to be contacting the FBI directly is highly unusual due to "decade-old restrictions on such contacts", according to CNN, and we should definitely be paying attention. Clearly, the Trump administration is extremely worried about what might be uncovered and wanted to take the focus off Trump's ties with Russia by asking the FBI for this ridiculous favor.

You can read the full report at [www.theindianpanorama.com](http://www.theindianpanorama.com)

## Donald Trump reverses Barack Obama ban on private prisons

WASHINGTON (TIP): President Donald Trump's administration on Thursday reinstated the use of private prisons for federal inmates, saying commercial prison operators are needed for the correctional system's "future needs."

Trump's new attorney general, Jeff Sessions, officially rescinded the Barack Obama administration's move last August to phase out the management of prisons by private companies, which Obama's justice department had said proved to be inadequate, more dangerous and not cheaper than government-run prisons.

Sessions said in an order that the move last year had reversed a longstanding policy at the Federal Bureau of Prisons to have private companies involved, "and impaired the bureau's ability to meet the future needs of the federal correctional system."

The Obama move had only affected a small portion of the US prison system: 13 privately run prisons housing just over 22,000 people, or about 11 percent of the federal prison population. Most are foreign nationals, mainly Mexicans incarcerated for immigration violations.

The Trump government has promised a crackdown on crime and illegal immigration, suggesting the prisons bureau could require greater holding capacity in a short time.

The 13 prisons are run by three companies: CoreCivic (known until recently as Corrections Corporation of America), GEO Group and Management and Training Corporation.

The announcement gave a strong after-hours boost to the stock of the two listed firms. Core Civic jumped 3.2 percent, while GEO Group added 1.0 percent.

The move was expected and both companies' stocks had already risen sharply after Trump's election victory on November 8.

## Donald Trump administration lifts transgender bathroom guidance

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Trump administration has ended federal protections for transgender students that instructed schools to allow them to use bathrooms and locker rooms matching their gender identities. Stepping into an emotional national debate, the administration yesterday came down on the side of states' rights, lifting federal guidelines that had been issued by the Obama administration and characterized by Republicans as a legal overreach.

Without the Obama directive, it will be up to states and school districts to interpret federal anti-discrimination law and determine whether students should have access to restrooms in accordance with their expressed gender identity and not just their biological sex. "This is an issue best solved at the state and local level," Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said. "Schools, communities and families can find a" and in many cases have found solutions that protect all students." In a letter to the nation's schools, the Justice and Education departments said the earlier guidance "has given rise to significant litigation regarding school restrooms and locker rooms." The agencies withdrew the guidance to "in order to further and more completely consider the legal issues involved." Anti-bullying safeguards would not be affected by the change, according to the letter.

"All schools must ensure that all students, including LGBT students, are able to learn and thrive in a safe environment," it said. It was not clear what immediate impact the change would have on schools, as a federal judge in Texas put a temporary hold on the Obama guidance soon after it was issued after 13 states sued.

Even without that hold, the guidance carried no force of law. But transgender rights advocates say it was useful and necessary to protect students from discrimination. Opponents argued it was federal overreach and violated the safety and privacy of other students. (PTI)

## Embassy of India hosts Memorial ceremony

WASHINGTON (TIP): Embassy of India organized a Memorial ceremony on February 21 to condole the passing away of two stalwarts of India-US journalism: Mr. Warren Unna (former South Asia Bureau Chief of Washington Post and longtime columnist for the Statesman) and Mr. T.V. Parasarum (veteran Press Trust of India/Indian Express correspondent). The event saw participation of the families and close friends of the departed souls, old India hands among the media and members of the Indian-American community.

Speaking on this occasion, Ambassador of India to the United States Navtej Sarna highlighted the stellar contributions of Mr. Parasarum and Mr. Unna in the field of journalism and promotion of greater empathy and deeper mutual understanding between the people of India and the world. Ambassador also drew attention to the passing away of another legendary journalist last night- Mr. Easwar Sagar [senior correspondent for The Hindu in the United States (1961-78)].



Ambassador of India to the United States Navtej Sarna highlighted the stellar contributions of Mr. Parasarum and Mr. Unna in the field of journalism

Condolence messages penned by Editors of Press Trust of India and The Statesman- two organizations, with which Mr. Parasarum and Mr. Unna were closely associated, were also read

out. The event concluded with fond recollections by families, friends and colleagues of Mr. Unna and Mr. Parasarum.

## Hitler's phone bought for \$243K at auction by Anonymous Bidder

MARYLAND (TIP): A Maryland auction house has reportedly sold Adolf Hitler's personal traveling telephone for \$243,000 to an anonymous bidder on Sunday, Feb 19.

According to Bill Panagopoulos of Alexander Historical Auctions in Chesapeake City the infamous phone was given (presented) to Brig. Sir Ralph Rayner during a visit to Hitler's

Berlin bunker by the occupying Russian officers.

Rayner's son sold the red Siemens phone, which bears Hitler's name and a swastika, is "arguably the most destructive weapon of all time, which sent millions to their deaths" according to a catalog description given by the auction house. On May 5, 1945, a day after

Germans surrendered, Rayner was ordered by Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery to make contact with the Russians in Berlin, according to the auction house.

The Russians offered Rayner a telephone that belonged to Eva Braun, Hitler's bride, but he joked that he preferred red.

"His Russian hosts were pleased to hand him

a red telephone," the auction house said in the catalog. "The telephone offered here."

Rayner told CNN that his father brought the phone and a dog figurine, which was made by slave laborers at Dachau concentration camp, back to their home in Devon in western England.

"I don't want them to be hidden again," he said. "I want them to remind the world of the horrors of war."

## I DRAW INSPIRATION FROM DONKEYS, MODI COUNTERS 'CASTEIST' AKHILESH

**LUCKNOW (TIP):** Countering Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav's 'donkeys from Gujarat' jibe, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Feb 23 (Thursday) said he drew inspiration from the animal.

Modi also said the remark reflected Akhilesh's "casteist" mentality. "You can attack me or the BJP, but why attack the donkeys? Why are you scared of them... they are hundreds of miles away," Modi said, addressing an election rally at Bahraich.

### Spare the animal, says PM

"It shows your (Akhilesh's) casteist mentality... it is discriminating among animals," the prime minister said, adding that the SP regime was known for employing the entire government machinery in tracing a lost buffalo.

"The donkey also inspires me... it remains loyal to its master and keeps on working even if tired, hungry or sick. I perform tasks that the people of the country ask me to do. I work on an empty stomach, without taking leave," he said.

Modi reminded Akhilesh that the previous Congress-led UPA government had released a postal stamp on donkeys. "It (Congress) is your (SP's) alliance partner now," he said.

Akhilesh had on Monday launched a veiled attack on Modi for promoting the donkeys of Gujarat and asked actor Amitabh Bachchan not to endorse them. "Gujarat ke log ab wahan ke gadhon ka bhi prachar karwa rahen hain...kahin gadhon ka prachar hote dekha hai?"

(even the donkeys of Gujarat are being promoted... have you ever seen the promotion of donkeys?), Akhilesh said at an election rally in Raebareli.

"I urge Amitabh Bachchan to stop promoting the donkeys of Gujarat," he said, referring to the ad campaign on the Wild Ass Sanctuary in Gujarat.

## With 82 seats, BJP makes gains in BMC polls, finishes 2 short of Shiv Sena's tally

**MUMBAI (TIP):** The Shiv Sena on Thursday (February 23) emerged as the largest party in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections with 84 seats, but the BJP, which made massive gains, said it could take control of the civic body with the backing of independents.

Shiv Sena activists celebrated earlier in the day as it appeared it was set to take control of the BMC, but at the end it finished with just 84 of the 227 seats. The BJP came close with 82 seats.

Any party or combine will need 114 corporators for a simple majority.

Across Maharashtra, however, the Bharatiya Janata Party made major gains in elections held for municipal bodies. The Shiv Sena victory came in Thane.

BJP Mumbai president Ashish Shelar said the party had bagged 82 seats in Mumbai and had the support of four independents and that it was in a position to claim the crucial post of mayor.

"This is a historic victory for the BJP ... We are only three seats less than the Shiv Sena ... The credit goes to the development agenda of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis," he said.

An aggressive Shiv Sena had snapped ties with the BJP+ ahead of the municipal elections and its leader Uddhav Thackeray had expected the Sena to win at least 100 seats, if not an outright majority.

The BMC, which is also the country's largest municipal body, has an annual budget of Rs 37,000 crore in 2016-17.

The Congress trailed at a distant third in Mumbai, forcing its city unit chief Sanjay Nirupam to accept moral responsibility. He has offered to resign from the post.

The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) of Raj Thackeray, Uddhav's estranged cousin, finished with seven seats. The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) bagged nine seats and the Hyderabad-based Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen three. The BJP's solid gains came in other major cities of Maharashtra. The BJP raced towards victory in the Pune Municipal Corporation, pushing the ruling NCP to a poor second spot. The Shiv Sena, the MNS and the Congress fared poorly in the state's cultural and IT capital.

The contest was close in Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation near Pune, with the ruling NCP leading in 27 seats and the BJP at the second place with 21 seats.

# SYL standoff: INLD bid to dig canal foiled; Abhay Chautala, 72 other leaders jailed

**PATIALA (TIP):** Top leaders of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), including Abhay Chautala, 18 other MLAs and two MPs, were arrested by Punjab Police at Shambhu barrier on the Punjab-Haryana border on Thursday after they, along with several supporters, entered the state to undertake digging of the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal.

They were rounded up for violating prohibitory orders and were sent to Patiala jail in judicial custody till February 27. A case under Section 188 (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered against Abhay and 72 other party leaders, who courted arrest, after the police refused to allow them to enter the state.

The INLD leaders had threatened to march into Punjab along with their shovel-carrying supporters towards the contentious canal, but heavy force was deployed to thwart their attempt. Punjab Police responded by constructing a 10-foot high wall of iron barricades and deployed about 5,000 armed personnel to stop the protesters from marching into the state.

When the INLD workers reached the Punjab-Haryana border at the Shambhu barrier, they were clearly outnumbered by the police. They first tried to climb up the barricades to cross into Punjab, but failed and symbolically started the digging work of the SYL Canal right there. As slogans of SYL being their legal right rent the air, Abhay delivered a short speech. He accused the Centre of being biased against Haryana, saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not implementing the court decision on the SYL canal.

After his speech was over, Abhay and his supporters turned to go back, but suddenly stopped to have a brief consultation with party leaders. He then changed his mind and decided to court arrest by entering Punjab. Police officials held brief parleys with the protesters before making an announcement on loudspeaker that whosoever enters Punjab will be arrested for breaching the prohibitory orders. Abhay and other party leaders did not resist the arrest and were taken to the Shambhu Serai where a temporary control room of Punjab Police had been set up.



Punjab police arrest INLD Leader Abhay Chautala along with other party workers at Shambhu Barrier near Ambala in Haryana on Thursday; and (below) symbolic digging of the SYL Canal by INLD supporters Photo courtesy: HT



After his arrest, Abhay warned that his party would not allow any Punjab leader who is opposed to the SYL Canal to travel through Haryana.

Earlier in the morning, INLD supporters started gathering at the new grain market in Ambala City for the "Jal Yudh Sammelan". Though the number of workers at the venue was modest at the start, it began to swell rapidly after 12.30pm.

The venue was packed by the time Abhay arrived. After a quick round of speeches, they started marching on National Highway-1 (also known as GT Road) towards the Punjab border, about 2km from the rally spot. The party leaders were ferried in tractor-trailers. Though Haryana Police had made heavy bandobust, they did little to stop

protesters from entering Punjab.

No traffic was allowed on the highway from Rajpura onwards and traffic to Ambala was diverted through Sirhind via Landran. They were stopped by Punjab Police which had deployed 10 companies of paramilitary, anti-riot squads at all entry points, besides using a helicopter and drones to keep vigil to avert any untoward situation, director general of police (DGP law and order) Hardeep Dhillon, along with inspector general, Patiala, B Chandra Sekhar, was in command of the operation.

Meanwhile, Punjab Police also didn't allow All India Sikh Students Federation and Bains brothers'-led Lok Insaaf Party workers to reach the Punjab-Haryana border as they had announced to take the INLD head-on. Source: HT

## Kejriwal sets eyes on three BJP-ruled states

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) national convener and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has called a meeting of state in charges on Saturday to discuss the party's national plan post-Punjab and Goa elections.

AAP will focus on the assembly elections in Gujarat later this year and Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh next year, party sources said. The Aam Aadmi Party launched a multi-pronged attack against the BJP accusing it of engineering violence at Delhi's Ramjas

college to communally charge the Uttar Pradesh election and its governments in Gujarat and Chhattisgarh for unleashing police brutalities on farmers and tribals.

On a day the party's highest decision making body — the political affairs committee — met to firm up the plan, AAP leaders in Delhi also raked up the issue of an alleged spy racket in MP in which a local BJP leader was arrested.

Party leader Kumar Vishwas accused the BJP along with its affiliate, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad —

Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh's student wing, of fomenting violence at Delhi University in the last two days.

"ABVP's actions in Delhi University are triggered by the BJP's impending defeat in UP," Vishwas said. "They are trying to communalise the election," he added. Party leader Gopal Rai, who is in charge of Gujarat, MP and Chhattisgarh led a delegation of farmers from Gandhinagar and tribals in Bastar to the National Human Rights Commission against alleged police atrocities.

# 1984 anti-Sikh riots: Delhi HC asks for timings of FIRs against Sajjan Kumar

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Delhi high court on Thursday (Feb 23) asked the special investigation team (SIT) probing the 1984 anti-Sikh riots to inform it about the timing of each first information report (FIR) registered against Congress leader Sajjan Kumar for the alleged killings.

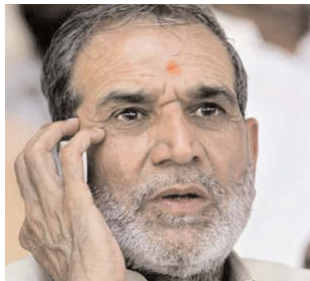
"You (SIT) must have investigated the cases involving the respondent (Kumar) here. Therefore, you must be aware of the timings of FIR lodged in connection with the cases against him (Kumar) and others," Justice S P Garg said.

The timings of each FIR were called for as Kumar is an accused in several anti-Sikh riot cases and the court had expressed concern on how a person could be involved in each one of them. It also directed the SIT to produce the copy of a trial court judgment by which Kumar was acquitted of all charges.

The court also directed the investigating team to show the copy of chargesheet filed against Kumar and others in connection with the killings on people in 1984. It said the documents shall be produced on March 14, the next date of hearing. The directions were issued to the agency after it failed to inform the court about the timing of the two FIRs out of 10, registered against the Congress leader.

Additional solicitor general (ASG) Sanjay Jain, appearing for the SIT, informed the court that 10 FIRs were registered in Delhi against Kumar after the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

He submitted before the court that the timing in each of the FIRs were different, which pointed towards the involvement of the Congress leader.



Sajjan Kumar

The ASG made the submission during hearing of its application seeking cancellation of the anticipatory bail granted by the trial court on December 21 last year in a case of killing of three Sikhs.

While granting relief to the former MP on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh and a surety of the like amount, the trial court had also asked him not leave the country without the court's permission and to cooperate in the probe.

The court was informed that the cases filed against Kumar falling under the jurisdiction of Janakpuri and Vikaspuri police stations in west Delhi, were lodged after delay of over 30 years as the complainant was "scared" to name the accused due to his "powerful" position. The ASG had submitted that since his name had cropped up during the SIT probe, he needs to be interrogated and his custody is also necessary as he has to be confronted with the evidence in the matter.

He had said that as per complainant by one Harvinder Singh on the fateful day at around 11am, Kumar was seen leading a mob. The complaint in Janakpuri pertains to the killing of two Sikhs — Sohan Singh and his son-in-law Avtar Singh — on November 1, 1984. The other relates to Gurcharan Singh who was burnt on November 2, 1984, in the jurisdiction of Vikaspuri

## '84 RIOTS WITNESS SAYS WILL TAKE LIE-DETECTION TEST IF TYTLER GOES FOR IT

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Arms dealer Abhishek Verma on Thursday said he was ready for a lie-detection test in a 1984 anti-Sikh riots case if Congress leader Jagdish Tytler, given a clean chit by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for his alleged role, also agreed to it.

Verma, who apprehends threat to his life and to his family, told a city court that he had no objection in undergoing the polygraph test if he was provided with adequate security and the process was videographed.

Tytler has objected to the test saying the CBI has not given any reason for conducting it and its plea for conducting it was "gross misuse of law" and filed with "mala fide intention".

Additional chief metropolitan magistrate Shivali Sharma took on record the reply filed by Verma and listed CBI's plea seeking to conduct the lie-detection test of Tytler and Verma on March 16 for hearing arguments.

Advocate Maninder Singh, who appeared for Verma, said he had been made a witness by the CBI in the case and it would be proper if the agency records his statement before a magistrate under Section 164 Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) as he would not be able to retract from it.

"If Tytler agrees for the test, I have no objection on it. But if I am going for the test, adequate security should be provided to me and my family as I am under threat. Asking me for the lie-detection test is more of pointing fingers at me rather than the accused. I am a witness and I am coming forward to help the prosecution," Verma submitted.

Giving conditional consent, the witness' counsel said the questions put to Verma during the test should be related to this case only and not to any other case in which he has been made accused by the agency. The CBI prosecutor, however, said the consent should be unconditional and there should not be any condition.

During the hearing, senior advocate HS Phoolka, who represented riot victims, said keeping in mind the background of the case, the witness should be provided adequate security.

On Verma's plea seeking protection, the CBI told the court it had forwarded the complaint to Delhi Police.

The case pertains to riots at Gurdwara Pulbangash in north Delhi where three people were killed on November 1, 1984, a day after the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Source: PTI

police station. As per the complaint, Gurcharan, who was half burnt, remained bedridden for 29 years. He died three years ago.

The SIT, which was set up in February 2015 on the

direction of the Union ministry of home affairs to reinvestigate the closed case, said it filed a detailed status report of the ongoing investigation before the trial court.

Source: PTI

## INDIA MAY HAVE TO WAIT LONG TO GET MALLYA BACK

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** With the UK legal system providing enough safeguards to industrialist Vijay Mallya take advantage of, India may have to wait long to get him extradited.

Though India and the UK have a bilateral Extradition Treaty in place since 1993, it is unlikely to help New Delhi in expediting the process.

The UK recently made it clear that it would strictly go by its Extradition Act, 2003, while determining if Mallya should be sent back.

Just days after New Delhi formally requested London to extradite Mallya to stand trial in loan default and money laundering cases, he was seen at Silverstone in the UK at the launch of a new racing car by his Formula One team — Sahara Force India.

Media reports quoted Mallya saying that he felt safe in the UK, notwithstanding India's attempts to extradite him.

A source in New Delhi said what Mallya must be relying upon was the complexity of the UK's legal system, which would make it difficult to get him back.

### Legal process

The Extradition Act, 2003, of the UK puts the nations requesting the British government for extradition of fugitives into two categories — Category 1 for members of the European Union and Category 2 for India and other nations which has an extradition arrangement with it.

A team of British government officials met their counterparts in the Indian government here on Monday and Tuesday and explained the complexities of the UK legal system.

Another source said though UK officials agreed to act fast on India's request to extradite Mallya and 15 other fugitives, they underlined that little could be done to speed up the judicial process.

## No more security stamp on fliers' hand baggage

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** It will be a bit more easy for fliers boarding a plane at seven airports, including Bengaluru and Delhi, with authorities doing away with the mandatory security stamp on hand baggages.

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) issued a circular on Thursday saying the system of putting security stamp on hand baggage tags would be immediately done away with at seven airports. The airports are Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Cochin. "Airport operator shall ensure that the requisite monitoring system is maintained all through at PESC (Pre-embarkation Security Check) points," the BCAS said.

"It is pertinent to mention that the trial run for the same has already been successfully conducted in two phases at these airports after putting in place requisite surveillance and monitoring system," it said adding the feedback from the trial run has been analysed and a positive response has been recorded. As per rules, all cabin baggage must carry a tag which is stamped by security personnel once the baggage goes through the security scanner. Many a time, it has caused trouble for fliers as loss of tags pose a problem before boarding a flight.

## Varun removed as BJP's star campaigner in UP polls

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** BJP MP Varun Gandhi is conspicuous by his absence in the Uttar Pradesh polls. His cold war with party chief Amit Shah has left him out of the list of star campaigners yet again.

Varun has not visited his own Lok Sabha constituency of Sultanpur after the announcement of the Assembly poll schedule, despite figuring in the party's second list of campaigners for the third and fourth phase of polling; his constituency goes to polls on Monday.

In a move that has caused great embarrassment to the party, Varun delivered a lecture in Indore on Tuesday, where he questioned the Modi government's outreach to farmers. He said the farmers continue to commit suicide.

He also criticised the government's inability to do something substantial about absconding loan defaulter Vijay Mallya.

## 3 soldiers killed in J&K ambush, 2 officers injured

**SRINAGAR (TIP):** Three soldiers and a woman were killed and four others, including two Army officers, wounded in an ambush on an Army patrol in Jammu & Kashmir's Shopian district early on Thursday. Hizbul Mujahideen, the pro-Pakistan terror group headed by Syed Salahuddin, claimed responsibility for the attack.

Following intelligence inputs, a cordon-and-search operation was launched by the Army's anti-terror squad, 44 Rashtriya Rifles, at Kungnoo, Shopian, on Thursday.

Around 2.15am, the patrol was returning in a private taxi after terminating the operation without any arrest or recovery when terrorists ambushed their vehicle from two sides at Mulu Chitragam, a village. Two officers, a lieutenant colonel and a major, were injured in the firefight. The wounded soldiers are in a critical condition. An elderly woman, Taja Begum, was killed in the crossfire after being hit by a stray bullet while she was looking out of the window of her house.

The soldiers who died are Lance Naik

Ghulam Mohiuddin from Bijbehara, Anantnag, Sreejith MJ from Palakkad, Kerala, and Sepoy Vikas Singh Gurjar from Karouli, Rajasthan.

Hizbul Mujahideen released a video on the internet purportedly showing a group of armed terrorists in combat fatigues, led by commander Zakir Mosa — who replaced Burhan Wani after he was killed in an encounter with security forces in July 2016 — dancing to music around a bonfire and celebrating the "successful" attack on the Army patrol.

# No Evidence of Aloe Vera Found in the Aloe Vera at Wal-Mart, CVS

## WAL-MART, TARGET, CVS SELL ALOE WITHOUT APPEARANCE OF PLANT-BLOOMBERG REPORT

Samples of store-brand aloe gel purchased at national retailers Wal-Mart, Target and CVS showed no indication of the plant in various lab tests. The products all listed aloe barbadensis leaf juice - another name for aloe vera - as either the No. 1 ingredient or No. 2 after water.

There's no watchdog assuring that aloe products are what they say they are. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration doesn't approve cosmetics before they're sold and has never levied a fine for selling fake aloe. That means suppliers are on an honor system, even as the total U.S. market for aloe products, including drinks and vitamins, has grown 11 percent in the past year to \$146 million, according to Chicago-based market researcher SPINS LLC.

"You have to be very careful when you select and use aloe products," said Tod Cooperman, president of White Plains, New York-based ConsumerLab.com, which has done aloe testing.

Aloe's three chemical markers - acemannan, malic acid and glucose - were absent in the tests for Wal-Mart, Target and CVS products conducted by a lab hired by Bloomberg News. The three samples contained a cheaper element called maltodextrin, a sugar sometimes used to imitate aloe. The gel that's sold at another retailer, Walgreens, contained one marker, malic acid, but not the other two. That means the presence of aloe can't be confirmed or ruled out, said Ken Jones, an independent industry consultant based in Chapala, Mexico.

Target Corp. declined to comment. Spokesmen for Wal-Mart Stores Inc., CVS Health Corp. and Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc. said their suppliers confirmed to them that their products were authentic. The four retailers have 23,000 outlets between them.

The four gels that Bloomberg had analyzed were Wal-Mart's Equate Aloe After Sun Gel with pure aloe vera; Target's Up & Up Aloe Vera Gel with pure aloe vera; CVS Aftersun Aloe Vera Moisturizing Gel; and Walgreens Alcohol Free Aloe Vera Body Gel. The lab that did the testing requested anonymity to preserve its business relationships.

The tests used a technique called nuclear magnetic resonance. It found additives such as maltodextrin and other ingredients, like triethanolamine, an emulsifier. In all the samples, lactic acid, a component that indicates degraded aloe vera, was absent.

Fruit of the Earth, a Fort Worth, Texas-based aloe brand founded in 1980, said it made the gels for Wal-Mart, Target and Walgreens. Fruit of the Earth said its aloe supplier was Ormond Beach, Florida-based Concentrated Aloe Corp., which said it uses fair trade, organic aloe that's farmed and processed in Guatemala.

Both companies disputed Bloomberg's findings.

### Raw Ingredients

"We've been in the business a long time and we know where the raw ingredients come from," John Dondrea, Fruit of the Earth's general counsel, said in a telephone interview. "We stand behind our products."

Tim Meadows, president of Concentrated Aloe Corp., said that nuclear magnetic resonance isn't reliable for cosmetics because the presence of multiple ingredients can cause interference and there's no way to test for aloe in finished products. He added that maltodextrin isn't an adulterant because it can be used in the drying process, and while some ways of processing aloe remove acemannan, that doesn't mean the aloe isn't real, he said.

"Acemannan has been misinterpreted," Meadows said. "The cosmetics industry requires highly processed aloe. How that affects acemannan is anybody's guess."

Though it's true that nuclear magnetic resonance isn't a test that's designed to study aloe vera in cosmetics, the lab results suggest that the plant "is not a major component" of the products, said James Neal-Kababick, director of Flora Research Labs in Grants Pass, Oregon, which tests and researches natural products. Jones, the consultant who also reviewed some of the tests, said he didn't see evidence of aloe or interfering substances.



The aloe vera gel many Americans buy to soothe damaged skin contains no evidence of aloe vera at all, says a Bloomberg report

The CVS aloe gel was made by Product Quest Manufacturing LLC. The Daytona Beach, Florida-based firm declined to comment or identify its supplier.

### Lawsuits Filed

Several law firms, including Bloomfield Hills, Michigan-based Barbat, Mansour & Suci PLLC, have filed lawsuits against the four retailers after separate testing failed to find aloe in the companies' private-label products. They're seeking class-action status and restitution for all the customers who they say were misled.

"No reasonable person would have purchased or used the products if they knew the products did not contain any aloe vera," attorneys wrote in a complaint filed in September in Illinois on behalf of plaintiffs represented by 10 law firms.

Fruit of the Earth, Wal-Mart, Target, CVS and Walgreens denied the allegations.

Independently, ConsumerLab.com said it had Fruit of the Earth brand Aloe Vera 100% Gel tested using nuclear magnetic resonance and found no evidence of aloe, while a competing brand, Aubrey Organics, did contain the markers that indicate aloe. ConsumerLab said it tested a dozen aloe products, including pills and juices, and just half the items appeared to meet the claims on their labels.

### Beneficial Properties

Acemannan is thought to give the plant its beneficial properties, said Jane Wilson, executive director of the International Aloe Science Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, which represents the industry.

Jesper Hummeluhr, founder of Copenhagen-based cosmetics maker Aloe Vera Group APS, said that if acemannan isn't detected, the aloe was degraded during the manufacturing process or the product contains no aloe. He's been making aloe products since 1989.

"What you have there is not aloe," said Hummeluhr, who reviewed some of the results without being told the name of the brands. "It could be a lot of water and a little bit of aloe added."

### Reliability Questioned

Acemannan is as much as 15 percent of aloe's makeup. Levels below 0.01 percent of dry weight won't register in the tests. Fruit of the Earth's Dondrea declined to say how much aloe is in the firm's gels, citing proprietary formulations.

Aloe vera is a succulent farmed in hot climates like Texas and Mexico. Its spiky leaves contain a clear goo that people have used as a topical ointment to treat burns and other skin problems for millennia. Known as the "plant of immortality" in ancient Egypt, it was depicted on stone carvings 6,000 years

ago, a burial gift for pharaohs, and it's been used as a folk remedy for conditions from diabetes to epilepsy, according to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health.

Concerns over imitation aloe aren't new. The industry created the International Aloe Science Council in the 1980s as more and more products hit store shelves that contained little or no aloe, said Wilson, the group's executive director. Maltodextrin, a light-colored powder that looks like aloe powder and is used as a food additive, was a common filler or substitute. Maltodextrin is cheaper than aloe, Wilson said.

Jeff Barrie, a Keene, New Hampshire-based sales manager at AloeCorp, one of the biggest suppliers of raw aloe powder, said he's seen competitors beat his lowest prices by half. That means they're not selling aloe, he said. Aloe powder can cost as much as \$240 a kilogram, he said, while the same amount of maltodextrin can cost a few dollars.

Making just 1 kilogram of aloe powder, the ingredient used in finished goods like gels and drinks, requires 400 kilos (882 pounds) of aloe leaves, Barrie said. The process involves removing rinds from the leaves and dehydrating the remaining aloe into a powder form.

"Aloe is all harvested by hand," Barrie said. "It's an involved process and it's not cheap."

There's no conclusive body of scientific research affirming aloe's healing properties. While some studies have shown a benefit for burns and cuts, "there's nothing to hang your hat on" in terms of clear evidence, partly because there hasn't been enough research, said D. Craig Hopp, a program director at the National Center for Complementary and Integrated Health in Bethesda, Maryland.

### Loving Aloe

"There's a lot of people that swear by aloe and love it, and if you put it in your product, you'll sell more of it whether it's a cream or a lotion for sunburns," said Gary Shreeve, a vice president of global operations at Scottsdale, Arizona-based Forever Living Products, which sells aloe certified by the International Aloe Science Council.

Some people are old school about aloe. Rather than buying aloe products, they just keep the succulent around the house.

Meredith Zielke, a documentary filmmaker in Chicago, is one of many aloe lovers who have a simple remedy. She keeps the plant in her home to cool her skin when her Lyme disease acts up. And it works, she said.

"I like just having it at home to snip it from there," Zielke said. "I just like the comfort and the knowledge of having a plant in your house that can actually heal you."

(Source: Bloomberg)





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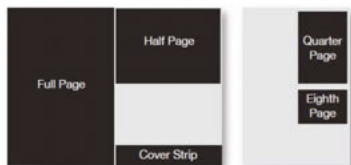
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## MOVIE REVIEW

# Running Shaadi



CAST: Amit Sadh, Taapsee Pannu, Arsh Bajwa

DIRECTION: Amit Roy

GENRE: Romantic Comedy

DURATION: 1 hour 55 minutes

**STORY :** Fresh out of a job, Ram Bharose (Amit Sadh), his friend Cyber (Arsh Bajwa) and his ex-employer's daughter Nimmi (Taapsee Pannu) start a matrimony service to help couples elope. Will he find himself as a client some day??

**REVIEW :** Growing up, we've all heard stories about couples eloping. While we don't hear many elopement tales anymore, at least in big cities, it still is a phenomenon in smaller towns. Mix that with technology and you have Running Shaadi, where writer Navjot Gulati and director Amit Roy pen a tight little romcom.

And it's not just about eloping. The egalitarian relationship that the leading pair develops is commendable yet believable. They talk about her menstrual cycle, discuss premarital sex, abortions and other 'sensitive' topics casually, like how most young people do. A headstrong girl and a wild child at heart, Nimmy is totally in on Bharose's latest, risky business venture -- a matrimonial website that helps couples elope. Until the first half, the film convinces you about their absurd business concept. But it's in the second half that the film really takes off and takes you along for a joyride. The twists, albeit expected, are entertaining and the comedy is very relevant; there's always a chuckle around. The characters are believable and face realistic dilemmas in their lives.

The real fun parts, though, are that of the supporting cast. Be it Cyber with his subdued, subtle role as a nerdy sidekick, or Bharose's English spouting Bihari uncle played by Brijendra Kala, or his to-be brother-in-law and his family or the many couples who the trio help elope -- they are all hilarious. The story is funny and irreverent and the performances up to the mark. The music never gets in the way of the story and the length, at 1 hour 55 minutes, is just right. While the constant beeping out of the .com at the end of the title is a tad irritating, you can let that slide considering the film was stuck in limbo for three years.

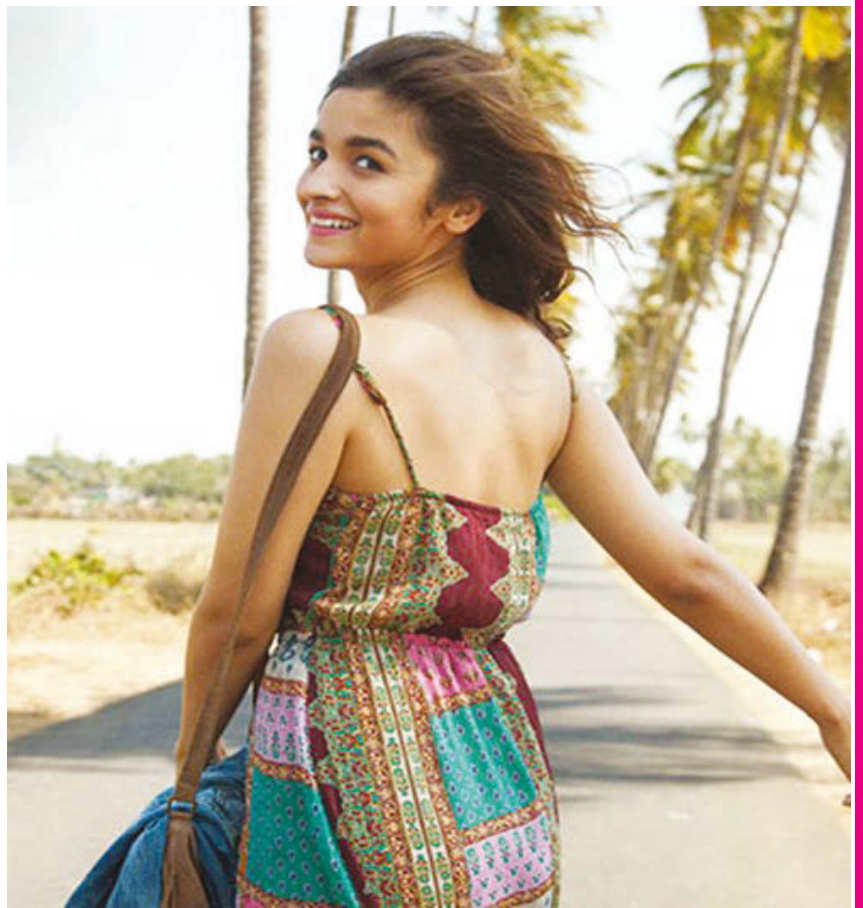
While there may not be much of a Shaadi, there's definitely a lot of fun running around that you may want to check out.

# ALIA BHATT TO REPLACE KAREENA IN 'SADMA' REMAKE?

**A**lia Bhatt is surely going places and by that, we don't mean her Dream Team tour that took her to some enviable foreign locations. The actress has impressed and surprised us with her fabulous acting prowess time and again, and it seems that she might just add another feather to her cap by bagging the lead role in the remake of a yesteryear classic, 'Sadma'. Sridevi had played the lead role in the original and Kareena Kapoor Khan was to reprise her role in the remake.

However, owing to her pregnancy and the fact that she is in her second trimester, Kareena won't be a part of the film any more. For those who haven't seen the original classic yet, Sridevi had done a brilliant job and considering it's an emotionally draining and mentally exhausting role, it could have taken toll on Kareena's health. What remains to be seen is who would reprise Kamal Haasan's role in the remake.

The legendary actor had done an outstanding job as he played the character of a caretaker of Sridevi, who, after an accident, loses her memory and becomes childlike until she regains her memory in the climax only to forget who Kamal Haasan was.



# PARINEETI CHOPRA BECOMES A CERTIFIED SCUBA DIVER



**P**arineeti Chopra is yet to begin work on Rohit Shetty's 'Golmaal 4' but before that she is trying her hand at scuba diving. In fact, the actress is now a certified scuba diver.

According to reports, Parineeti can

now dive up to 40 meters or about 120 feet in open sea. Talking about her experience, she said that diving is an exhilarating experience and seeing the underwater flora and fauna especially sharks is surreal. Pari also added that

her next target is to try scuba diving at night and that she wants to practice diving in heavy currents.

On the professional front, she is currently shooting for 'Meri Pyaari Bindu' with Ayushmann Khurrana.

# CHARLIZE THERON JOINS 'NEED TO KNOW'

Actress Charlize Theron has been roped in to produce and star in the upcoming spy thriller 'Need to Know'.

The film is based on the upcoming novel of the same name by Karen Cleveland, who has worked as a CIA analyst.

The yet-to-be published book is about a wife and mother, who works as a CIA analyst and who discovers a threat to herself and her family while searching for a Russian sleeper cell in the US.

Theron will produce the project with Beth Kono and A.J. Dix through their Denver & Delilah Films production company.

Theron's upcoming films include 'The Fate of the Furious' and 'The Coldest City'.  
*Source: IANS*



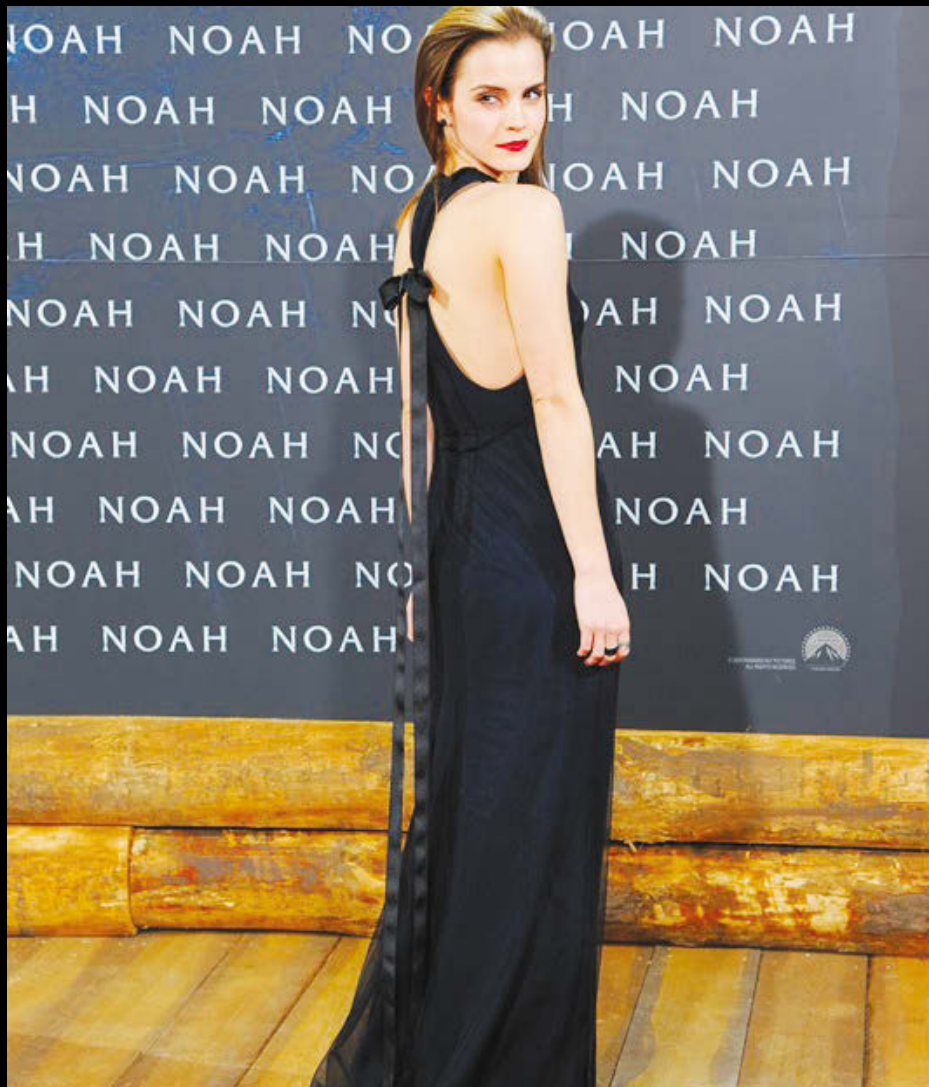
# CRITICISM HAS TOUGHENED ME UP: EMMA WATSON

Emma Watson has said constant scrutiny that comes along with fame has made her a stronger person. The 26-year-old actress said she has spent most of her life under the arc lights and has realised that she is a different individual today.

"There is a level of criticism that comes with being an actress and a public figure, which I expect but once you take a stance on something like feminism, that's a completely different ball game. It really toughened me up," Emma said.

The 'Beauty and the Beast' actress added she is no expert on feminism and feels she has a long way to go. Emma continued, "I am not sure if I deserve all the respect I get yet, but I'm working on it."

*Source: TOI*



## MOVIE REVIEW

# Jackie



CAST: Natalie Portman, Billy Crudup, Peter Sarsgaard, John Hurt

DIRECTION: Pablo Larraín

GENRE: Biography

DURATION: 1 hour 40 minutes

STORY: The movie looks at the days in the life of Jacqueline Kennedy right after the assassination of her husband, the American President John F Kennedy.

REVIEW: It starts out with a meeting between an unnamed journalist (Billy Crudup) and Jacqueline Kennedy (Natalie Portman), when the former was summoned by her to write the final word on her husband's legacy, given the loose talk around him. She dictates the interview and compares the slain Kennedy's short-lived presidency to the legendary Camelot. The movie shows how Jacqueline made possible, that even today, the legacy of JFK stands, even if it may not be true. It shows the public and the private face of Jacqueline, the most famous first lady ever. While the story of JFK's assassination and the aftermath is famous, Larraín makes sure the public can see the workings of her mind.

The unusual way that the film is shot — with extreme close-ups and sixties style filters, help present a sense of that era. Portman deserves all the accolades that may come her way for her portrayal, which is the best one till date, of Jacqueline. At the start, it may be unsettling and even awkward to watch how Natalie Portman mouths her dialogues in a carefully crafted mid-Atlantic accent, or how she carries herself with an unsure grace in a TV video showing the first lady giving a guided tour of the White House to the American public. But as the movie continues, and you see Jacqueline in the time of her grief, you realise how Portman has owned the character.

A disturbingly intimate portrayal of Jacqueline Kennedy, 'Jackie' is a film that unmask her in such a tender yet objective manner; you feel like an intruder who is tailing the first lady of America and a widow in her most trying time. Still, this is when director Pablo Larraín shows you just what Jacqueline was made of.

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# Sixth mass extinction? Two-thirds of wildlife may be gone by 2020: WWF

More than two thirds of the world's wildlife could be gone by the end of the decade if action isn't taken soon, a new report from the World Wildlife Fund revealed on Thursday.

Since 1970, there has already been a 58% overall decline in the numbers of fish, mammals, birds and reptiles worldwide, according to the WWF's latest bi-annual Living Planet Index.

If accurate, that means wildlife across the globe is vanishing at a rate of 2% a year.

"This is definitely human impact, we're in the sixth mass extinction. There's only been five before this and we're definitely in the sixth," WWF conservation scientist Martin Taylor told CNN.

Plastic pollution has rapidly accelerated, with eight million tons entering the marine environment each year. This figure is set to rise as production of the material is set to double over the next 20 years.

Drowning in plastic - Plastic pollution has rapidly accelerated, with eight million tons entering the marine environment each year, according to scientists. This figure is set to rise as production of the material is set to double over the next 20 years.

Burning problem - In many of the worst affected countries such as China and the Philippines, local people lack the infrastructure to properly dispose of plastic waste. In some cases they burn it, releasing dangerous gases associated with cancer.

Plastic people - There are also concerns that people are consuming dangerous plastic through contaminated fish. A recent survey, published in Scientific Reports journal, revealed that a quarter of market fish in Indonesia and California contain plastic.

There are different ideas about how to address the crisis. The U.S. National and Atmospheric Association favors

beach cleaning and public education at local level, combined with challenging policymakers and plastic producers to promote conservation.

Recycling efforts are becoming more creative. Plastic waste is now converted into building materials in Cameroon and the Philippines. Charging for plastic bags and bottles and bags has helped to reduce waste.

Dutch entrepreneur Boyan Slat has a more ambitious vision. The 21-year-old has designed a huge trash-eating machine that he intends to deploy at the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. He believes it can remove 99% of the debris within 30 years.

Some researchers estimate there will be more plastic than fish in our oceans by the year 2050.

The South Pacific island of Tuvalu should be a model of sustainability. But plastic pollution is having a devastating effect on the formerly pristine environment, and it may be responsible for the declining health of many islanders.

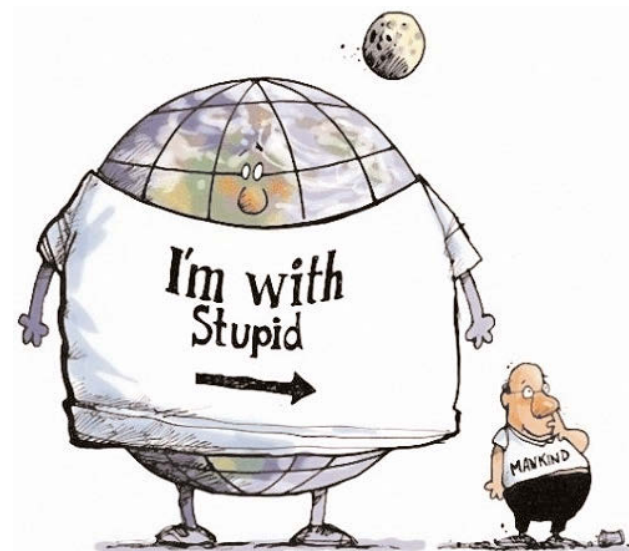
British producer Jo Ruxton and her team have spent four years documenting the effects of plastic pollution for the upcoming documentary "A Plastic Ocean." She hopes the film will challenge people and societies to stop thinking of the material as disposable.

The crew visited dozens of sites from the Arctic to the Mediterranean and Hawaii, without ever finding a plastic-free location. The average square kilometer of ocean contains around 20,000 microplastic pieces.

The film documents the effects of plastic on marine life. More than one million seabirds are estimated to be killed every year through entanglement and ingestion, often mistaking plastic for food.

Endangered species such as sea turtles could be driven to extinction by the plastic plague.

Among the species mentioned in the report are elephants, whose numbers have fallen by a fifth in ten



years, as well as sharks and rays, a third of whom face extinction from overfishing.

Taylor said the deaths of animals and fish across the globe weren't just a threat to biodiversity but could see humanity threatened as well.

"Governments (need) to take action to halt the slow death of the planet because it isn't just affecting wild species it's affecting us too. This is a threat to our future as a species, what we're doing to the planet," he said.

"We only have one planet if we screw it up then we're gone."

To prevent a sixth mass extinction, Taylor said governments must take immediate action to cut down on emissions and habitat destruction.

"There's a lot people can do even if they're not wealthy or living in wealthy countries, such as using renewable energy, looking for certified sustainable products and most particularly talking to your members of parliament ... saying you want strong environmental laws," he said.

The report was compiled by monitoring trends in 14,152 populations of 3,706 different species of vertebrates, including fish, mammals and birds, across the world.

(Source: CNN)



## Running Liquor Store In Lindenhurst, Long Island Owner Moving to Texas



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## Britain appoints first woman Scotland Yard chief in 188 years

**LONDON (TIP):** Cressida Dick was named the new commissioner of London's Metropolitan Police on Feb 22, the first woman to lead Scotland Yard in its 188-year history.

Dick, a former assistant commissioner of the force, succeeds Bernard Hogan-Howe, who is stepping down next week. The Met is Britain's biggest and oldest police force, with 43,000 officers. Home secretary Amber Rudd said that 56-year-old Dick "has a clear vision for the future of the Metropolitan Police and an understanding of the diverse range of communities it serves". Dick, who left the police force in 2015 to work at the foreign office, led the security operation for the 2012 London Olympics and was highly regarded by many Scotland Yard peers.

She had drawn criticism for commanding an operation after the July 2005 London bombings in which a Brazilian man, Jean Charles de Menezes, was shot after being mistaken for a suicide bomber. A jury cleared Dick of blame but relatives of de Menezes had called for her not to be given the top job at Scotland Yard.

The family of de Menezes said they had "serious concerns" about the appointment. "The message is that police officers can act with impunity," they said.

## Japan Crown Prince vows to follow father's footsteps

**TOKYO (TIP):** Japan's Crown Prince Naruhito has marked his 57th birthday with a pledge to follow in his father's footsteps as symbol of the nation when his father's abdication wish is realized.

Naruhito is first in line to Japan's Chrysanthemum throne and will succeed Emperor Akihito, now 83.

Akihito last August expressed his apparent wish to abdicate, citing concerns his age and health may start limiting his ability to fulfil his duties as emperor.

The government is currently discussing a special law to allow Akihito to abdicate.

Naruhito said in his birthday remarks, issued Thursday, that he is open to discussing ways to have the imperial succession fit the modern era. (AP)

## Kim autopsy 'illegal and immoral': North Korean state media

**SEOUL (TIP):** Pyongyang's state media on Thursday blasted Malaysia for an "illegal and immoral" autopsy on a man believed to be the half-brother of North Korea's leader, breaking a 10-day silence on the airport assassination.

"Malaysia is obliged to hand his body to the DPRK (North Korea) side as it made an autopsy and forensic examination of it in an illegal and immoral manner", the North's Korean Jurists Committee said, in comments carried by KCNA. Malaysia has not released the corpse "under the absurd pretext" that it needs a DNA sample from the dead man's family.

"This proves that the Malaysian side is going to politicize the transfer of the body in utter disregard of international law and morality and thus attain a sinister purpose", it said.

South Korea said Sunday that Seoul is certain that the dead man is leader Kim Jong-Un's estranged half-brother Kim Jong-Nam, and that Malaysia's investigation shows Pyongyang was behind the assassination.

The North's statement -- its first mention of the death of a North Korean, but one which did not at any point name the dead man -- repeated Pyongyang's demand for a joint investigation, stressing it was ready to dispatch a delegation of its jurists. (AFP)

# 3,50,000 children trapped in west Mosul: Save the Children

**LONDON (TIP)**

**A**round 350,000 children are trapped in western Mosul, Save the Children warned on Sunday as Iraqi forces launched a fresh offensive on jihadists defending the strategic city.

"Iraqi forces and their allies, including the US and UK, must do everything in their power to protect children and their families from harm, and avoid civilian buildings like schools and hospitals as they push deeper into the city," said the London-based charity's Iraq country director, Maurizio Crivallero.

He warned that escape is not an option for most families, who risk summary execution by fighters from the Islamic State group, sniper fire and landmines -- but they are also running out of food, water and medicine.

"This is the grim choice for children in western Mosul right now: bombs, crossfire and hunger if they stay -- or execution and snipers if they try to run," Crivallero said in a statement.

He added: "Safe escape routes for civilians must also be established as soon as possible."



The offensive to retake Mosul's west bank that began on Sunday could be the most brutal fighting yet in a four-month-old operation on Iraq's second city, where the leader of the Islamic State group declared a "caliphate" in 2014.

The Iraqi government launched an offensive to reconquer Mosul on October 17, and declared east Mosul "fully liberated" on January 24.

Federal forces now face what was always one of the toughest challenges --

the narrow streets of the Old City in Mosul's west bank, which are impassable for many military vehicles.

Save the Children warned that "the impact of artillery and other explosive weaponry in those narrow, densely-populated streets is likely to be more deadly and indiscriminate than anything we have seen in the conflict so far". The 350,000 figure relates to people under the age of 18, a charity spokesperson confirmed. (AFP)

## UNICEF, French president urge protection for children of war

**PARIS (TIP)**

**C**hild soldiers, underage sex slaves, orphaned adolescent refugees -- France's president and UNICEF are urging the international community to do more to protect the more than 200 million children of today's conflict zones.

"The situation is as urgent as ever," French President Francois Hollande pleaded as he opened a conference in Paris on Tuesday with representatives from 80 countries, decrying "the nightmare that killed these children's innocence."

Organizers want coordinated efforts to liberate and re-integrate thousands of child soldiers from Sudan to Somalia, and thousands of girls forced into wedlock by militants from Nigeria to Afghanistan.

"Those who harm these children are harming what is most sacred to humankind," Hollande said. "Killing and brutalizing children is negating civilization."

The conference is also pushing for tougher prosecution of abusers, and protection for hospitals and schools targeted in war zones, such as in Syrian government airstrikes on Aleppo recently.

While 105 countries have signed onto promises made 10 years ago to protect conflict children, problems persist and the conference is aiming at enlisting more governments in the effort.

"Children do not belong on the battlefield. They belong in school. They belong in safe places where they are loved and protected from the battles that they had no hand in creating," UN Children's Fund director Anthony Lake



told the conference. Hollande also called on Britain to take in more unaccompanied child refugees currently in France. "I call on the United Kingdom to shoulder its responsibilities concerning adolescents today in France currently who have families across the Channel. We have made efforts to shelter and welcome them. They want to go to the UK. We have agreements with our friend and neighbor country and these

agreements by our friend and neighbor must be fully respected."

Hundreds of unaccompanied teens and younger children were among thousands of migrants who converged on a filthy camp in Calais last year before it was dismantled in October. The children were taken to migrant centers around France pending British decisions on whether to accept them. (AFP)

# European Union says it is open to accommodate more Indian skilled professionals

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The European Union said it is ready to accommodate more Indian IT professionals and denounced any form of protectionism in global trade, amid anxiety in India over the Trump administration's possible clampdown on H1B visa.

Pushing for deeper trade ties with India, a delegation of European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs+ also expressed "regret" over failure by both sides to resume the stalled dialogue to firm the long-pending EU-India trade and investment pact.

Criticising the new US government's protectionist rhetoric+ which triggered fears in Europe as well, head of the delegation David McAllister said Europe is "open" for allowing more Indian professionals who are high on demand.

"Europe is open for people with high demand. Indian people are highly skilled. Our IT sector would not have been successful if we did not have skilled professionals from India," he said.

Soon after taking over last month, Trump had decided to overhaul the work visa programmes like the H-1B and L1, a move that will adversely hit the lifeline of Indian tech firms and professionals+ in the US.

Pressing for early resumption of negotiations+ for the EU-India Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA), McAllister said the delegation urged the Indian leaders to resume the talks as the pact will significantly boost two-way trade.

"We deeply regret that we are not



being able to move ahead. We will use the visit to call for resumption of talks for the agreement," he told reporters.

The EU delegation, the second one here, will hold talks with a number of Union Ministers, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, the Vice Chairman of NITI Ayog Arvind Panagariya and Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan among others.

An European Parliament Delegation for relations with India is also in the country and it had strongly sought resumption of talks for the trade pact during its meetings with Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The BTIA talks have been stalled since May 2013, when both sides failed to bridge substantial gaps on crucial issues, including data security status for IT sector. Launched in June 2007, negotiations for the proposed agreement have witnessed many hurdles as both the sides have major differences on crucial issues.

Delegation member Urmas Paet said the EU would like to have the trade pact with India on the lines of the recently concluded EU-Canada trade deal, which features a new mechanism on investment protection and dispute settlement.

India has already made it clear that it will not allow investment to become part of any global agreement that allows investors to challenge governments in an international tribunal. In the EU-India Summit in Brussels last year+, the two sides had failed to make any announcement on resumption of the negotiations as many bottlenecks still remain.

The two sides are yet to iron out issues related to tariff and movement of professionals but the EU has shown an inclination to restart talks.

Besides demanding significant duty cuts in automobiles, the EU wants tax reduction in wines, spirits and dairy products, and a strong intellectual property regime. (PTI)

# China says it's pleased with strategic talks with India

BEIJING (TIP):

China said on Thursday that the strategic dialogue with India, which took place on Wednesday, proved to be hugely successful resulting in "extensive agreements". The upgraded strategic dialogue involved two teams of officials with the Indian delegation led by foreign secretary S Jaishankar and China's executive vice foreign minister Zhang Yesui leading a group of Chinese officials.

"The two sides had an in-depth exchange and comprehensive exchange of views and reached extensive agreements," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at the ministry's regular briefing today. Officials on both sides "reached extensive consensus" while accepting the fact that "China and India have extensive converging interests and huge potential for cooperation," he said.

Jaishankar told Indian journalists on Wednesday that the strategic dialogue



covered a wide range of issues, and resulted in better understanding of each other's perceptions on world affairs. But India was still trying to persuade China to change its stand on some sensitive issues while Beijing stuck to its

opposition on censoring Pakistan based terrorist Masood Azhar+ at the sanctions committee of the United Nations Security Council, and allowing India to become a member of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group. (PTI)

# IRAQI FORCES STORM MOSUL AIRPORT, MILITARY BASE

**SOUTH OF MOSUL (TIP):** US-backed Iraqi security forces captured Mosul airport on Feb 23, state television said, in a major gain in operations to drive Islamic State from the western half of the city.

Elite Counter Terrorism forces advanced from the southwestern side and entered the Ghazlani army base along with the southwestern districts of Tal al-Rumman and al-Mamoun.

Losing Mosul could spell the end of the Iraqi side of militants' self-styled caliphate in Iraq and Syria, which Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared from the city after sweeping through vast areas of Iraq in 2014.

Iraqi forces hope to use the airport as a launchpad for their campaign to drive the militants from Iraq's second largest city.

A Reuters correspondent saw more than 100 civilians fleeing towards Iraqi security forces from the district of al-Mamoun. Some of them were wounded.

"Daesh fled when counter terrorism Humvees reached al-Mamoun. We were afraid and we decided to escape towards the Humvees," said Ahmed Atiya, one of the escaped civilians said, referring to Islamic State by its Arabic name.

"We were afraid from the shelling," he added.

Federal police and an elite interior ministry unit known as Rapid Response had battled their way into the airport as Islamic State fighters fought back using suicide car bombs, a Reuters correspondent in the area south of Mosul airport said.

Police officers said the militants had also deployed bomb-carrying drones against the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Forces advancing from the southwestern side of the city.

"We are attacking Daesh (Islamic State) from multiple fronts to distract them and prevent them regrouping," said federal police captain Amir Abdul Kareem, whose units are fighting near Ghazlani military base. "It's the best way to knock them down quickly."

## NARROW ALLEYWAYS

Western advisers supporting Iraqi forces were seen some 2 km (one mile) away from the frontline to the southwest of Mosul, a Reuters correspondent said.

Iraqi forces last month ousted Islamic State from eastern Mosul and embarked on a new offensive against the militant group in densely-populated western Mosul this week.

The campaign involves a 100,000-strong force of Iraqi troops, Kurdish fighters and Shi'ite militias and has made rapid advances since the start of the year, aided by new tactics and improved coordination.

US special forces in armoured vehicles on Thursday positioned near Mosul airport looked on as Iraqi troops advanced and a helicopter bombarded suspected Islamic State positions.

Counter-terrorism service (CTS) troops fought their way inside the nearby Ghazlani base, which includes barracks and training grounds close to the Baghdad-Mosul highway, a CTS spokesman told Reuters.

The airport and the base, captured by Islamic State fighters when they overran Mosul in June 2014, have been heavily damaged by US-led air strikes intended to wear down the militants ahead of the offensive, a senior Iraqi official said.

The US military commander in Iraq has said he believes US-backed forces will retake both of Islamic State's urban bastions - the other is the Syrian city of Raqqa - within the next six months, which would end the jihadists' ambitions to rule and govern significant territory.

Iraqi commanders expect the battle to be more difficult than in the east of Mosul, however, in part because tanks and armoured vehicles cannot pass through narrow alleyways that crisscross the city's ancient western districts.

Militants have developed a network of passageways and tunnels to enable them to hide and fight among civilians, melt away after hit-and-run operations and track government troop movements, according to inhabitants. (Reuters)

# TRICKS TO GET SHINY LEGS

**E**ver thought about having legs like a celebrity? If you dreamed of having those perfectly toned legs like celebrities, this article is just for you. We tell you how you could make your legs look shiny, continue reading. All those who want to gain attention by their legs, taking care of this part is equally important as you take care of your face. Bumpy stumbles, ingrown hair, oily bumps, scars, marks and other such things can make your legs look awful and unpleasant.

If you are craving to gain attention with your legs, here we mention to you some of the easy tips you should follow. Check out these easy tips to make your legs shine like a celebrity!

## Go For Waxing

In order to get flawless and shining legs, you should opt for a closer shave. You should avoid using razors, tweezers, and other electronic devices while shaving, as it will prevent giving you a closer shave. Instead, you should go for waxing, as it will help to remove hair follicles deeply without leaving any marks behind.

## Keep Your Legs Moisturised

You should always keep your legs moisturised by using an ounce full of moisturiser. Applying a good-quality moisturiser can help to keep your legs hydrated and moisturised for a longer period of time, thus preventing dark spots or bumps. You should make sure you moisturise your skin well and reapply the lotion after 5-6 hours. When you step out, remember to apply a sunscreen, so that your legs are protected.

## Look For A Firming Cream

Using firming cream can help to tighten your skin and also improve the elasticity of same. You should look for a lotion which contains extracts of



caffeine in it, as it helps to rejuvenate your skin quickly and prevents dullness or sagging. Leg creams with extracts of caffeine are especially designed to keep your legs to look younger and beautiful.

## Exfoliate Your Skin

Exfoliating your skin is another vital step that will help to get rid of the dead skin cells easily. Not exfoliating your skin daily may lead to an appearance of large-sized pores, dead skin cells, breakouts and other such problems to be found on the legs. In order to prevent all of these, it is advisable to use a body scrub to remove the dead skin cells. Use a sugar-based scrub and exfoliate your skin every alternate day to remove the dead skin cells and debris from the skin.

## Tone Them

In order to make your legs look

beautiful, you should tone them. Exercise is one of the common and an effective way to tone your legs properly. Performing exercise for the lower body can help to tone your legs easily and also give a wonderful shape. If you are craving to get beautiful and toned legs in one month, opt for a tedious workout that promises to cut down the lower body fat.

## Massage Your Legs Regularly

Massaging your legs with baby oil can help to treat razor marks and bumps if any. Using baby oil can help to soothe your skin and also add a nice shine to your beautiful legs. If not anything, you can heat some coconut oil and massage your legs with this lukewarm oil. Massaging your legs with organic oil every alternate day can help to give you beautiful and smooth legs.



## FACE MASKS TO KEEP YOUR SKIN 10 YEARS YOUNGER

**W**omen dream of looking younger than their actual age. Ageing of the skin is the harsh truth of life where after a few years, you can observe fine lines, wrinkles and sagged skin. What should be done to prevent these ageing signs on the face? The answer to this is using homemade face masks regularly that could help make you look younger and feel great.

Homemade face masks are excellent for ageing skin, as they do not contain any chemicals or harmful ingredients. Also, due to natural proteins, vitamins and antioxidants present in the face masks, they help give us a younger-looking skin. If you dream of looking 10 years younger and having flawless skin, here are a few simple homemade face masks you could try.

### Pomegranate Mask

Due to vitamin C and antioxidants present in pomegranate, it can help to boost collagen, thus giving you clear and glowing skin. The pomegranate face mask is extremely beneficial for your face, as it helps to remove dead skin cells, thus giving you flawless-looking skin. Take 3 spoons of pomegranate seeds, add two spoons of cooked oats and 2 spoons of milk. Grind all the ingredients together and apply this mask on the face. Wait for some time and wash off with cold water.

### Oatmeal And Honey Mask

Make a face mask with the help of honey and oatmeal, and massage this on your face. Wait for 20-30 minutes and wash off with cold water. Using a mixture of oatmeal and honey can help to exfoliate your skin deeply, thus preventing dead skin cells on the skin. Also, it helps to increase the production of collagen, thus giving you a younger-looking skin. Repeat the process 5 times in a week to enjoy maximum benefits.

### Banana Anti-ageing Face

Mask Banana contains a lot of good fibre, antioxidants, and proteins that help to keep your skin looking younger and fresh every time. There are several ways to use banana on the skin and here we mention to you one simplest yet effective banana face mask recipe. Take a banana and mash it with the help of a fork. Now, add some honey and fresh cream to the mixture. Mix well and apply this on your face. Wait for 30 minutes and wash off with cold water. Due to Vitamin E and anti-ageing properties, banana can help to reverse the signs of ageing.

### Papaya And Yogurt Face Mask

Due to essential antioxidants and tannins present in papaya and yogurt, respectively, this mask can help to benefit your skin in several ways. It not only helps to give you a clear and glowing face, but it prevents an appearance of acne, blemishes and other signs of ageing on the face. Also, using papaya and yogurt face mask can help to work as a natural sunscreen, thus protecting your skin from the harmful rays of the sun. Mash papaya and add some yogurt to it. Add one spoon of turmeric and mix everything together. Apply this face mask on the face and wash off with water. Repeat thrice in a week to enjoy the benefits.

### Coconut Milk

Coconut milk is a treasure of all the good vitamins and proteins and hence it proves to be extremely beneficial for the skin. Due to minerals present in the coconut milk, it can help to keep your skin soft and moisturised for a longer period of time. Take some coconut milk, add one spoon of lemon, one spoon of honey and one spoon of glycerine to it. Mix all the ingredients together and apply this mask on the face.

## FOOD

# MOONG DAL KACHORI

## INGREDIENTS

2 cup all purpose flour, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 2 cup refined oil

5 teaspoon refined oil, For Filling, 2 tablespoon chopped coriander leaves, 1 teaspoon coriander powder, 1/4 teaspoon red chilli powder

1/2 teaspoon ginger powder, 1/4 teaspoon garam masala powder, 1/2 cup soaked moong dal, 2 cup chopped green chilli

1 teaspoon fennel seeds powder, 1 gm asafoetida

1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 tablespoon cumin seeds

## Method

Take all purpose flour in a big bowl, add salt and oil. Mix well.

Add little water at a time and knead soft dough. Cover the dough and keep it aside for 15-20 minutes.

Preheat a pan and add 3-4 tbsp oil in it. Add cumin seeds, cumin seeds, asafoetida, green chilly, coriander powder, fennel powder and saute the spices for few minutes.

Now add soaked dal, salt, garam masala, ginger powder and red chilly powder.

Stir constantly and cook dal until it dries up. Allow it to cool and keep it separate.



Now take one dough ball and flatten it with help of your fingers. Fill it with dal stuffing and make kachori. Repeat the process with other dough balls.

Preheat oil in a wok. Fry the kachori till it turns golden brown.

Crunchy moong dal kachori is ready.

Serve hot with green coriander chutney or sweet chutney.



# SLEEPING HUNGRY OR MUNCHING LATE: WHAT'S WORSE?

**Y**ou had your dinner two hours ago and you are going to have your forty winks soon but your tummy doesn't call it a day yet. Happens often, doesn't it? And this lands us to a million dollar quandary - should we sleep with a groaning stomach or succumb to our cravings? Well, the answer is - yes and no.

Nutritionists and dieticians say that we need to learn how to tame our hunger. One of the many ways to go about this is to ask yourself how hungry you really are. You can even use a scale for a more decisive answer. If the scales are more bent towards hunger as compared to a full tummy, go have something. Otherwise, you will have to be satisfied with a glass of water, or a whole grain cookie, or anything under 250 calories, depending on how hungry you are.

You also need to take into account your day's calorie consumption and stick to it. If you have already exhausted your day's calorie limit, try not to have anything besides water or hot tea. If you still have a chunk left from your portion, go for whole grain snacks or whole fiber cereals. A glass of skimmed milk is also a healthy way to beat your late hunger pangs. Stay away from high protein or high fat foods as they take longer to digest and will adversely



affect your sleep quality.

But if you are more of a stricter, and believe in not having anything even when your hunger scale is tipping off, you are wrong. If you sleep hungry, your body's metabolism will have a spring fever and you may end up starving the following day. The hunger pangs may also make it hard

for you to fall asleep and you can end up hungrier than before.

So, find what your happy medium is. See what works best for you and never exceed your daily calorie requirement. Make a routine which includes a healthier and less-calorie substitute for your late night noshing.

Source: TOI



## LOSE WEIGHT WITH CUMIN SEEDS

**C**umin, also known as jeera, is an earthy, nutty somewhat bitter spice that is available in India and other countries. Do you know that this spice has got a unique weight loss power too? You can lose your belly fat within just 20 days by eating cumin regularly. Also, your overall body weight can be reduced after eating cumin on a daily basis. A research done on cumin for its weight loss abilities on 88 obese women showed that cumin is very effective for weight loss. It helps burn calories fast by increasing the metabolism rate and digestion.

Apart from its weight loss abilities, cumin has got many other health benefits associated with it. It lowers bad cholesterol, prevents heart attack, increases memory, boosts immunity, treats anaemia, increases digestion, prevents gases and bloating, etc. In this article, we have mentioned various ways to use cumin for weight loss. Cumin (jeera) is also very effective in reducing belly fat within a matter of just 15 days. Drink or eat cumin powder on a daily basis to experience a magical result. Read on the article to know how to use cumin for weight loss.

### Cumin Weight Loss Drink

Soak 2 tablespoons of cumin seeds in water overnight and boil the seeds in the morning. Filter it to remove the seeds and squeeze a half-cut lemon to this. Drink it on an empty stomach every morning for 2 weeks for quick weight loss.

### Cumin Powder With Yoghurt

Cumin can be consumed in many forms for weight loss. Mix one teaspoon of cumin powder with 5 grams of yogurt and have it daily.

### Other Ways To Use Cumin

The other ways of eating cumin are to mix 3 grams of cumin powder in water with few drops of honey and later drink it. Make a vegetable soup and add one teaspoon of cumin in it. Add it to plain brown rice that not only enhances its flavour but also increases its weight loss properties.

### Lemon, Ginger And Cumin

This is one of the effective weight loss cumin recipes. Both ginger and lemon increase the weight loss ability of cumin seeds. To make this weight loss dish, grate a ginger and boil carrots and other veggies in water. Sprinkle some cumin powder, lemon juice, grated ginger over the vegetables and have them for dinner.

### Cumin Melts Belly Fat

Cumin helps to burn extra calories and melts belly fat as well. The nutrients and antioxidants present in cumin seeds can increase metabolism, and thus help our body to burn calories and melt belly fat fast.

Cumin Increases Digestion And Prevents Gases. Cumin also helps in proper digestion of foods, and thus prevents gases. Bloating and flatulence are common issues that are caused by indigestion of food. Cumin prevents the accumulation of gases in the stomach and intestines by helping in complete digestion of foods.

## CHEWING GUM MAY ADVERSELY AFFECT DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

**C**hronic exposure to a common food additive found in everything from chewing gum to bread can decrease the ability of small intestine cells to absorb nutrients and act as a barrier to pathogens, warns a study.

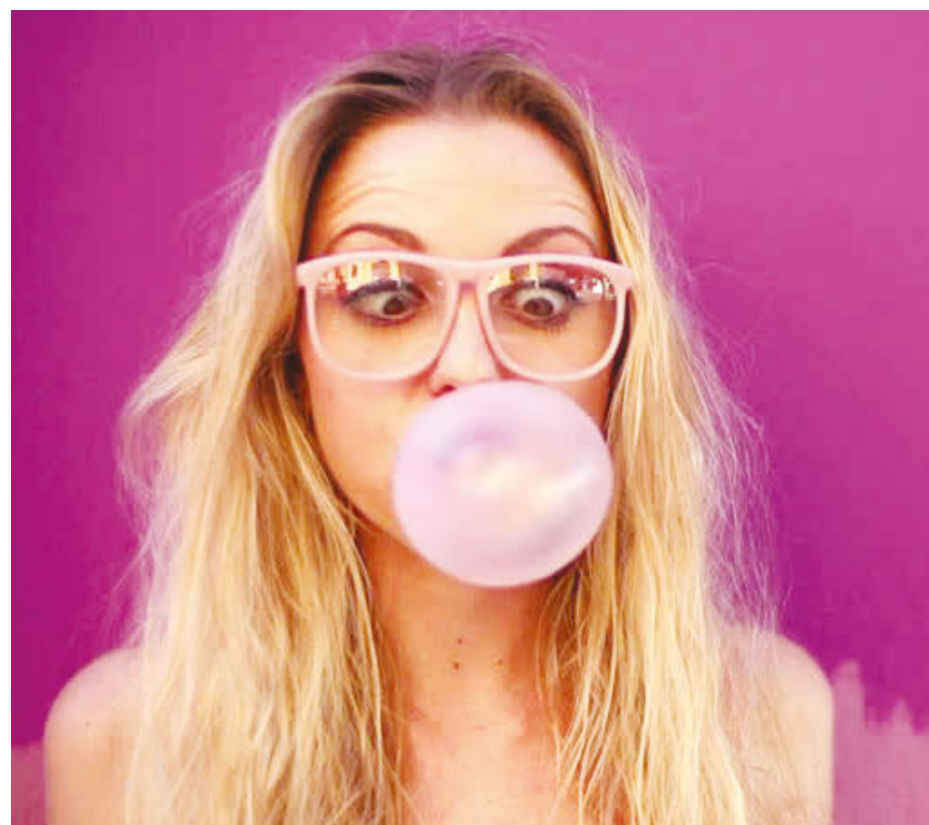
Ingestion of the compound, known as titanium dioxide, is nearly unavoidable. It can enter the digestive system through toothpastes, as titanium dioxide is used to create abrasion needed for cleaning. The oxide is also used in some chocolates to give it a smooth texture.

"Titanium oxide is a common food additive and people have been eating a lot of it for a long time -- don't worry, it won't kill you! -- but we were interested in some of the subtle effects, and we think people should know about them," said one of the authors of the study, Gretchen Mahler, Assistant Professor at Binghamton University, State University of New York.

For the study, the researchers exposed a small intestinal cell culture model to the physiological equivalent of a meal's worth of titanium oxide nanoparticles -- 30 nanometers across -- over four hours (acute exposure), or three meal's worth over five days.

Acute exposures did not have much effect, but chronic exposure diminished the absorptive projections on the surface of intestinal cells called microvilli, showed the findings published in the journal NanoImpact.

With fewer microvilli, the intestinal



barrier was weakened, metabolism slowed and some nutrients -- iron, zinc, and fatty acids, specifically -- were more difficult to absorb.

Enzyme functions were negatively affected, while inflammation signals

increased, the study said.

"To avoid foods rich in titanium oxide nanoparticles you should avoid processed foods, and especially candy. That is where you see a lot of nanoparticles," Mahler said.

## SAMSUNG GALAXY USERS CAN SOON UNLOCK WINDOWS 10 PCS WITH FINGERPRINT SENSOR



**NEW DELHI (TIP):** It looks like Samsung Galaxy smartphone users may soon be able to unlock non-Samsung Windows 10 devices with an easier method. For now, Galaxy users can unlock only Windows 10-based Galaxy TabPro S using the feature. The feature comes as a part of the Samsung Flow app.

The company has said that the app (including the feature) will soon expand to all the Windows 10 PCs. The confirmation was made in the form of a reply to a user's query on the Samsung Flow app on Google Play store.

The response by the company suggests that Samsung Flow app will be hitting all Windows 10 devices after the next major Windows 10 update. "Hi, I had, Sorry for your inconvenience. Samsung Flow is compatible with TabPro S now. But it will soon support all Windows 10 PCs from Windows 10 next major update (estimated early of April). Thank you," replied the company.

The Samsung Flow app was introduced alongside the Galaxy S6 and Galaxy S6 edge smartphones. The app also allows users to check and reply to smartphone notifications via PC, transfer content and more.

Talking about Samsung's native apps, the company is reportedly set to roll out the Secure Folder application to Android Nougat-based Galaxy S7 handsets. The company had earlier promised that it will roll out the app along with the Android Nougat OS.

Samsung Galaxy S7 and the Galaxy S7 Edge users who don't want to wait for the official rollout can get their hands on the Secure Folder feature by downloading the APK file from Sam Mobile's website. The app is likely to make its way to the Google Play Store soon, however, for the exact availability details are not yet known.

## Indian-origin researcher's new robotic arm can make laparoscopic surgery cheaper

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Researchers, including one of Indian-origin, have developed a robotic arm that can drastically cut down the cost of performing complex, minimally invasive procedures, also known as laparoscopic surgery.

Minimally invasive procedures could lead to less trauma for patients and shorter recovery times after surgery.

The hand-held instrument developed at the University of Michigan in the US provides the same sorts of benefits as robot-assisted surgery, such as greater precision and functionality, but at a lower cost compared to existing robotic surgical systems, the creators said.

The new \$500 surgical instrument could take the place of a \$2 million robot for certain minimally invasive procedures, according to a university statement.

The lower cost could result in new capabilities for rural hospitals and other medical centres that cannot afford more expensive systems.

The technology gives surgeons a higher degree of dexterity and intuitive control than traditional laparoscopic instruments, said Shorya Awtar, Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering at University of Michigan in the US. The technology is based on US National Science Foundation-funded engineering research and is being commercialised by FlexDex Surgical.

Awtar, an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology - Kanpur, co-founded FlexDex with his University of Michigan colleague and surgery professor, James Geiger, and entrepreneur Greg Bowles.

# 7 EARTH-SIZE PLANETS FOUND ORBITING STAR, MAY HOLD LIFE

**CAPE CANAVERAL (TIP):** For the first time, astronomers have discovered seven Earth-size planets orbiting a single nearby star — and these new worlds could hold life.

This cluster of planets is less than 40 light-years away in the constellation Aquarius, according to NASA and the Belgian-led research team who announced the discovery Wednesday.

The planets circle tightly around a dim dwarf star called Trappist-1, barely the size of Jupiter. Three are in the so-called habitable zone, the area around a star where water and, possibly life, might exist. The others are right on the doorstep.

Scientists said they need to study the atmospheres before determining whether these rocky, terrestrial planets could support some sort of life. But it already shows just how many Earth-size planets could be out there — especially in a star's sweet spot, ripe for extraterrestrial life. The more planets like this, the greater the potential of finding one that's truly habitable. Until now, only two or three Earth-size planets had been spotted around a star.

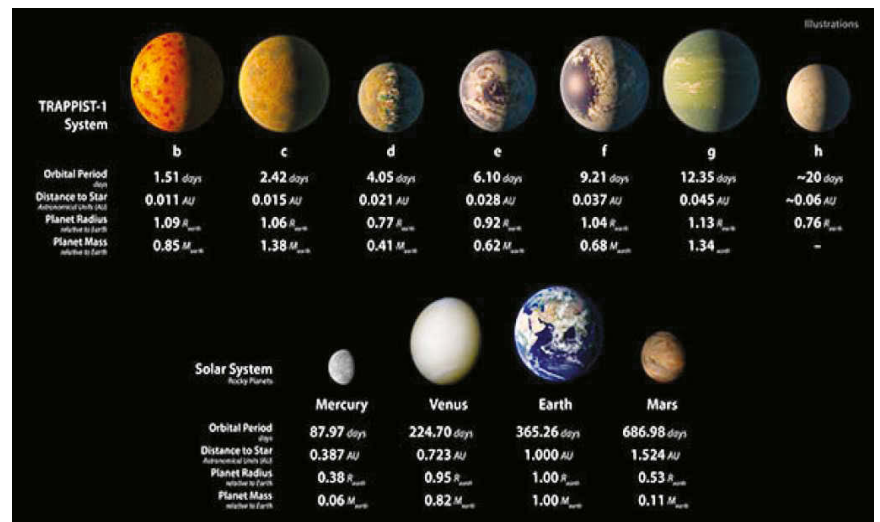
"We've made a crucial step toward finding if there is life out there," said the University of Cambridge's Amaury Triaud, one of the researchers.

The potential for more Earth-size planets in our Milky Way galaxy is mind-boggling. The history of planet-searching shows "when there's one, there's more," said Massachusetts Institute of Technology astrophysicist Sara Seager.

"With this amazing system, we know that there must be many more potentially life-bearing worlds out there just waiting to be found," she said.

NASA's Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for the science mission, said the discovery "gives us a hint that finding a second Earth is not just a matter of if, but when," and addresses the age-old question of "Are we alone out there?"

"We're making a step forward with



this, a leap forward in fact, toward answering that question," Zurbuchen said at a news conference.

Last spring, the University of Liege's Michael Gillon and his team reported finding three planets around Trappist-1. Now the count is up to seven, and Gillon said there could be more. Their latest findings appear in the journal *Nature*.

This crowded yet compact solar system — 235 trillion miles away — is reminiscent of Jupiter and its Galilean moons, according to the researchers.

Picture this: If Trappist-1 were our sun, all seven planets would be inside Mercury's orbit. Mercury is the innermost planet of our own solar system.

The ultracool star at the heart of this system would shine 200 times dimmer than our sun, a perpetual twilight as we know it. And the star would glow red — maybe salmon-colored, the researchers speculate.

"The spectacle would be beautiful because every now and then, you would see another planet, maybe about as big as twice the moon in the sky, depending on which planet you're on and which planet you look at," Triaud said Tuesday in a teleconference with reporters.

Years are exceedingly short in this star system — the planets take just 1 { to

20 days to orbit Trappist-1.

The Leiden Observatory's Ignas Snellen, who was not involved in the study, is excited by the prospect of learning more about what he calls "the seven sisters of planet Earth." In a companion article in *Nature*, he said Gillon's team could have been lucky in nabbing so many terrestrial planets in one stellar swoop.

"But finding seven transiting Earth-sized planets in such a small sample suggests that the solar system with its four (sub-) Earth-sized planets might be nothing out of the ordinary," Snellen wrote.

Altogether, astronomers have confirmed close to 3,600 planets outside our solar system since the 1990s, but barely four dozen are in the potential habitable zone of their stars, and of those, just 18 are approximately the size of Earth.

Gillon and his team used both ground and space telescopes to identify and track the seven Trappist-1 planets, which they label simply by lowercase letters, "b" through "h." As is typical in these cases, the letter "A" — in upper case — is reserved for the star. Planets cast shadows on their star as they pass in front of it; that's how the scientists spotted them.

Source: AP

## Monster pulsar discovered 50 million light years away

A monster has been discovered lurking 50 million light years away. It's a pulsar, that is, a collapsed star spinning around at an increasing speed and sending out as much energy in one second as our Sun does in 3.5 years. The discovery was made by scientists using the x-ray observatory space craft XMM-Newton managed by the European Space Agency (ESA).

The newly found pulsar is a thousand times brighter than previously thought possible and also the most distant of its kind ever detected. It completes one rotation in just over a second.

"The discovery of this very unusual object, by far the most extreme ever discovered in terms of distance,

luminosity and rate of increase of its rotation frequency, sets a new record for XMM-Newton, and is changing our ideas of how such objects really 'work'," says Norbert Schartel, ESA's XMM-Newton project scientist.

Pulsars are spinning, magnetised neutron stars that sweep regular pulses of radiation in two symmetrical beams across the cosmos. If suitably aligned with Earth these beams are like a lighthouse beacon appearing to flash on and off as it rotates. They were once massive stars that exploded as a powerful supernova at the end of their natural life, before becoming small and extraordinarily dense stellar corpses.

XMM-Newton observed the object several times in the last 13 years, with

the discovery a result of a systematic search for pulsars in the data archive - its 1.13 s periodic pulses giving it away. The signal was also identified in NASA's *Nustar* archive data, providing additional information.

"Before, it was believed that only black holes at least 10 times more massive than our sun feeding off their stellar companions could achieve such extraordinary luminosities, but the rapid and regular pulsations of this source are the fingerprints of neutron stars and clearly distinguish them from black holes," says Gian Luca Israel, from INAF-Osservatorio Astronomica di Roma, Italy, lead author of the paper describing the result published in *Science* this week.

Source: TOI

MODI'S DEMONETISATION WOE

# Rs 2,000 notes could attract more fake money dealers

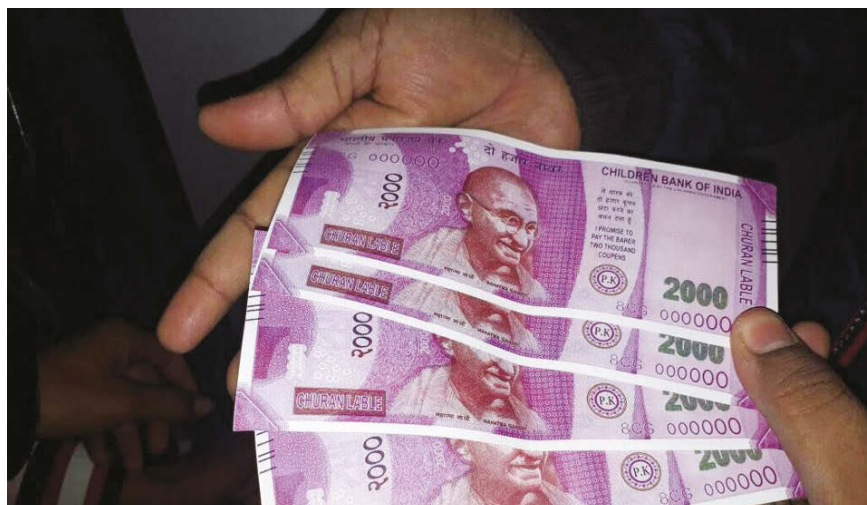
**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Rs 2,000 note might just become Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Achilles' heel in his mission to crack down on black money, as higher denominations allow currency criminals to pump in larger amounts of fake notes into the system.

Higher denomination notes everywhere in this world have lured counterfeiters as it is cost effective, and easier to carry. The reason is simple – more black and fake money can be pushed into the system through less notes.

The recent case of fake Rs 2,000 notes at a State Bank of India ATM might be just the beginning of the new high-denomination fake currency, even though the government has introduced more checks, to decipher a fake note from a real one. "You can never make a statement that counterfeiting of currency can be stopped, but by increasing security features, the design of a currency can be an impediment to faking it," said a former Reserve Bank of India official.

A quick search on the web would throw up the US reduced its denomination from 12 to seven, since World War II era – denominations of \$500, \$1,000, \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$1,00,000 were weeded out.

Larger the denominations, the impact on money laundering and fake currencies is higher. Larger the notes, easier it is for drug traffickers, gun dealers, and smugglers to carry large sums of money.



Fake notes of Rs 2000 which were dispensed by an SBI ATM in south Delhi. PTI Photo

"Larger denominations carry more value, its easier to print them, and are cost effective... That is one reason why there is a strong argument why RBI should phase out Rs 2,000 note," said Rajiv Kumar, economist and director at Pahle India Foundation.

The government, however, cannot do without larger denominations. "There has to be a balance in the amount of cash floating in the economy... Smaller the note, more difficult is it to handle. It is easier to carry five Rs 2,000 notes, compared to 100 Rs 100 notes," said Mohit Bahl, partner and head of forensic services, at consultancy firm KPMG. Though it is counter intuitive for the government to introduce Rs 2,000 notes while scrapping Rs 1,000 to crack

down on black money hoarding, says MM Joshi, former chairman of the central board of direct tax, but he adds: "The process of remonetisation was easier with a higher denomination note than the ones scrapped."

"Lower denomination notes make it difficult for black money holders to keep in large amounts, Rs 2,000 will make it easier. The government should revisit the Rs 2,000 notes once the economy is back to normal, and the process of remonetisation is over," Joshi added.

Bahl pointed out that the most difficult part in the process of counterfeiting currency, is to push the fake money into the system, and with fewer notes that, too, becomes easier.

Source: HT

## STATE BANK OF INDIA TO MERGE 5 ASSOCIATE BANKS FROM APRIL

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** State Bank of India will merge five of its associate banks with itself from April 2017.

SBI has five associate lenders are State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur, State Bank of Travancore, State Bank of Patiala, State Bank of Mysore and State Bank of Hyderabad. Among the associate banks, State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur, State Bank of Mysore and State Bank of Travancore are listed.

SBI informed stock exchanges that the Government of India has issued orders on February 22 under sub-section (2) of Section 35 of the State Bank of India Act to implement the merger process.

The government order says "the entire undertaking of SBBJ, SBM, SBT, SBP and SBH shall stand transferred to and vested in the State Bank of India from April 01, 2017."

In June 2016, the Cabinet approved the merger of State Bank of India (SBI) and five of its subsidiary banks to make it a global-sized bank.

The merged entity will become a banking behemoth with an asset base of about Rs 37 lakh crore with 22,500 branches and 58,000 ATMs. The merged will also have over 50 crore customers.

SBI first merged State Bank of Saurashtra with itself in 2008. Two years later, State Bank of Indore was merged with it.

## Tax-free gratuity ceiling for pvt sector employees to be doubled to Rs 20 lakh

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Private-sector employees will soon be able to withdraw up to Rs 20 lakh in tax-free gratuity after the Centre decided to amend a law and double the amount, bringing them at par with central government staff.

Currently, private sector employees can get tax exemption up to Rs 10 lakh in gratuity after five years of continuous employment.

A tripartite meeting between the labour ministry, trade unions and employee bodies decided on Thursday that a bill to amend the Payment of Gratuities Act will be brought in the second half of the Budget session of Parliament.

The Left-affiliated labour unions also demanded that employees get gratuity after one year of service, instead of the current cap of five years.

The move comes after the seventh pay commission's recommendation allowing central government employees to earn tax-exempted gratuity up to Rs 20 lakh.

At the meeting, labour minister also told the unions that the bill to amend the gratuity level may also have a mechanism to ensure automatic revision of gratuity ceiling as and when the pay commission suggests similar measures for central government employees.

"It is a good move to bring the private sector at par with central government employees. This move will also partly offset the impact of inflation," said Rahul Garg, leader of direct taxes at PwC India.

The trade unions also demanded that the new gratuity ceiling for tax benefits be applicable retrospectively from January 1, 2016. Sources however, told HT that the government was unlikely to enforce a retrospective amendment to the tax laws. The provision of tax exemption on gratuity falls under section 10 of the Income Tax Act and was last amended in 2010. For a change in gratuity provisions, both the Payment of Gratuity act and the Income Tax Act would have to be amended.

Gratuity is calculated on the monthly basic salary added with dearness allowance. It is withdrawn upon termination of employment or retirement.

The amount paid is usually the salary multiplied with the numbers of years of service and 15/26 (salary\*years of service\*15/26) – the gratuity is calculated on 15 out of 26 working days. For example, a person with 10 years experience would need a basic salary + dearness allowance of more than Rs 3.5 lakh a month to withdraw a gratuity of Rs 20 lakh at the end of her service.

This is why experts believe the new move won't hit the government's tax collections given that a gratuity earning of Rs 20 lakh would be limited to high-salaried individuals. In India, 24 lakh people declare an income of above Rs 10 lakh and only 1.72 lakh people earn over Rs 50 lakh.

In 1997, the tax relief on gratuity was increased from Rs 2.5 lakh to Rs 3.5 lakhs. This was further increased to Rs 10 lakh in 2010.

Source: HT

## RELIANCE JIO TO CHARGE FOR DATA FROM APRIL



**MUMBAI (TIP):** Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's telecom unit Reliance Jio will begin charging for data services from April but will give steep discounts for a year to over 100 million customers who have come on board within six months of its launch.

While local voice calls, STD and roaming will continue to be free, he promised to match the best offers of rival telecom companies and add 20 percent more data from April 1. In a speech broadcast live from the company's social media accounts, Ambani said Jio has added 100 million subscribers in 170 days since launch in September last year and the company plans to extend the network to cover 99 percent of population by this year-end.

Jio, which marked Ambani's re-entry in telecom space after a decade with free voice calls for life and free data for a promotional period that was extended until March 31, will offer existing users unlimited services for a year at a monthly charge of Rs 303 and one-time membership fee of Rs 99.

## BHARTI AIRTEL TO ACQUIRE TELENOR INDIA

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Bharti Airtel, India's largest telecoms network operator, on Thursday said it would buy Telenor (India) Communications Pvt Ltd, in a deal that will bolster Airtel's footprint with additional spectrum in the 1800 MHz band.

Airtel will buy Telenor's India operations in seven circles - Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh (East), Uttar Pradesh (West) and Assam, the company said in a statement.

In a separate statement, Telenor said that the transaction will not trigger any impairment. As of fourth quarter 2016, the remaining value of tangible and intangible assets in Telenor India amounted to NOK 0.3 billion. The transaction is expected to close within 12 months," Telenor said.

Airtel is India's largest wireless operator with over 269 million subscribers and a revenue market share of over 33 per cent. As the new owner, Airtel will take over Telenor India's spectrum, licenses and operations, including its employees and customer base of 44 million.

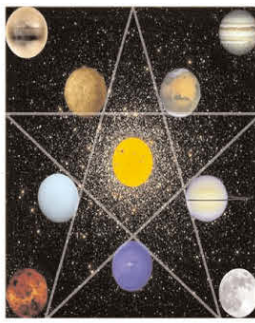
"The proposed acquisition will include transfer of all of Telenor India's assets and customers, further augmenting Airtel's overall customer base and network. It will also enable Airtel to further bolster its strong spectrum footprint in these seven circles, with the addition of 43.4 MHz spectrum in the 1,800 MHz band," Airtel said.

Telenor India's operations and services will continue as normal until the completion of the transaction.

"On completion, the proposed acquisition will undergo seamless integration, both on the customer as well as the network side, and further strengthen our market position in several key circles.

The customers of Telenor India will now be able to enjoy ...a range of Airtel's world-class products and services," Gopal Vittal, Managing Director and CEO (India and South Asia), Bharti Airtel, said.

## "|| SHRI GANESHAYA NAMAHA ||"



BEJAN DARUWALLA

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## Predictions for the month of MARCH, 2017

### Aries



Ganesha says you want to revitalize your relationships as well as your career, add zest and zing to both. You may even pursue changes in both house / office for this reason, making them both more exciting. You will travel with zest, and enjoy not just the journey but the destination. I'm taking literally as well as metaphorically now. Free - flowing ties, bonds, connections, relationships that bring pleasure, a spirit of total giving makes you popular and loved.

### Taurus



When I talked of giving, I didn't say enough to really give you an idea of the scale of operation, though I did try! It is the harmony you've created that has made you so large - hearted, unstinting in your emotions, care, efforts. The less advantaged bring out the best in you; society and its larger issues, too will impel you to give of yourself. Ganesha rewards you with greater prosperity, enhancement of property, many more benefits.

### Gemini



I ended with work, and have to start with it, too! There will be deadlines, demands, duties and you have to find the fourth D - determination - to cope with them. Demands could be both financial as well as emotional, in terms of home, family, children. But then, your joy and fulfilment also come from home, family and children! Ganesha's advice, relayed by me!

### Cancer



Your spiritual practices and quest have brought you personal, private gain. Now you get an improved philosophy and attitude. It brings material gains and benefits as well - rest, relaxation of mind and body, happier interactions, much more ease in personal relationships and a desire / willingness to socialize and entertain, be entertained and amused

### Leo



In the persona you have been acquiring, your communication skills and your views and perceptions of people have improved greatly. Now, special people warm up to you, love is sincere, romantic, even intense. Your income, too, improves greatly and your savings and investments will grow proportionately. Future gains can easily be foretold, therefore

### Virgo



Good things happen to you in the work sphere with the moon phase in your own sign. Also, you have greater enjoyment of life, love, laughter - the three wonderful L's. Your techniques, ideas, efforts at work will be marvelously apt and successful, and you know that they will click well. Prosperity is bound to come, as a result. Most importantly, anxieties are laid to rest, as your faith and self-confidence burgeon, and your worries fade away

### Libra



Financial and domestic responsibilities had really not gone away, only receded from your mind. You have grown, and can handle cares and worries without being hassled. You make the right choices, wrest the initiative, and get going. The fulfilment you get in the family equations empowers you to overcome the hidden barriers, hurdles, or inimical attitudes you may have to deal with.

### Scorpio



You have waited out the storm - which in any case turned out to be just a strong wind and nothing worse! Power, satisfaction, achievements in your career / work help you in terms of confidence. You are innovative, original, highly successful at meeting deadlines / targets. Your spiritual strength, faith give you the creativity, skills, ideas to make a go of your relationships too.

### Sagittarius



You are laying some very strong and lasting foundations now, with your hard work and perseverance. You get meticulous planning, attention to detail. The results will come in the shape of a beautiful edifice of power, glory, acclaim, recognition, success. You take no foolish shortcuts or gambles but work steadily ahead

### Capricorn



Your workload more than doubles and you wonder how to cope with it all - also feeling that your tensions and pressures are back. You could have been lulled into false hope and security by the last period. Not so, say Ganesha and I. Campaigns, collaborations, ceremonies, public perceptions have to be handled. Ganesha ensures that the gains will be there, as soon as you can see them.

### Aquarius



Balance, calm, poise, a certainty and clarity of mind will all descend on you. It will help you in terms of right choices, right actions so that there is a far more concord and harmony at work and at home. Relationships will thrive at different levels and you will handle yourself well within them. More power, efficiency, authority, status at work

### Pisces



Some rescheduling, changes and reorganization at work will be essential - and radical, too. You will have to balance your quest for personal fulfilment with your fondness for work, your commitment to it. You will need to a) take adequate rest / relaxation, b) relate to people with more depth, feeling, sincerity even gusto, c) follow your own intuition and insights

Bejan Daruwalla is world's most famous astrologer today. He appears regularly on world wide TV shows. Bejan who has been a professor in English, has authored a number of books on astrology. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on March 29, 2012, lunched one of Bejan's books, '2012- End of the World? Bejan contributes to a number of journals and

newspapers in many parts of the world which include Berkley Communications (London) Times of India (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai) and The Indian Panorama ( New York and Texas). Bejan's predictions have mostly been correct and people the world over rely on his predictions.

Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at [info@bejandaruwalla.com](mailto:info@bejandaruwalla.com) and on phone 011-91-9825470377

# SHRI VISHWESHWAR IN VARANASI

Standing on the western bank of India's holiest river Ganges, Varanasi is the oldest surviving city of the world and the cultural capital of India. It is in the heart of this city that there stands in its fullest majesty the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in which is enshrined the Jyotirlinga of Shiva, Vishweshwara or Vishwanatha. Here gravitate the teeming millions of India to seek benediction and spiritual peace by the darshan of this Jyotirlinga which confers liberation from the bondages of maya and the inexorable entanglements of the world. ASRI KASHI VISHWA NATH TEMPLE simple glimpse of the Jyotirlinga is a soul-cleansing experience that transforms life and puts it on the path of knowledge and bhakti. Vishweshwara Jyotirlinga has a very special and unique significance in the spiritual history of India. Tradition has it that the merits earned by the darshan of other jyotirlinga scattered in various parts of India accrue to devotee by a single visit to Kashi Vishwanath Temple. Deeply and intimately implanted in the Hindu mind, the Kashi Vishwanath Temple has been a living embodiment of our timeless cultural traditions and highest spiritual values. The Temple has been visited by all great saints- Adi Shankaracharya, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekanand, Goswami Tulsidas, Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati, Gurunanak and several other spiritual personalities.

Where the Varana and Asi rivers join the Ganges, a beautiful city was built there in the ancient times. It was named Varanasi. Varanasi, a prime place of pilgrimage, a tribe called kasha used to live. Therefore, Varanasi was also known as Kashi. Near Kashi, Ganga flows in the shape of a bow. Hence it acquired special importance. A king called Deivodas expanded this area.

Varanasi is located in Uttarpradesh, in the Gangetic plains.

## Purana of kashi vishwanath jyotirlinga

Nirvikar cahitanya and Sanatan Brahma have assumed the form of Saguna Vishwarupa from the initial Nirgun Roopa or form. The Shiva Shakti roopa became the Purusha (man) and Stree (the woman) again. Prakriti and Purusha (Nature and man) (Shiva-Shakti) were once ordained by Shiva to do tapas in the universe in order to create the best being. He specified the best place for this purpose. When a prayer was held, Nirgun Shiva, with His own powers and aura, created a wonderful city called Panchakoshi. Vishnu, who resided there, spent a lot of time praying to Shiva after which several watersprings originated there. Vishnu was amazed at this wonderous event, and even as he tilted his head, a gemstone fell from his ear. Because of this place, it was also called Manikarnika. The entire Panch Koshi area of Manikarnika waters were then gathered into the Trident by Shiva. Then from the navel of Vishnu was born a lotus flower with Brahma in it. Brahma was ordained by Shiva to create a world, at which Brahma created this wonderful world. It had fifty crore Yojanas of area and fourteen lokas. In order to save the lives of these who are bound by their own actions or karma. Shiva kept panchakoshi city away from the entire universe. In this city, Shiva Himself established the saviour Muktidayak JyotirLinga, which He can never leave. Shiva removed this very Kashi from His Trident and set it in this mortal world. It was not to be destroyed when Brahma's day ends, but during Pralay i.e., final destruction of the world, Shiva saved it by keeping it safe in his trident. So the kashi is called avimukta kshetra. In Kashi, the Avimukteshwar Linga is there forever. Those who can never hope for salvation, attain Moksha here. Kasi Viswanathar - Varanasi

This holiest city of Panchakoshi, with its capacity to destroy every conceivable sin, is the vehicle of a special Moksha by the name "Samyugha". That is the reason why this city which is ruled by Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha, is the place, where even divines want to die. Sarwaguna from inside and Tamoguna from outside, are the qualities of Rudra here. When prayed to, Vishwanatha Bahagavan Sri Shankar made this abode and resided there with Parvati.

## Glory of Kashi

Kashi city is the place for Moksha and Ganga. Those who live here attain Mukti or Salvation, even without having to travel to any place of pilgrimage. Any one, be it a man, woman, young, old, Sahava, pure or impure, Prasuta, Aprasuta, Swadesh, Andaja, Udibhaja, of whatever caste, all attain Moksha. There is not an iota of doubt in this. Whatever a person may be doing, eat, sleep or anything else, if he departs from this world from Avimukteshwar, he definitely attains Moksha. Any small act of goodness or Punyakarya, takes away all the sins. Good as well as bad people are born on this earth.



But by living in Kashi, both attain Moksha. Later, several people came forward to build this temple. A king by the name Banar developed this city of pilgrimage. About one and half thousand beautiful temples were built here. The tower of the Vishweshwara temple is a hundred feet high.

Kashi nagar is so great that even if the universe is to be destroyed in Pralaya, it would remain intact. Dandapani and Kalabhairav guard this city. They stay there forever. On the Ganga banks eighty four bathing ghats are located. There are also several teerthkundas. They have been there right from the times of Vedas.

## History of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple

Varanasi, which was a pious place of pilgrimage for the hindus, soon became an eyesore and source of jealousy for the Muslims. From 1033 to 1669 AD Kashi came under several destructive attacks. Temples were demolished and Masjids built there instead. But due to the dedication of the Hindu devotees, the JyotirLing pilgrimage place continued to develop. During the reign of the British and the Marathas, this place really developed well. Even the Jaina and Boudha monks helped to keep the place of the city intact.

The Kashi Vishweshwar temple as we see it now was built by Ahalya Devi Holkar in 1777 AD. In 1785 AD, the then King of Kashi, Mansaram and his son Belvant Singh built many more temples near Varanasi. In 1755 AD, the Avadh pantof pratinidhi (representative) got the old temple of Bindumadhava repaired and renovated it beautifully. The kalabhairava temple was built by Srimant Baji Rao Peshwa in 1852 AD. King Ranjit Singh had the Kashi Vishwanath temple towers covered in gold. A huge bell hangs in the temple. It was donated by the King of Nepal. Surrounding Saranath, there are many Budhhist stupas, Viharas and Chaitra grihas. In 1931 AD the mahabodhi society had built a very beautiful Buddha temple in Saranath.

The Hindu devotees visit Kashi to make offering. Here they perform many rituals and consider themselves blessed. Along side, several foreign tourists visit this place regularly. Places worth seeing include Ghats, temples, tapobhoomi and the scenic beauty of the surroundings. Kashi Kshetra and Sri Vishweswara JyotirLinga are connected as the holiest shrines in the world. The Ganga water here is considered as the nectar of the earth. Dying in Kashi or performing the final rites is

considered as the way to the Heavens. Kashi - Rameshwar(1) yatra is the prime pilgrimage for the Hindus.

## The temple structure

The temple complex consists of a series of smaller shrines, located in a small lane called the Vishwanatha Galli, near the river. The linga of the main deity at the shrine is 60 cm tall and 90 cm in circumference housed in a silver altar.

The main temple is quadrangle and is surrounded by shrines of other gods. There are small temples for Kaalbhairav, Dhandapani, Avimukteshwar, Vishnu, Vinayaka, Sanishwara, Virupaksha and Virupaksh Gauri in the complex. There is a small well in the temple called the Jnana Vapi also spelled as Gyaan vapi (the wisdom well). The Jnana Vapi wells sites to the north of the main temple and it is believed that the Jyotirlinga was hidden in the well to protect it at the time of invasion. It is said that the main priest of the temple jumped in the well with the Shiv Ling in order to protect the Jyotirlinga from invaders.

According to the structure of the temple, there is a sabha guruh or congregation hall leading to the inner garbha, guruh or sanctum. The venerable linga is made up of black colored stone, and is enshrined in the sanctum, placed on a silver platform. Structure of the temple is composed of three parts. The first comprises a spire on the temple of Lord Vishwanath or Mahadeva. The second is gold dome and the third is the gold spire atop the Vishwanath carrying a flag and a trident.



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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it? Indian alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

# MAHA SHIVRATRI

**M**aha Shivaratri or Maha Sivaratri/padmarajarathri is a great festival in Hinduism, celebrated annually with the devotion and religious enthusiasm in the honor of the Lord Shiva, deities of Hindu Trinity. The literal meaning of Shivaratri is "The Great Night of Lord Shiva". According to the Hindu calendar, it is celebrated in the Varanasi in the dark fortnight or Krishna Paksha at the 13th night or 14th day of the month Maagha or Phalgun (month of February or March according to the English calendar) to worship Shiva Lingam to make happy the Lord Shiva.

Maha Shivaratri 2017 would be celebrated all over India as well as abroad by the devotees of Lord Shiva on February 24.

## History

This festival is celebrated to respect Lord Shiva by offering leaves of Bael or Bilva/Vilvam, Bhang, Dhatura, flowers, coconut, fruits, water, cow milk and other things. Devotees keep fast of full-day and full-night and pray to Lord Shiva for their beautiful life partner with healthy and prosperous life. According to the ritual belief and traditions, penances are performed to get benefited in the practice of Yoga and meditation. Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi is one of the most important places for tourist attractions in the UP state where a big fair is held on at Maha Shivratri in front of the Virla temple and Vishwanath Gali of the old Vishwanath temple.

Another myth of celebrating Maha Shivaratri in Hinduism is that, whole world was facing destruction and more near to the pralaya, and then the Goddess Parvati had worshiped her husband the Lord Shiva to save the world. Finally her prayer was approved by the Lord Shiva and then Goddess Parvati named that night, the Maha-Shivaratri, or the great night of Shiva.

### Favorite Day of the Lord Shiva

It is believed that after completion of the creation of world, Goddess Parvati asked to Lord Shiva that which devotees and rituals satisfied him the most, and then Lord Shiva replied to Goddess Parvati that the 13th night of the Maagha month is his most favorite day. After that, she repeated the words of Lord Shiva to her friends, and then the words were spread all over world.

## Rituals

On Maha Shivratri, people keep fast of whole day and night and Kashi Vishwanath temple gets congregated by the young and old devotees from the very early morning. They come to the temple to perform the puja of traditional Shivalingam and hope to get what they have prayed to the god. They take bath in the holy water of the Ganga (Symbol of the purity) early in the morning before sunrise and wear a clean clothe after the sacred bath.

Every worshiper brings a pot full of holy Gange water to the temple to offer the Shivalingam. Women pray to God for her well-being of their husbands and sons, an unmarried woman pray to get their desired husband like Shiva (the ideal husband) in future; boys pray to get beautiful wife and successful life in future. The temple full of sound of bells and people shouts of "Shankerji ki Jai" or "Mahadevji ki Jai". Devotees take 5 round of the Shivalingam and pour water on the Shivalingam. Some also pour cow milk on the Shivalingam.

According to the Shiva Purana, the Mahashivaratri puja involves six steps which are:

- Taking bath in the Gange for purification of soul, mind and body. Bathing of the Shiv Linga with the holy water of Gange, then bathing with milk and honey. God Shiva loves bel patra (three leaves stalked in one) so every rituals added it to the puja.
- After bathing of the Shiv Linga, vermilion paste applied on it which represents the virtue.
- Offer fruits, flowers which are given to get long life and satisfaction of desires.
- Burning enrage yields wealth.
- The lighting with diya represents achieving more knowledge.
- Offering betel leaves provide satisfaction full of great pleasures.
- Worshipers also apply three horizontal lines of holy ash on their forehead just like the Lord Shiva which represents spiritual knowledge, cleanliness and penance. They wear garland made up of the Rudraksha (seed of Rudraksha tree) while worshiping the Lord Shiva. It is believed that Rudraksha tree was originated from the tears of Lord Shiva. Shivaratri is also considered as the



wedding day of the Lord Shiva and Mata Parvati.

## What makes the Lord Shiva please more?

It is written in the Shiva Purana that doing abhisheka of the Lord Shiva Linga with six dravyas such as cow milk, yoghurt, sugar, honey, ghee and Gange water while reading Sri Rudram, Chamakam and Dasa Shanthi pleases more the Lord Shiva. Milk is for the approval of cleanliness and faithfulness, yogurt for wealth and offspring, honey for sweet tongue, ghee for success, sugar for pleasure, and water for purity.

## Significance of Mahashivaratri

Mahashivaratri Festival is of great and tremendous significance for the millions of Hindu devotee's all over India as well as abroad. It falls every year on fourteenth day of the Phalgun month in the dark fortnight at the end of winter season. This festival is the big festival during which devotees can please the Lord Shiva in order to fulfill their desires. It has another great significance for the Women. Both married and unmarried women keep strict fast for whole day and do Shiva Linga Puja with very honesty to please the Goddess Parvati or Gaura Mata in order to get the marital bliss as well as long, wealthy and prosperous married life. At Mahashivaratri, the marriage of Lord Shiva with Mata Parvati took place in the ancient time, so the Hindu people celebrate this festival by performing the same ceremony every year. People in Varanasi start this ceremony from Mahamrityunjaya temple of Daranagar to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi.

This festival is especially auspicious for the women. At this day, married women pray to God for the wellness and well being of their Suhaag however; unmarried women pray to God to get

good husband in future just like the Lord Shiva means an ideal husband. Devotees of the Lord Shiva wake up in the early morning and take a ritual bath especially in the holy water of river Ganga. They wear fresh or new clothes and go to nearest Shiva temple to offer the Milk Abhishek to the Shiva Lingum and then with honey and water. They also offer some fruits, peach, dhatura, bael patra, bhang leaves, sweets, Ganga jal, etc. They pray to the God to fulfill their long list of wishes. People also sing ritual songs, do arti, drink bhang and dance at music.

The process of worshiping, offering and praying continues whole day long from early morning till night. First of all in the early morning a ritual puja of the Shiva Lingam is performed by the temple's priests. First they give bath to the Shiva Lingam with milk, yoghurt, honey, ghee, sugar (also called panchagavya) and then with water by chanting the mantra of "Om Namah Shivaya". Somewhere people give bath to the Shiva Linga with milk, yoghurt, honey, sandalwood paste and rose water. They apply vermilion paste on the Shiva Linga and keep Bilwa leaves (especially three joined leaves in one stalk) on the top in the believe that Goddess Lakshmi resides in Bilwa leaves and it has cooling effects to the hot-tempered deity so it would help devotees in pleasing the Lord Shiva.

Devotees ring temple bells in full sound. Then they allow devotees to come inside the temple and do their ritual. In some cities, a nightlong jaagran is organized at Shiva temples where a big crowd of large number of devotees stay whole night to sing holy hymns and devotional songs praising Lord Shiva and Mata Parvati.

And in the early morning, devotees again perform all the ritual like bathing, offering Jal to Shiva Linga, etc and break their fast by taking Prasad offered by priests of the temple.

OM NAMAH SHIVAYE

The spectacular Nelong Valley - a cold desert like area - tucked in the Uttarakhand Himalayas, close to the Indo-China border, was opened to tourists earlier this year after 53 years of remaining out of bounds post the 1962 War. While the state government opened it with much enthusiasm in May, it failed to promote the destination as a result less than 200 tourists visited the valley in the last six months.

The valley, which has a similar landscape as that of Ladakh, is not only rich in natural beauty but also houses remnants of the treacherous Indo-China trade route - like a hand-built wooden bridge - that was used for centuries by the locals prior to the war.

### About Nelong Valley

The valley, situated at an altitude of around 11,000 feet above the sea level, falls under the Gangotri National Park in Uttarkashi district, is around 315 km from Dehradun. It is also only 23 kms away from Bhaironghati, a place just eight kms ahead of the famous Gangotri shrine.

Entry to this restricted area perched close to the China border had remained forbidden for civilians after the 1962 war. The arid region was thrown open in May and closed for the season in November.

### Regulated tourism

The government has put a cap on the number of vehicles entering the valley per day, which is maximum six with only four occupants in each. A permit letter from the sub-divisional magistrate is required to visit the area while entry of foreigners is banned. Though the government had opened the destination with high hopes, only 184 tourists visited the valley in six months.

Manoj Jagudi an engineering graduate visiting the valley said, "This place is like a hidden treasure in the Himalayas but little is known about it outside the state."

### Potential of Nelong Valley

Experts say the picturesque valley holds a tremendous potential to be developed into a niche tourism destination, just like the world-famed Valley of Flowers in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand that attracts thousands of tourists and nature enthusiasts every year.

Retired senior bureaucrat SS Pangtey, considered an authority in Uttarakhand tourism, says the region is an untapped asset of natural splendor that could turn into a major attraction for domestic tourists if publicized properly. "It is a remote, virgin area which has a huge potential to become an adventure tourism hotspot if only the state is able to publicise it amply," Pangtey says.

He said regulated tourism (to prevent disturbance to local ecology) is alright "but even that will happen only when they get to know about the valley in the first place".

Arun Puri, an Uttarkashi-based tour operator, says that the "permit process should be simplified and a single window information system should be put in place in the state capital to facilitate tourists".

### Local heritage

In the wake of the 1962 War, locals of the Rongba (Bhotiya) tribe residing in the valley were forced to shift to Bagori and Dunda villages in Uttarkashi district. Re-opening of the valley has brought much joy to them.

"Prior to the war, trade with Tibet was the economic mainstay of the villagers in the valley. Few remnants of the trade route - the most prominent one being a narrow wooden bridge along the gorge - still remains intact. This valley could thus be highlighted as a heritage site," said Jot Singh, a native of Nelong valley and now a farmer living in Bagori village.

Vinod Panwar, a local from Uttarkashi, said Nelong Valley will make for an "added attraction" to tourism circuit in the region, thereby improving the local economy.

# NELONG VALLEY IN THE HIMALAYAS



contd from Page 1

## Trump calls deportations a...

attention has been focused on the building of the border wall, these new memos direct the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to escalate immigration enforcement nationwide. The memos reveal that DHS intends to take a much more "enforcement-oriented" position with regard to U.S. Immigration law.

**INDIAN-AMERICANS AS PER UNOFFICIAL FIGURES ACCOUNT FOR NEARLY 300,000 ILLEGAL ALIENS.**

Nearly 300,000 Indian-Americans are likely to be impacted by the Trump administration's sweeping plans that put the nation's 11 million undocumented immigrants at risk of deportation.

The Trump administration is releasing more on its plans to crack down on illegal immigration, enforcing the executive orders President Trump issued in late January. Those orders called for increased border security and stricter enforcement of immigration laws.

"Everybody who is here illegally is subject to removal at any time," Spicer said. "That is consistent with every country, not just ours. If you're in this country in an illegal manner, that obviously there's a provision that could ensure that you be removed."

"The Department no longer will exempt classes or categories of removable aliens from potential enforcement," the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said in an enforcement memo.

"Department personnel have full authority to arrest or apprehend an alien whom an immigration officer has probable cause to believe is in violation of the immigration laws," it said.

According to the memo, the DHS Secretary has the authority to apply expedited removal provisions to aliens who have not been admitted or paroled into the US, who are inadmissible, and who have not been continuously physically present in the US for the two-year period immediately prior to the determination of their inadmissibility, so that such aliens are immediately removed unless the alien is an unaccompanied minor, intends to apply for asylum or has a fear of persecution or torture in their home country, or claims to have lawful immigration status.

### WHAT IS IN THE MEMOS?

1. **AN END TO LONG-STANDING PROTECTIONS FOR CHILDREN.** DHS intends to strip many children arriving alone at our border of basic protections and to penalize their parents for seeking to reunite with their children in the United States. DHS will do this by narrowing the definition of "unaccompanied alien child" in order to limit those protections and by launching either civil or criminal enforcement against the parents.

2. **A MASSIVE EXPANSION OF DETENTION.** The memos contemplate a massive expansion of detention, including a requirement that DHS officers detain nearly everyone they apprehend at or near the border. This detention space expansion—a boon to the private prison industry—means that children, families, and other vulnerable groups seeking protection in the United States will end up detained, at great financial and human cost.

3. **PROSECUTION PRIORITIES AND DISCRETION ARE GONE.** The new memos rescind earlier policies on whom to prosecute and deport and whom to de-prioritize because they pose no threat to our communities. The new enforcement priorities are extremely broad, covering nearly all undocumented individuals in the United States. They even include individuals simply charged or suspected of having committed crimes.

4. **CREATION OF A DEPORTATION FORCE.** The memos order the hiring of 5,000 additional Customs and Border

Protection (CBP) agents and 10,000 additional Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. They direct a massive expansion of 287(g)-a provision that allows DHS to deputize State and Local law enforcement officers to perform the functions of immigration agents. The memos reinstate Secure Communities [terminating the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP)], which expand the ways in which local police collaborate with ICE.

5. **PLANS TO BYPASS IMMIGRATION COURTS AND SHORT-CIRCUIT DUE PROCESS.** The memos indicate that many people in the interior of the country - not just those at the border - could be subject to expedited removal or expedited deportation without going before an immigration law judge, the details of which DHS said will be forthcoming in a notice in the Federal Register. This expansion of "expedited removal," will allow the government to bypass the backlogged immigration courts in order to remove or deport people rapidly and with little-to-no due process.

**THE INDIAN PANORAMA URGES READERS TO CONSULT AN ATTORNEY IF THEY HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE WAY THAT THE NEW U.S. IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY LAWS MAY IMPACT THEM, THEIR FAMILY, THEIR FRIENDS, OR THEIR COLLEAGUES.**

## Mexico voices "Irritation" to...

With a stern look while speaking to reporters on Thursday, February 23, after closed-door meetings with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Homeland Security chief John Kelly, Videgaray said it is "a complex time" for Mexican-US relations.

"There exists among Mexicans worry and irritation about what are perceived to be policies that could be harmful for the national interest and for Mexicans here and abroad," Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray told a news conference on Thursday.

The US government this week angered Mexico by saying it was seeking to deport many illegal immigrants to Mexico if they entered the United States from there, regardless of their nationality.

The immigration guidelines are the latest point of tension between neighbors already tense over Trump's vow to build a wall on the border and his attempts to browbeat Mexico into giving concessions on trade.

Videgaray and President Enrique Pena Nieto have been criticized at home for being too willing to engage with Trump. However, relationships between the two countries have gone downhill in the past few weeks.

Both sides on Thursday pledged further dialogue on migration, trade and security issues facing both nations.

Kelly and Tillerson were much more measured in their words than either the Mexicans or Trump, who on Thursday said a military operation was being carried out to clear "bad dudes" from the United States.

'No mass deportations'

For their part, Kelly and Tillerson sought to cool tempers as they adopted a more measured tone than either the Mexicans or Trump, who on Thursday said a military operation was being carried out to clear "bad dudes" from the US.

Kelly said there would be "no use of military force in immigration operations," and "no, repeat, no mass deportations".

None of the US officials made direct references to the deportation of immigrants from third countries to Mexico, or to paying for the border wall planned by Trump, a red-flag issue for Mexico. Both sides at the Mexico City talks on Thursday pledged further dialogue on migration, trade and security issues facing both nations. Al Jazeera's John Holman, reporting from Mexico City, said Mexico has been criticized as "timid" in confronting issues with the US in the past, but since Trump came into office it has grown "tougher".

"Usually, this is a quiet and cordial meeting. That's how it

has been for decades. But not under the administration of Donald Trump," Holman said.

## Indian Shot Dead by American...

Wednesday night, while another Indian and his colleague Alok Madasani was critically injured and is battling for life at a local hospital.

One other identified as Ian Grillot was also injured in the shooting.

The accused, Adam Purinton, 51, was arrested on Thursday, February 23 morning, five hours after the incident.

"It was a tragic and senseless act of violence," Olathe Police Chief Steven Menke told reporters.

According to local media reports, he yelled "get out of my country" at the Indians.

Purinton, a navy veteran, later reportedly told a bartender in Clinton, Missouri, where he was hiding that he killed two Middle Eastern persons, the Kansas City Star said.

The Indian Embassy has swung into action and two senior officials of the Indian Consulate in Houston have been sent to Kansas to assist the victims' families.

"Consul Ravindra Joshi and Vice Consul Harpal Singh rushed to Kansas to assist shooting victim.

They are on their way and will reach by evening," the consulate said in a tweet.

The accused has been charged with premeditated first-degree murder and his bond has been set at USD 2 million.

According to Garmin, Kuchubhotla and Madasani worked in the company's aviation systems.

"We're saddened that two Garmin associates were involved in last night's (Wednesday night) incident, and we express our condolences to the family and friends of our co-workers involved. Garmin will have grievance counsellors on-site and available for its associates today and tomorrow," Garmin said in a statement. (Source PTI)

## Indo-American Press Club ...

Nassau County, is set to administer the oath of office to the 2017 office-bearers, including Eapen George as General Secretary and Biju Chacko as Treasurer.

A highlight of the event will be felicitating Mr H.R. Shah, Chairman and CEO of TV Asia, on conferment of one of the highest civilian awards of India, Padma Shri.

The keynote address will be given by Jehangir Khattak, Co-Director, Center for Community and Ethnic Media, CUNY Graduate School of Journalism,

Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, Deputy Consul General, New York will preside over the function.

A book, Musings on Medicine, Myth, and History - India's Legacy, by Dr. VK Raju and Dr. Leela Raju will be launched. The authors will be present.

The roster of entertainment includes a skit by New Jersey street theater group, Prayog. Kalpita Chakote, who has performed at the UN and at Metropolitan Museum of Art, will present a classical dance. St. John's College students will present Bhangra. Surya Makkar will play the dhol.

Under founder and chairman, Ginsmon Zacharia, IAPC has grown from strength to strength. It has organized three successful annual international conferences in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut. A highlight of the conference last year was a presidential debate with representatives from Democratic and Republican sides. Prof. Indrajit S Saluja moderated the debate.

IPAC has six active chapters in America and Canada. The Atlanta chapter celebrated India's Republic Day this January in a big way. Last year, the Houston chapter hosted a debate and discussion on the presidential election to increase participation of the Indian community in the political process.



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# Yoga improves memory by reducing stress levels, per a University of Illinois study

Yoga practice improves executive function by attenuating stress levels, according to a study conducted by researchers at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) in USA.

An abstract of the study posted online from the December 2016 edition of Biological Psychology journal, stated: An 8-week Hatha yoga intervention attenuated stress response in an older adult sample.

It concluded: Eight weeks of regular yoga practice resulted in improved working memory performance that was mediated by an attenuated response to stress.

According to UIUC News Bureau: Researchers found that eight weeks of hatha yoga classes moderated stress levels and led to better performance on challenging cognitive tests. This study, supported by National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health, was conducted at Exercise Psychology Laboratory of UIUC directed by Professor Edward McAuley.

Distinguished Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement in Nevada today, called the UIUC looking into the usage of multi-



faceted yoga in stress levels and cognitive performance "a step in the positive direction". Zed urged all major world universities to explore various benefits yoga offers.

Yoga, referred as "a living fossil", was a mental and physical discipline, for everybody to share and benefit from, whose

traces went back to around 2,000 BCE to Indus Valley civilization, Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, noted.

Rajan Zed further said that yoga, although introduced and nourished by Hinduism, was a world heritage and liberation powerhouse to be utilized by all. According to Patanjali

who codified it in Yoga Sutra, yoga was a methodical effort to attain perfection, through the control of the different elements of human nature, physical and psychical.

According to US National Institutes of Health, yoga may help one to feel more relaxed, be more flexible, improve posture, breathe deeply, and get rid of stress. According to a "2016 Yoga in America Study", about 37 million Americans (which included many celebrities) now practice yoga; and yoga is strongly correlated with having a positive self image. Yoga was the repository of something basic in the human soul and psyche, Zed added.

According to Oxford Dictionary of Hinduism, hatha-yoga (yoga of force) is a form of yogic practice designed to bring about liberation and immortality in this life, through the purification and manipulation of the practitioner's body.

UIUC, founded in 1867, claims to be a "world-class leader in research, teaching, and public engagement" and "pioneer innovative research that tackles global problems". Robert Jones is the Chancellor.

## Vedic Prayers for 2017



By Bejan Daruwalla

### ARIES (March 21 to April 20)

So great is His Majesty, yet Man, the Person, is still greater: All beings are a part of Him Three parts are immortal in Heaven. You take possession, Divine Fire, Of all that the devoted being, On the altar you are kindled. Bring us the priceless treasure. Conqueror of deities, young seer, Born with unlimited power, The spirit sustains every act, And is acclaimed for His thunder.

### TAURUS (April 21 to May 21)

O fair one, banish the enemy with light! And prepare for us broad pastures free from fear! Ward off hatred, bring us your priceless treasure! O Bountiful, shower blessings on the singer! Illumine us with your glorious splendour, O divine Dawn! Enrich and lengthen our lives, O Goddess full of grace! Grant us fulfilment. And cows, horses, and chariots in abundance! I'm a singer, father's a doctor, Mother grinds flour with a millstone, Our thoughts all turn upon profit And cowlike we all plod along. For the sake of Spirit, O Mind, Let go of all these wandering thoughts!

### GEMINI (May 22 to June 21)

While communing with myself, alone, I ask: O when shall I dwell with the great Lord of Lords? Will He accept my gift with joy, not anger? With mind at peace, when shall I see His Mercy? I ask, Supreme Lord, wishing to know my sin: I seek out the pure in heart to question them, The enlightened always give the same reply: In truth the Lord Himself is angry with you. O Lord of Lords, what was my chief

transgression

That makes You punish a singer of Your Praise?

Tell me Mighty One, from Whom nothing is hid, That purified I soon may kneel and adore you.

### CANCER (June 22 to July 22)

Neither nonbeing nor being was a yet, Neither was airy space nor heavens beyond, What was enveloped? And where? Sheltered by whom? And was there water? Bottomless, unfathomed? Oh sing a song, a song of praise To the clear and swiftly flowing Drop of crystal with a thousand eyes. It is you with a thousand eyes, It is you with thousand ways That they purified with the sieve. Swiftly ran the drop of crystal Streaming through the sieve and rushing into the jars, Finding its way to Indra's heart. For Indra's sake, O nectar! Be purified, quick - flowing one. Bring us the seed of abundance.

### LEO (July 23 to August 23)

The beams ascend toward the God Who holds the knowledge of all lives, So that all things behold the Sun. Seven mares draw you, O Lord, In your chariot, Suyi Divine O Radiant One with hair aflame, He has yoked the splendid seven, The daughters of the Sun's chariot, And with this willing team, moves on. Emerging up above the dark, Toward the higher light we turn; We have attained the God of Gods, The Sun itself, the highest light.

### VIRGO (August 24 to September 23)

I am the Queen, gatherer of abundance, Knowing and wise, always supreme in worship Divine powers appointed me in all places; I have many homes, I enter many forms. O Daughter of Heaven, Dawn of noble birth, Whom the men of glory celebrate in hymns, Establish in us wealth sublime and mighty! O Gods, protect us always with your blessings. Sending out her beams, she rose up facing all,

**(Dear Readers, I have researched Vedic prayers for Western astrology. Therefore for 2017 I am offering it to you as a blessing and a gift. Be happy!)**

In brilliant robes, resplendent, radiating - Golden - coloured and glorious to behold, Mother of plenty, mistress of the days she shone.

### LIBRA (September 24 - October 23)

I blow like the wind; it is I that maintain And that I that sustain all things in creation. Beyond the Heavens and beyond this broad Earth: Such is the magnitude that I have assumed Neither was there death nor immortality, Nor was there any sign then of night or day; Totally windless, by itself, the one breathed; Beyond that, indeed, nothing whatever was. Stretched crosswise was their line, a ray of glory. Was there a below? And was there an above? There were sowers of seeds and forces of might: Potency from beneath and from on high the will.

### SCORPIO (October 24 - November 22)

I move with roaring, howling, and radiant might, I move with the infinite and nature's powers. I hold the love of Lords, I hold The fire of the soul, I hold like and healing. I possess the sacred potion and I wield The power of create, to nourish and give. Indeed, I strengthen him who sacrifices, The mindful one, the generous, him who serves. By your art, Spirit, You defeat The artful withering of Death. May the Wise who witness Your act Be inspired by You, O Spirit,

### SAGITTARIUS (November 23 - December 21)

Through my power, the man of judgement may eat And whoever breathes or hears the spoken Word; Unknowingly they all abide in me In truth, I speak; hear, O holy tradition! I alone utter the Word to Truth, the Word That brings enjoyment to Gods and men alike. The man I love, to him do I give power; I make him a divine, a seer, and a sage I stretch the bow of him who drives out evil That the arrow may strike wisdom's enemy I create among men strife and contention.

I fill both Earth and Heavens with my presence.

### CAPRICORN (December 22 - January 20)

By sacrifice Gods sacrificed to sacrifice. These were the earlier established principles, The Might Ones in this way reached perfect bliss, Where dwell the Gods, ancients who make straight the way. That sacrifice, blessed on the straw, Was Man, born in the beginning: Gods sacrificed by means of Him. So did the seers and the saints. Our thoughts wander in all directions And many are the ways of men: The Cartwright hopes for accidents, The physician for the cripple, And the priest for a rich patron. For the sake of Spirit, O Mind, Let go of all these wandering thoughts!

### AQUARIUS (January 21 - February 18)

Come together! Speak together! Let your minds be in harmony, As the gods of Old together Sat in harmony to worship. The speech is one, united are the voices: The mind in union with the thoughts of the Wise. In union with the words that I speak to you To you the sacrifice I make is one. Let your aim be one and single, Let your hearts be joined in one - The mind at rest in union - At peace with all, so may you be.

### PISCES (February 19 - March 20)

All the friends rejoice for their glorious friend At the end of his journey, reaching fulfilment, For he brings nourishment, and removes their guilt, And he is prepared to act courageously, While one man adds to the store of sacred verse, Another sings hymns to dispel ignorance, The Man of the World presents knowledge of what is And yet another gives measure to worship. Singing Your praise, O Mighty One! I come full of grace to the water And the workers of Truth stood by Witnessing, O Lover of Song!

# Grassroots hunt for Olympic winners begins

AHMEDABAD (TIP)

The Olympic Task Force (OTF), constituted recently to identify young talent and aid their training and transition to elite sportspersons, had an auspicious beginning on Thursday. Almost the entire sports fraternity of Gujarat, including government representatives, sports associations, sports journalists, sports medicine experts, school principals and coaches came together and interacted at a workshop.

"The task force will have the collective wisdom of all stakeholders at this first-of-its-kind workshop," said Om Pathak, an OTF member.

The passion to make India a major sporting nation, especially in Olympics, was apparent in all those who attended the workshop. Those given a chance to express their views gave suggestions on how to improve India's Olympics performance.

"I'm indeed very pleased to see the level of enthusiasm among all those present here today," said Sandip Pradhan, director-general, Sports Authority of Gujarat and also the convener member of the OTF.

"I'm especially happy that it's once again Gujarat which has taken the initiative to hold such a programme in Ahmedabad. It's a great moment that this first national dialogue after

**The Olympic Task Force (OTF) was constituted recently to identify young talent and aid their training and transition to elite sportspersons**

**Other topics discussed at the workshop ranged from the current state of Olympic sports in India to the obstacles that prevent Indian athletes from being competitive**

**Former Indian hockey captain Viren Rasquinha, who is also member of the OTF, also felt that this meeting was indeed a step in the right direction**

formation of the OTF has taken place in our state," Pradhan said.

Other topics discussed at the workshop ranged from the current state of Olympic sports in India to the obstacles that prevent Indian athletes from being competitive and winning more medals. A long-term strategy for 2028 Olympics and short-term plans for 2020 and 2024 Games to improve India's performance were proposed.

Former Indian hockey captain Viren Rasquinha, who is also member of the OTF, also felt that this meeting was indeed a step in the right direction.

India have the potential to reach 2020 Olympic hockey semifinals

Rasquinha felt that India's performance in international hockey has improved in the last few years. "Hockey India has been doing a wonderful job in the last five years. I

feel that our country has full potential to at least reach the 2020 Olympic hockey semifinals," said Rasquinha, who is also the CEO of the Olympics Gold Quest.

When asked as to who he felt were the greatest Indian hockey players, Rasquinha said Danraj Pillay and Dilip Tirkey were the best.

"We are on the right track. The Hockey India League is also doing very good," said Rasquinha, who retired at an early age when at the peak of his career. On the question of the best coach, Rasquinha was all praise for the present Indian coach Roelant Oltmans.

"Still I think Rajendra Singh Senior was the best Indian coach, although I am a big fan of Cedric D'Souza as well," said Rasquinha, who played 180 matches for India in a span of eight years. (PTI)

## Svitolina poised for top 10 breakthrough with Dubai win

DUBAI (TIP)

Elina Svitolina queued up a possible breakthrough into a first-time top 10 ranking as she reached the semi-finals of the Dubai Tennis Championships on Thursday with a 6-0, 6-4 defeat of Lauren Davis.

The seventh ranked, currently ranked 13th and winner of a fifth career title this month in Taipei, will line up on Friday against either top seed Angelique Kerber or Croatian Ana Konjuh after those two meet in a quarter-final at the Aviation club.

Kerber can regain the WTA top ranking from Serena Williams with a trophy performance on Saturday after losing the top honour after the American won the Australian Open.

"I'm really happy the way I started and the way I finished the match, I was being very aggressive and it worked really good," said Svitolina. "I was calm and positive today. I'm really happy with the performance.

"I was expecting she would do something different after losing 0-6 - it's always tough. I was expecting her to come back to the game.

"I was trying to stick to my plan and stay really positive. I knew that there would be some up-and-downs, but I tried to do more, more effort from my side so I didn't lose my focus too much."

Latvian Anastasija Sevastova put out the week's last Chinese hope,



defeating Wang Qiang 6-4, 7-5 as the Asian lost her first sets of the week.

Sevastova will wait for an opponent from tenth seed Caroline Wozniacki

and teenaged American CiCi Bellis, who upset 2012 champion and fourth seed Agnieszka Radwanska in the third round. (AFP)

## Australian Open: Surprise upsets of week one

Defending champion Novak Djokovic was knocked out in four hours and 48 minutes by world No 116 Denis Istomin in the second round, losing 7-6 (10-8), 5-7, 2-6, 7-6 (7-5), 6-4. It was the first time that Djokovic had been beaten in the second round of a Grand Slam since Wimbledon 2008.

Andy Murray's hopes of winning a first Australian Open title ended with a shock defeat to world number 50 Misha Zverev. Murray, the world No 1, dropped serve eight times as his German opponent won 7-5, 5-7, 6-2, 6-4 in the upset of the season.

A few hours after Murray's exit, the defending champion and world No 2 Angelique Kerber was beaten in the fourth round by unseeded Coco Vandeweghe, ranked 35 in the game. German Kerber, 29, won Grand Slam titles at Melbourne and New York last year, but went down to Vandeweghe 6-2, 6-3

Britain's Dan Evans, ranked 51, came from a set down to upset seventh seed and former US Open winner Marin Cilic 3-6 7-5 6-3 6-3 in the second round. This was the 26-year-old's biggest career victory, and came after he struggled with an eye problem while Cilic breezed through the first set in 31 minutes.

The British No 3's next victim was the home favorite Bernard Tomic, a victory which put him into the last 16. Evans beat the 27th seed 7-5, 7-6, 7-6 in two hours and 48 minutes in another great display of his handskills, holding his nerve in both tiebreakers. There was even arguments with the officials after a rain shower disrupted play at a crucial time in the third set.

This was a high-intensity match which Italian Andreas Seppi won, but made headlines for yet another Nick Kyrgios meltdown that sent him crashing out of the tournament. Perennial bad boy Kyrgios was accused of tanking, or giving up, during his 1-6, 6-7 (1/7), 6-4, 6-2, 10-8 loss to Seppi. Australian Kyrgios won the first two sets, then lost two, before the final went back and forth in riveting manner. (AP)

## Rooney to stay at Manchester United

LONDON (TIP): Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney will stay at the club, he said in a statement on Thursday, ending speculation that he could move to China.

"Despite the interest which has been shown from other clubs, for which I'm grateful, I want to end recent speculation and say that I am staying at Manchester United," Rooney said. British media had reported on Thursday that Rooney's agent, Paul Stretford, was in China to see if he could negotiate a deal for the England forward to leave United. (AFP)

## Hockey needs support from state governments too: Narinder Batra

CHANDIGARH (TIP): Asserting that future of Indian hockey was bright, FIH president Narinder Batra on Thursday said that state governments too should do their bit to ensure that the sport further flourish in this country.

"Hockey or any sport, besides cricket, cannot survive without government support. Sports being a state subject, states also need to get active. We have couple of states during my period - like governments of Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, they are the ones who support hockey," he said.

"Others do have teams, but I don't see any support coming from these state governments, whether it is infrastructure or whether it is development or whether it is coaching. States also need to get a bit involved. When we call hockey a de facto national game, I think states also have a little bit of commitment and if they get involved, the pace at which we want hockey to grow will be a bit different," Batra said.

About the nurseries of hockey, he said, "Nurseries of hockey they are in control, things are moving well, whether it is Punjab, Haryana, Odisha, Jharkhand, certain places in Karnataka, then Bhopal and Lucknow have also picked up. So, hockey is growing, but places like Hyderabad and Tamil Nadu, Mumbai and Maharashtra, we are not getting much of development of players from these areas." (PTI)



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