

## US Women's Hockey Team Beats Canada 3-2 for Gold at PyeongChang Olympics



Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson of the United States celebrates after winning the women's gold medal hockey game at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Gangneung, South Korea, Feb. 22, 2018

**GANGNEUNG, SOUTH KOREA (TIP):** US Women's Hockey team gave a shock to the fancied Canadians by winning the Gold in a thrilling penalty shootout 3 to 2. Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson, the sixth U.S. shooter in a shootout, skated slowly toward the net, faked a shot, shifted the puck left, then pulled it right before tucking the puck past the outstretched glove of diving Canada goalie Shannon Szabados. *contd on Page 20*

## Students, Parents, Teachers Implore President Trump to Ensure School Safety

Trump mulls arming teachers, increasing age for gun purchases

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** A week after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland in which 17 students were killed, President Donald Trump hosted a listening session with a group of survivors, parents and teachers. On hand were Vice President Mike Pence and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

Trump held an emotional, hour-long meeting with students who survived the Florida shooting and a parent whose child did not. He said arming teachers and other school staff could help prevent future mass shootings, voicing support for an idea backed by the powerful National Rifle Association gun lobby.

Trump sat in the middle of a semi-circle in the White House State Dining Room. Photographers captured images of his handwritten note card with questions and *contd on Page 20*



President Donald Trump meets with students, parents and teachers affected by mass shootings in Parkland, Fla., Newtown, Conn., and Columbine, Colo., at the White House on Feb 21 to talk about policies to keep America's schools safe.

## Breaking News

School officer waited outside building for 4 minutes as killings happened, Sheriff Israel says



**TALLAHASSEE (TIP):** A Marjory Stoneman Douglas school resource officer has been suspended without pay after Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said video shows him taking up a defensive position during the shooting but never entering the school. Israel announced Thursday that the decision to suspend Deputy Scot Peterson was made after reviewing video

*contd on Page 20*

Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel addresses a press conference on Feb 22, 2018.

## Trudeau's India visit mired in controversy over dinner invite to 'convicted Khalistani terrorist'



**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's India visit kicked off with rather a cold reception by government of India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has been very warm to visiting heads of state and government who he received warmly on arrival, sent in a junior minister to receive the visiting Prime Minister of Canada, ostensibly *contd on Page 20*

Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau received on arrival, Feb 17, by a minister of state for agriculture. (Image Tweeted by @Justin Trudeau)

## Special Counsel Mueller Files New Charges against Manafort and Gates



Manafort faces 18 new charges in Virginia, while Gates faces 23 new charges.

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Special Counsel Robert Mueller filed, February 22, new fraud and money-laundering charges against former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and his associate Rick Gates. In the 37-page indictment, prosecutors describe a "scheme" in which the two longtime business partners allegedly laundered \$30 million, failed to pay taxes for almost 10 years and used real estate *contd on Page 20*

## What is in store for a Possible Dallas-Houston Bullet Train?



**DALLAS (TIP):** The fight over Texas Central Railway -- aka. the Texas Bullet Train -- rests on many of the contentious fault lines that shape the Lone Star State. City interests versus rural identity. Urban dwellers versus people who want their stars at night to shine big and bright.

Mostly, it is about land. Who controls it, what's the best use for it and how much of it can the two metro areas -- Houston and Dallas -- claim so their economic futures are secure.

"How do you achieve that balance?" Harris County Precinct 4 Commissioner Jack Cagle asked. He supports the project despite the strong opposition of many in his district. "They don't want to have that next generation of development, and you have to be sensitive to that." *contd on Page 20*

## Indian-American seeks re-election to city council in Texas

**HOUSTON (TIP):** Indian-American Himesh Gandhi has filed for re-election to a city council in the US state of Texas.

He is a three-term incumbent of the At-Large Position 1 post on the Sugar Land, Texas, City Council and is seeking a fourth and final term in the May 5 election.

Gandhi, a longtime community leader, promised to continue his focus on improving the lives of residents in the thriving community.

"Sugar Land has been my home for most of my adult life. It is a diverse, growing city where we are successfully merging cultures, ideas and values," Gandhi told PTI.

"I am committed to maintaining quality development and robust city services while following smart spending practices," he said.

Himesh, first elected in 2012 at the age of 35, was the youngest councilman to be elected in a citywide vote. He has served on numerous City Council committees and was also a member of the task force that spearheaded development of the Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land "an iconic concert and performance hall that opened last year. *contd on page 20*



Gandhi, a longtime community leader is a three-term incumbent of the At-Large Position 1 post on the Sugar Land, Texas, City Council and is seeking a fourth and final term in the May 5 election.



## Indian Origin Canada's Defense Minister Harjit Singh Sajjan says He Faced Discrimination in Canadian Military



Harjit Singh Sajjan.

File Photo

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Indian origin Canada's Defense Minister Harjit Singh Sajjan said he "faced discrimination" in that country's military because he "looked different".

Sajjan, who moved to Canada as a young boy, said this in the presence of Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, wife of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, currently on a week-long visit to India.

"I was born in India and moved to Canada, when I was five... When I was 18 and joined the military there, I faced discrimination, even though I am a Canadian...because I looked different," he said, during the Asia launch of the global campaign -- 'She Will Grow Into It' here.

Sajjan is travelling along with Trudeau and his wife, and they visited Amritsar and even offered 'sewa' (volunteer service).

"I hail from a small village and lived a very simple life, before migrating to Canada," he said.

Sajjan, who became the Defense minister in 2015, also shared an anecdote from his youth days to underline the message of equality.

"I was 12, and I came across a girl in India, with round, beautiful eyes, who came towards me begging for money and I asked her to go away...Years later in Canada, when I faced discrimination, her face flashed in front of my eyes, and I realized she was begging because she was hungry," he said.

The Canadian minister said that then he realized how it felt to be treated unequal.

"Sixty per cent of the world's malnourished people are women, and this campaign seeks to fill the gap," Sajjan said.

During his interaction with young women from high schools, he described them as "powerful agents of change".

"Every child has a gift and endeavor to accomplish your inner potential and realize what you dream to become," he said, adding, that "But, when you find you dream and success, go back and serve people".

The campaign, led by Canada-based non-profit organization Nutrition International, was launched globally in Ottawa on the International Day of the Girl Child.

# Indian American student to build a primary health clinic in Uttar Pradesh village

**MARYLAND (TIP):** An Indian American student at Towson University is leading an effort to build a primary health clinic in a remote village in Uttar Pradesh.

Mohammad Siddiqi, 21, is helping to build a clinic in the village of Santokha, in the Sandila district, 50 miles to the southwest of Lucknow. Siddiqi's parents Akhlaq and Anjum Siddiqi were born and grew up in the area before they moved to the United States decades ago.

There are no healthcare facilities in Santokha and villagers are forced to see quack doctors with no medical background that recommend hazardous "treatments," Mohammad Siddiqi said. His mission is to provide quality healthcare to the poor people in the village and neighboring areas, he added.

"After visiting my parents' village for the first time, I realized there is very limited access to emergency medical services as well as a need for basic education regarding health practices in different situations, such as prenatal and postnatal care," he said. "I hope to tackle these two needs with this clinic, which is already well into its development."

Siddiqi, who is currently studying at Towson University with a major in accounting while interning part-time at Morgan Stanley as a finance analyst, has been able to raise \$75,000 for the construction of the clinic so far.



Mohammad Siddiqi, 21, is helping to build a clinic in the village of Santokha

His father, Akhlaq Siddiqi, works for the US Patent Office and his mother Anjum Siddiqi runs an assisted living facility in Gaithersburg, MD.

Although his studies and career plans are centered around accounting and finance - upon completing his undergraduate degree in May 2018, he plans to start an internship with Deloitte for Summer 2018 before pursuing a Master's in Finance - Mohammad Siddiqi said he has developed a passion to help others not as fortunate.

Among other things, the clinic will screen

patients for serious illnesses, such as heart diseases, cancer, blood diseases, eye diseases and kidney diseases, as well as treat common diseases including fever, malaria, tuberculosis, gastroenteritis, respiratory diseases and infections, he said. It will have curative, education and prevention programs.

Eventually, the clinic will have state-of-the-art diagnostic services, including X-ray, ultrasound and ECG, he added.

Siddiqi said a current challenge is building relationships with the local government as well as NGOs and healthcare professionals. Involvement of the local community and other stakeholders will ensure long-term viability of the project, he said.

Citing the assisted living facility his mother runs, Siddiqi said healthcare is a field that his family deeply cares about and has expertise in, and, considering his parents' roots in the area, starting a clinic in the Sandila region was quite natural.

His father Akhlaq Siddiqi said the family has a strong emotional bond with the village and wanted to do something for the area. After a family visit a few years ago, Mohammad saw the condition of the villagers and decided to take the initiative in building the clinic, he said.

"In future we plan to build similar clinic in other parts of Uttar Pradesh by mobilizing other people of Uttar Pradesh origin," Akhlaq Siddiqi said.

## Indian American NUMC surgeon from Long Island walks free of all criminal charges



Dr. Venkatesh Sasthakonar, on his way out of court in Mineola on Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2018. Photo / Courtesy Newsday

**LONG ISLAND, NY (TIP):** Indian American surgeon Dr. Venkatesh Sasthakonar has been cleared of all criminal charges by a judge in Nassau County, Long Island, according to news reports.

The well-known surgeon was accused by a nurse of allegedly trying to strangle her with an 'elastic cord' following differences over some medical procedures. But a judge exonerated him on Feb. 20, and police said there was insufficient evidence that any crime occurred after examining videos and talking to colleagues at the hospital. The 44-year old doctor is a veteran weight-loss surgeon. He had consistently maintained his innocence. News reports quoted the doctor's attorney saying the nurse's story was a complete lie.

Outside the courtroom after the judge pronounced the verdict, Dr. Sasthakonar was surrounded by friends and well-wishers. He occasionally became emotional as he recounted his traumatic experience. "What happened to me didn't hurt me," he is quoted saying in the abc7ny report, adding, "What happened to (my wife) and the kids is what hurt me...I thought being a good person could protect you against bad things happening to you, against evil. I don't trust that anymore." Dr. Sasthakonar is married to an internal medicine physician.

"I hope nobody goes through this hell including the person who started all this," Sasthakonar's wife is quoted saying in the cbslocal.com report, adding, "What happened in the past month was a nightmare." "After thoroughly reviewing this case, interviewing witnesses and analyzing surveillance video, it has been determined there is not enough evidence to support that a crime occurred," Brendan Brosh, a spokesman for Nassau County District Attorney's office, is quoted saying in a statement on cbslocal.com.

## Indian American Vandana Jhingan removed from Illinois Republican primary ballot in Illinois

**CHICAGO (TIP):** Indian American Vandana Jhingan, the Republican Hindu Coalition-backed candidate, has been removed from the official list of Republican primary ballot in Illinois' 8th Congressional District.

Jhingan was one of the two Indian American Republicans vying for the GOP nomination to run against the incumbent Democrat Raja Krishnamoorthi in the November election.

Jhingan was disqualified after a constituent, Steven Anderson, filed a complaint that many signatories to her nomination were not residents of the district.

Nonresidents, who are not registered voters, cannot be considered as signatories while filing the nomination.

According to election general counsel, Ken Menzel who spoke to the local Daily Herald, a second complaint was also filed against the Jhingan alleging improper circulation of the petition.

The paper said she lacked enough signatures and thus failed to make it to the official ballot.

Jhingan, a Chicago-based journalist, is the Midwest Bureau Chief of the Indian American cable network TV Asia.

Another Indian American candidate Jitendra Digavkar is on the ballot in the Republican primary. He is a businessman and runs a successful credit card process firm based in Schaumburg, which provides processing services to all types of businesses.

Krishnamoorthi, an attorney-turned-businessman, was elected to the US House of Representatives from the district in November 2016, defeating Republican Peter DiCianni.



Vandana Jhingan, a Chicago-based journalist, is the Midwest Bureau Chief of the Indian American cable network TV Asia



# Indian Origin Sikh Man's Turban Pulled Out Outside UK Parliament

**LONDON (TIP) :** An Indian Origin Sikh man's turban was pulled out by a white man shouting "Muslim go back" in an apparent racist attack outside the UK parliament, according to a media report.

Ravneet Singh, 37, from Punjab, was waiting to enter the Portcullis House, part of the British Parliamentary Estate, to meet Sikh Labor MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi when the assault took place on February 21st.

Mr. Singh said he was waiting in the queue when the man, who was shouting "Muslim go back", approached him and tried to remove his turban, a religious headgear.

"I was in the queue outside Portcullis House and this guy ran up to us. Just before we got to the entrance he came up to me and attacked me. He was pulling at my turban strongly. It half moved, and I grabbed it. Before he could do anything else I shouted at him and he ran," Mr Singh was quoted as saying by The Independent.

Mr. Singh said the man made a "racist comment" in another language that he did not understand.

"He was a white man, but he didn't sound English. He said something like 'Muslim go back'," he added.

Mr. Dhesi, who was to host Mr. Singh, expressed "disgust" at the incident and sought action against the culprit.

"Disgusted to discover today that someone filled with hatred tried to pull off the turban of one of my guests standing in line outside



Ravneet Singh, 37, from Punjab, was waiting to enter the Portcullis House

@UKParliament. I hope the @metpoliceuk /authorities will take urgent action," Mr Dhesi tweeted.

According to the report, the police have confirmed being alerted at 5.20 pm about the assault outside the building adjacent to the Houses of Parliament, which is home to

offices for MPs and their staff.

Police said no arrest has been made so far and they were probing the case.

The Sikh community in the UK has often been the mistaken target of hate crimes against Muslims that surged after the 9/11 attack in the US.

## Indian Americans Researchers Selected for Virginia's 2018 Outstanding STEM Awards

**Virginia's Outstanding STEM Awards are for the contribution and deep commitment towards the betterment of human health globally.**



Parthik Naidu and Arun J Sanyal

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Indian American researchers have been selected for Virginia's Outstanding STEM Awards for their contribution and deep commitment towards the betterment of human health globally.

STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Arun J Sanyal and Parthik Naidu are among six people selected by Virginia Governor Ralph Northam for the 2018 Outstanding STEM Awards.

While Sanyal has developed training programs in liver disease diagnosis and treatment, Naidu, 18, has developed a machine learning software to study 3D interactions of the cancer.

Celebrating the academic excellence and entrepreneurial spirit of these Virginians helps showcase how STEM innovations tie in to our everyday lives, said Governor Northam.

It also highlights the profound contribution that STEM makes to Virginia families and our economy. I thank these extraordinary awardees and everyone who works hard to make Virginia a leader in these important fields, Mr. Northam said.

Sanyal is a pioneer in identifying the mechanisms, clinical outcomes and management of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NASH) and metabolic syndrome, a disease of increasing prevalence and global consequences.

To address this, he has developed training programmes in liver disease diagnosis and treatment, and works to incorporate them in primary care settings. He was selected for the Virginia Outstanding Scientist award for his deep commitment to the betterment of human health globally via science, education and public policy. Naidu was selected as a STEM Phenom for his sharing of knowledge with others to inspire those around him to become change makers in addition to his application of STEM principles, a statement said.

He developed a machine learning software to study 3D interactions of the cancer when he was 17 years old.

The computational tool called DNALoopR is faster, less expensive and more accurately analyses the biological patterns of cancer DNA than laboratory tools that currently exist.

DNALoopR gives unprecedented insight into the inner workings of cancer, thus helping doctors create personalized treatments for millions of patients.

Naidu is currently a freshman at Stanford University studying computer science.

## Indian American statehouse delegate running for Congress from Maryland's sixth district gets Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett's endorsement



Aruna Miller

**MARYLAND (TIP):** Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett has endorsed Indian American Democrat Aruna Miller, who is running for Congress from Maryland's 6th congressional district.

"I am proud to endorse Aruna Miller to be the next Congresswoman from Maryland," he said. "In the years that I have known her, she has had an exemplary commitment to the people of Montgomery County and has dedicated herself to serving every individual she represents. Her record of votes and constituent services demonstrate that she is the right person for the job. We will all benefit having Aruna Miller in Congress."

Thanking Leggett, Miller, who is a Maryland statehouse delegate, said, "County Executive Leggett is a legend here in Montgomery County but also across the state. Every day he has made our state and our region a vibrant, thriving place to call home. His work will benefit generations of Marylanders and I am lucky enough not only to have him as my County Executive but also as a mentor, my former boss and as my friend. Ike's leadership has inspired me in my own public service career."

According to the Miller campaign, the Indian American has received endorsements from Maryland statehouse Speaker Michael Busch and Chairwoman Maggie McIntosh, in addition to many of her colleagues in the Maryland House of Delegates. "I am so fortunate to work with leaders like Ike Leggett who exemplify government service at its best," Miller said in a press release.

Leggett, a Vietnam War veteran who served as the chairman of Maryland Democratic Party, is retiring as the county executive later this year.

Miller moved to the US from India in 1972 following her parents and lived for a while in Poughkeepsie, New York, then moved to St. Louis, Missouri with family. She went to engineering school in Missouri University and is a civil engineer - a transportation engineer.

She married her college sweetheart and moved to Montgomery County, Maryland in the 1990s. The couple has three daughters. Two of them have graduated and they are working in New York City. And the youngest is a freshman in University of Maryland, College Park.

## Indian American from California adopts village in Telangana



Annapareddy Appi Reddy (Center)

Photo courtesy: Facebook@Telangana Information Technology Association

**SACRAMENTO (TIP):** Indian American Annapareddy Appi Reddy from California has adopted the remote Dondapadu village in Suryapet district as a part of Digithon Digital Village initiated by the Telangana Information Technology Association (TITA).

Till a few months ago, residents of the village believed a computer was just another gadget meant for students and the educated. But this initiative helps villagers understand banking, agriculture and even access anything beyond their village.

218 villagers are selected to be given basic computer training that equipped them to conduct digital transactions and be financially literate. The team selected participants who did not have access to a smartphone and trained them. They were introduced to E-Sage, an agriculture knowledge platform developed by the IIIT-Hyderabad, where they could learn new methods of farming and understand the market to sell their produce at apt prices.

While the team provided ground-level support, TITA president Sundeep Kumar Makthala said more than 40 NRIs responded to their call to adopt their villages under the Digithon program.

TITA, a non-profit and non-governmental organization working for the welfare of Telangana IT students, was started in 2013 by IT veterans who hail from Telangana region.



# Students Launch a Movement from Town Hall to Washington 'Never Again'

## NRA: GUNS ARE THE PROBLEM, DO SOMETHING

**SUNRISE, FLORIDA (TIP):** Survivors of the massacre at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, took center stage, Feb 21, at a town hall hosted by CNN as thousands of community members cheered on the young people thrust into the national spotlight by a massacre that killed 17 people.

Moderated by CNN anchor Jake Tapper, the Town Hall featured students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, parents and community members. The event was closed to the general public.



Moderated by CNN anchor Jake Tapper, the Town Hall featured students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, parents and community members

The students-turned-gun-control advocates, their teachers and parents asked frank questions of Sens. Marco Rubio and Bill Nelson and Rep. Ted Deutch about whether they would support banning certain assault-style rifles and refuse to take money from the NRA. National Rifle Association national spokeswoman Dana Loesch also participated in the discussion.

Sen Marco Rubio was the only Republican at the Town Hall. President Trump had declined to come. Republican Governor of Florida Rick Scott, too, stayed away as did other State lawmakers. Marco Rubio came in for much attack as did the NRA Spokeswoman Dana Loesch.

"We would like to know why do we have to be the ones to do this? Why do we have to speak out to the (state) Capitol? Why do we have to march on Washington, just to save innocent lives?" asked senior Ryan Deitsch, his voice rising with each question.

The Stoneman Douglas students and parents also confronted NRA spokeswoman Dana Loesch, who said the organization feels



Cameron Kasky, a junior at the school, asked Rubio to turn down campaign contributions from the National Rifle Association

the system for buying firearms is flawed and too many people who shouldn't be able to buy guns are getting through the cracks.

The town hall on Wednesday, Feb 21 night followed days of sit-ins, walkouts and demonstrations in solidarity with survivors of the massacre.

Avery Anger, 14, who hid in a closet during the shooting, said she didn't know what to think after the town hall. "It was more of a debate than a discussion," she said. She entered the town hall with one question -- "is it going to be safe for me to go back to school?" By the end, she still was unsure. "I don't feel like they answered the question." The shooting reignited the passionate national discussion on gun laws and how to keep communities safe, catalyzing a protest movement led by the young students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

Fred Guttenberg, whose daughter Jaime was killed, angrily addressed Rubio, wanting the senator to agree that semiautomatic rifles like the AR-15 type used in the shooting were the problem.

"Sen. Rubio, I want to like you. Here's the problem. ... Your comments this week and those of our President have been

pathetically weak," he said to lasting applause and cheers. "Look at me and tell me guns were the factor in the hunting of our kids in the school this week."

Guttenberg called on the senator to do something about guns, to work with the people affected by the massacre. Rubio, a Republican, replied, "I'm saying that the problems we are facing here today cannot be solved by gun laws alone."

Cameron Kasky, a junior at the school, asked Rubio to turn down campaign contributions from the National Rifle Association.

Rubio said he supports the Second Amendment, but he also stood for school safety. He wouldn't say he would turn down an NRA contribution.

"The influence of these groups comes not from money," he said, "You can ask that question and I can say that people buy into my agenda."

Loesch, the National Rifle Association spokeswoman, told the audience she was fighting for them and that people who shouldn't own guns should be reported by states to a national background check system.

"I don't believe this insane monster should have ever been able to obtain a firearm," Loesch said Wednesday night, calling the suspect "nuts."

While some in the crowd yelled, "You're a murderer," Loesch said the system to buy firearms is flawed.

Student Emma Gonzalez, who has been outspoken about her opposition to semiautomatic rifles, asked Loesch what the NRA's position was on bump stocks and making it more difficult to buy



A face off: Sheriff Scott Israel and NRA Spokeswoman Dana Loesch

certain weapons.

Loesch replied the NRA is waiting on the Justice Department to make a ruling on bump stocks.

Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel interrupted Loesch, saying he knew she was standing up for the NRA.

"But you just told this group you were standing up for them," he said. "You're not standing up for them until you say I want less weapons."

Deitsch told Rubio he had been doing active shooter drills since he was in elementary school. When he was in fifth grade he had to hide in a bathroom for three hours when his school went on lockdown because there were reports of a shooter in the town.

"Now seven years later, I am in a closet with 19 other kids waiting, fearing for my own life," he said.

Why do we have to lead the change, he asked?

Rubio said change can come when people on different sides, who have strong feelings, can agree on a way to make progress.

He said he has proposed a concept called a gun violence restraining order that would allow people to go to authorities with concerns about someone who should not have a gun. Police would be able to take away weapons, he said.

"I do appreciate your words there but that feels like the first step of a 5K run," Deitsch said.

Earlier in the day, President Donald Trump, who declined to participate in the town hall, suggested at a listening session at the White House that part of the solution to preventing school shootings could be having some armed, trained teachers on campus.

None of the politicians at the town hall was sympathetic to the thought.

Nelson, a Democrat said, "I think it is a terrible idea."

Rubio and Deutch agreed.

Robert Runcie, the Broward County school system superintendent, told the audience beforehand that teachers should be armed with more money.

Before the event, Israel fired up the crowd in the arena, saying,

"My generation, we did not get it done. You will get it done."

Runcie told the Stoneman Douglas students that they have started a movement.

"These are the young people that are going to change the world for the better. And let me tell you, our students are ready for this moment. They have been preparing for this moment," he said.

Some of the student participants came straight from the state Capitol in Tallahassee after lobbying state lawmakers for tougher



Robert Runcie, the Broward County school system superintendent, told the audience that teachers should be armed with more money, not with guns.

restrictions on weapons like the one used to kill their friends and teachers.

The evening closed with poignant moments, one involving the words of Alex Schachter, one of the students who died.

Read by his dad, Max Schachter, the poem was about roller coasters. Alex loved them.

"He wasn't writing about his life and had no idea his poem would become the future," Max Schachter said.

In the poem, Alex compared the ups and downs of life to a roller coaster.

"It may be too much for you at times. The twists, the turns, the upside downs, but you get back up. You keep chugging along," he wrote.

The program closed with a song, "Shine," performed by members of the Stoneman Douglas drama club.

The song was addressed to the shooter, who is in jail.

You may have hurt us

But I promise we are not going to let you in



A view of the gathering

Photos / CNN screenshots

We're putting up a fight

You may have brought the dark but together we will shine a light

And we will be something special

We're going to shine, shine

Different students said these lines between verses:

We refuse to be ignored by those who will not listen.

There are so many things you can do to become involved.

Reach out to your congressmen, mail, call and tweet.

The smallest of words can make the biggest difference.

Be the voice for those who don't have one.

The President pledged to go to work after the meeting ended.

"We don't want others to go through the kind of pain you have gone through. It wouldn't be right," he said.

The father of Meadow Pollack, who was killed last week, said he was speaking at Wednesday's session because his daughter couldn't.

"We as a country failed our children," Andrew Pollack said.

(Source: CNN)



# Immigration in Italy: Facts and myths ahead of election

**ROME (TIP):** A right-wing coalition shepherded by ex-prime minister Silvio Berlusconi is capitalising on anti-immigrant feeling in the lead up to Italy's general elections on March 4.

Here are four sets of facts about common complaints, misconceptions and other aspects of immigration in Italy:

Italy's national statistics institute Istat says that there are five million foreigners legally resident in Italy. That's 8.3 percent of the country's population of 60.5 million.

More than 690,000 migrants, most from Sub-Saharan Africa, have arrived by boat from Libya since 2013. Migration study foundation ISMU estimates that around 500,000 are living in the country illegally -- 0.9 percent of the population.

Government figures put the cost in 2017 of migrants arriving via Libya at more than 4.2 billion euros, of which 65 percent was spent on taking care of asylum seekers during their application process.

According to a study by the Idos Institute, overall immigrants bring in between 2.1 and 2.8 billion euros more than they cost the state.

"People go crazy there. There are many young people whose brains just go numb after a few months," says Moussa Bamba, a 32-year-old Ivorian. He spent several months crammed in a crowded reception centre near Venice with 1,400 other migrants.

The Conetta facility was dubbed a "human



warehouse" by local mayor Alberto Panfilio. While some facilities offer activities and support, others are accused of scrimping on costs while immigrants wait for up to two years on a decision on their status.

Italy's Interior Ministry says the crime rate has dropped by 8.3 percent the last 10 years, despite the fact that the number of foreigners in the country has increased from three to five million.

Figures presented by the ministry showed that in 2017 murders dropped by nearly 12 percent, robberies by 11 percent and burglaries by nine percent.

A controversial agreement signed by Rome with the Libyan authorities and militias last summer reduced arrivals by 70 percent.

The government also oversaw a 12 percent increase in expulsions last year, from 5,817 in 2016 to 6,514. (AFP)

## 'Racist' white powder letter sent to Meghan Markle: Report

**LONDON (TIP):** A letter with white powder was sent to Prince Harry and his fiancée Meghan Markle, the Evening Standard newspaper reported on Thursday, saying it was also believed to contain a racist message.

The paper said that officers from the Metropolitan Police's counter-terrorism command were called in after the letter was received on February 12 at a sorting office in St James's Palace in central London.

But analysis of the powder found that it was harmless. Contacted by AFP, Prince Harry's press service at Kensington Palace declined to comment on the report.

"Police are investigating after a package containing a substance was delivered to St James's Palace on Monday, 12 February," police said in a statement.

"The substance was tested and confirmed as non-suspicious. Officers are also investigating an allegation of malicious communications which relates to the same package," the statement said.

The Evening Standard said police were believed to be examining whether the incident was linked to a package containing white powder that was sent to the British parliament on February 13. The couple are due to marry in Windsor on May 19.

When their relationship was first revealed in 2016, Harry issued a strongly-worded statement against media harassment of his mixed-race girlfriend. (AP)

## Court considers banning diesel cars in German cities

**BERLIN (TIP):** A German court began considering today whether authorities should ban diesel cars from cities to lower air pollution, a move that could have drastic consequences for the country's powerful auto industry.

The Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig is hearing an appeal by two German states against lower court rulings that suggested driving bans for particularly dirty diesel cars would be effective and should be seriously considered as a means of protecting public health.

The court has said a verdict could be issued as early as later today. If judges reject the appeal, dozens of cities would have a few months to enact measures to remove heavily polluting diesel vehicles from the roads -- an administrative nightmare for local authorities and a heavy blow to drivers who bought cars they were promised met emissions standards.

The original court cases were brought by environmental campaigners, who accuse the government of putting automakers' interests before people's health.

German car manufacturer Volkswagen was found three years ago to have used in-car software to cheat on US diesel emissions tests. The discovery resulted in large fines and costly buybacks for VW in the United States, but the German government has refrained from punishing VW, a major employer that's partly owned by the state of Lower Saxony.

Apart from hitting Volkswagen and other German carmakers, officials warn that a ban could paralyse bus companies, garbage collection services and tradespeople who rely heavily on diesel vehicles.

The European Union is also putting pressure on Germany and other countries for failing to rein in air pollution. (AP)

# As China puts pressure on Taiwan, signs of a US pushback

**BEIJING (TIP):** As China ratchets up pressure on Taiwan, the self-governing island it claims as its territory, the United States is cautiously starting to push back.

In recent months, Chinese strategic bombers have been conducting "island encirclement" flights, escorted by fighter jets. The Chinese government has discouraged tourism to Taiwan and imports of goods such as fish over the past year and a half, hurting its economy. And China persuaded the island's most important remaining diplomatic ally, Panama, to switch diplomatic recognition last summer from Taipei to Beijing.

Concern about Taiwan's fate now appears to be building slowly in Washington, even as US President Donald Trump continues to seek China's help on other issues. Through his first year in office, Trump pressed Beijing to put more pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, with limited success. He has also sought to limit China's nearly \$400 billion trade surplus with the United States, which has nonetheless continued to widen.

Against that backdrop, Washington has recently begun moving gradually to reinforce its ties to Taiwan, a vigorous democracy facing an increasingly authoritarian government in Beijing.

Bills have been introduced in Congress to promote visits to Taiwan by warships and by civilian officials. A small gathering of defense contractors is planned for May to discuss Taiwan's production of parts for weapons assembled in the United States. And in June, a US institute that functions as an informal diplomatic channel plans to open an elegant new complex in Taiwan's capital.



"It looks like the Trump administration is playing the Taiwan card for whatever purpose -- to put pressure or to seek concessions," said Willy Lam, an adjunct professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Chinese officials are showing signs of annoyance, and raising accusations that the United States is interfering in what Beijing considers one of its redline issues. "It is horrible that the present situation of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait will probably be turbulent," said a commentary earlier this month on Huaxia, a Beijing-controlled news service on Taiwan issues.

Senator James Inhofe, R-Okla., the second-ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Forces Committee after Senator John McCain, R-Ariz., is in Taiwan this week, leading a large delegation of House and Senate committee members and staff.

They have been meeting with President Tsai Ing-wen and her senior ministers, a dialogue likely to offend Beijing officials. In an emailed reply to questions, Inhofe endorsed continued US support for Taiwan, including a bill pending in the Senate that would encourage senior administration officials to visit the island. The bill has already passed the House.

"With China becoming more aggressive and intent on expanding its influence globally, the United States-Taiwan security relationship is now more important than ever," the senator said. "By ensuring they have the ability to defend themselves, Taiwan will continue to be an important part of promoting regional stability." Trump signed separate legislation in December, bitterly opposed by Beijing, that included a provision encouraging mutual port calls by naval vessels from Taiwan and the United States. (NYT Service)



## ED FREEZES DEPOSITS, SHARES WORTH RS 44 CR OF NIRAV GROUP

**MUMBAI/NEW DELHI (TIP):** The ED on Friday said it had frozen bank deposits and shares worth about Rs 44 crore of the Nirav Modi group, and seized a huge collection of imported watches from locations linked to the billionaire diamantaire.

Officials said they had put freeze orders on bank accounts containing Rs 30 crore and shares worth Rs 13.86 crore of the group under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

A huge collection of imported watches, 176 steel almirahs, 158 boxes and 60 other containers had been seized during ED searches at multiple locations linked to the billionaire diamond jewellery designer over last week, they said.

Only on Thursday, the agency seized deposits, shares and luxury cars worth over Rs 100 crore of the businessman and his group.

Modi, his uncle and Gitanjali Gems promoter Mehul Choksi and others are being investigated by the ED and other probe agencies after it recently came to light, following a complaint by the PNB, that they allegedly cheated the nationalised bank to the tune of Rs 11,400 crore, with the purported involvement of a few employees of the bank.

The CBI and the ED have registered two FIRs each to probe the case. Both Modi and Choksi are said to have left the country before criminal cases were lodged against them.

Source: PTI

## Congress will not name CM candidate before Rajasthan polls



**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Congress will not declare its chief ministerial face ahead of the Rajasthan Assembly polls, party general secretary in-charge for the state Avinash Pande said on Thursday, stressing that it has been the party's "tradition".

He said the party's Rajasthan leaders will put on a united performance to ensure victory "as they did" during the recently-held bypolls in Ajmer and Alwar parliamentary seats and Mandalgarh assembly segment in the state.

"It has been the Congress tradition that it never declares a CM face, barring exceptional cases, ahead of assembly polls. The high command decides the chief minister after discussing it with elected MLAs. This tradition will be followed in Rajasthan too," Pande said.

Earlier in the day, Congress president Rahul Gandhi held a meeting with Rajasthan Congress leaders, including former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, state unit chief Sachin Pilot and others on the party's activities for the next six months.

Pande maintained that the leadership issue in connection with the state assembly polls, scheduled to be held later this year, did not figure during the meeting.

"We sought the final approval for the party programme for next six months (from Gandhi). All the leaders in unison assured that the programme will be implemented jointly. Rahul ji wished them good luck," he added.

Pande also said that the leaders have decided that the state unit's 'Mera Booth, Mera Gaurav' programme will be implemented in all the assembly segments of the state, which goes to polls later this year.

"Hamara hoga ek hi agenda, Congress ka jhanda (Our only agenda is to see Congress flag flies high)," Pande added.

Asked about the meeting with Gandhi, Pilot said it was decided that the party will undertake a mass outreach programme in all the 200 assembly segments of the state.

"We have now a lot of weight on our shoulders (following the success in bypolls). Expectations are very high from the Congress and we must not rest and immediately start a mass outreach programme the youth, farmers, middle class, rural areas in 200 constituencies. The meeting discussed the details of the same," Pilot added.

Source: PTI

# Bank loan default: Rotomac promoter Kothari, son arrested by CBI

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Central Bureau of Investigation on Feb 22 arrested Rotomac promoter Vikram Kothari and his son Rahul Kothari on charges of cheating a consortium of seven banks by siphoning off bank loans to the tune Rs 2,919 crore.

"Both the accused were not cooperating with the investigators and were evasive in their replies during questioning which necessitated their custodial interrogation," said a CBI spokesperson.

The arrests came after the Kotharis were questioned for the fourth consecutive day on Thursday following searches at their residences and office premises in Kanpur.

The CBI had registered an FIR in the case on the basis of a complaint received from the Bank of Baroda, which was part of the consortium, that alleged misappropriation of funds and violation of Fema guidelines.

The banks had claimed that their total outstanding dues, including interest, stood at Rs 3,695 crore.

The agency had named Rotomac Global Private Ltd, its directors Vikram Kothari, his wife Sadhana Kothari and son Rahul Kothari, and unknown bank officials as accused in the case.

The Enforcement Directorate is probing the money laundering allegations against the Kotharis. The Income Tax Department has attached four properties of Kothari - three in Kanpur and one in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

The Bank of Baroda had said in its complaint it had discovered that offices of Rotomac's overseas suppliers and buyers



CBI officials at the Rotomac Global Private Limited office at Mall Road in Kanpur.

in Hong Kong, Dubai and Sharjah were either closed or operating virtually. This prompted the state-owned bank to complain to the CBI that the company's promoters were carrying out fake mercantile trade.

The case comes on the heels of a Rs 11,400-crore alleged fraud in Punjab National Bank (PNB) in which jeweller Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi are accused.

Meanwhile, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) chairperson said they will probe if the chartered accountants (CAs) associated with the Rotomac group followed standard norms.

"Action will be taken if the CAs are found to be involved in any irregularities," chairman of the Central



Vikram Kothari

India Regional Council of ICAI (CIRC-ICAI) Deep Kumar Misra said.

## India 81st on global corruption index

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** India has been ranked 81st on the global corruption perception index for 2017, released by Transparency International, which named the country among the "worst offenders" in terms of graft and press freedom in the Asia Pacific region.

The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, placed India at the 81st place. In the 2016, India was at 79th place among 176 countries. The index uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. India's score in the latest ranking, however, remained unchanged at 40. In 2015, the score was 38.

Transparency International further said, "In some countries across the region (Asia Pacific), journalists, activists, Opposition leaders and even staff of law enforcement or watchdog agencies are threatened, and in the worst cases, even murdered."

"Philippines, India and the Maldives are among the worst regional offenders in this respect. These countries score high for corruption and have fewer press freedoms and higher number of journalist deaths," it added.

In the last six years, 15 journalists working on corruption stories in these countries were murdered, as reported by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

In the latest ranking, New Zealand



- In the latest ranking, New Zealand and Denmark occupied the first two spots at the top of the index, with scores of 89 and 88 respectively.
- On the other hand, Syria (178th), South Sudan (179th) and Somalia (180th) were ranked the lowest in the index, with scores of 14, 12 and nine.
- Among other South Asian countries, Bhutan fared the best with a ranking of 26th.
- Other countries include Pakistan (117th), Afghanistan (177th), Nepal (122th), Myanmar (130th), Bangladesh (143rd), the Maldives (112th) and Sri Lanka (91st).
- China fared a bit better than India and was ranked 77th, with a score of 41.

and Denmark were placed the highest, with scores of 89 and 88, respectively. On the other hand Syria, South Sudan and Somalia were ranked lowest with scores of 14, 12 and 9, respectively.

Meanwhile, China with a score of 41 was ranked 77th on the list, while Brazil was placed at 96th with a score of 37 and Russia was at the 135th place with a score of 29.

Further analysis of the results indicates that countries with the least protection for press and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also tend to have the worst rates of corruption. The analysis, which incorporates data from the CPJ, showed that in the last six years, nine out of 10 journalists were killed in countries that score 45 or less on the index.

Source: ANI



# Pakistan will pay for Jammu attack: Army chief Gen Bipin Rawat

NEW DELHI (TIP): Army chief General Bipin Rawat said Indian army will give Pakistan a reply "sooner rather than later" for the February 10 terror attack on a military camp in Jammu, reported Hindustan Times.

Six soldiers and a civilian were killed in the fidayeen attack in Sunjuwan by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists. Soon after the incident, defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that Pakistan, which she accused of backing the attackers, would pay for its "misadventure".

"Pakistan thinks it is fighting a war that is paying them dividends but we have several options, including surgical strikes," the army chief said in an interview on Wednesday, without giving details that would compromise India's tactical and strategic response.

Rawat said that he would order a ceasefire at the Line of Control (LoC) as soon as Pakistan stops sending terrorists to India. "The Indian Army will honour the ceasefire and de-escalate tensions the day Pakistan stops sending terrorists across the line of control," Rawat said, referring to the 2003 agreement put in place as a confidence-building measure, Hindustan Times reported.

Ceasefire violations at the LoC have spiked over the last year. There were 860 such violations recorded in 2017 from either side, as compared to 271 the previous year, according to government data.

Asked about the January 27 firing in Shopian, in which three protestors were killed by army bullets at a time when the PDP-BJP government had withdrawn cases against first-time stone-pelters on the suggestion of the Centre's interlocutor Dineshwar Sharma, Rawat



**The army chief also defended Shopian firing by forces, saying stone-pelters were hampering military operations**

said: "The cases were withdrawn as a goodwill gesture but what goodwill are they (the stone pelters) showing? The pelting continues."

He defended the military action, saying stone-pelters were hampering military operations. "The army has a job to do. We don't want collateral damage but what do you expect us to do when we get surrounded by a stone pelting mob? Even in Shopian, we fired in the air first."

Referring to the controversial incident when Major Gogoi tied Kashmiri shawl weaver Farooq Ahmad Dar to the bonnet of a jeep last year, "Let me tell you, we honour local sentiments and don't conduct operations during janazas (funeral processions) even though terrorists come there and fire in the air. What do you want me to do, have a seat in front of all jeeps. We got flak even for that."

The Jammu & Kashmir police had registered an FIR against the army after the Shopian firing. Asked if he had given permission to the father of Major Aditya (named in the Shopian FIR) to approach the Supreme Court to get the police complaint quashed, Rawat said, "The father has a right to defend his son. If a girl (Kerala actress Priya Varrier) can approach the court because her wink has offended people can't a father do the same if he apprehends that his son would be arrested?"

The General also had a piece of advice for the media: to not show visuals of grief-stricken family members of martyrs. "Because the media only focuses on soldiers killed by Pakistan, they build a narrative on how they have managed to inflict a blow on us."

All martyrs are equal, he added, "even those killed in an avalanche".

Source: HT



Maldivian president Abdullah Yameen with Chinese president Xi Jinping in Beijing in December 2017.

## CHINA'S GROWING TIES WITH MALDIVES GIVE INDIA JITTERS

NEW DELHI (TIP): Relative to India, China is a late entrant in the Maldives, a key Indian Ocean nation and the only SAARC member-state Prime Minister Narendra Modi is yet to visit.

But China may well have stolen a march over India, which hasn't quite managed to have its concerns over happenings in the island nation addressed by Maldives president Abdullah Yameen, who extended the emergency in his country much to New Delhi's dismay, according to Hindustan Times report.

Maldives' reluctance to follow its promised "India-first" policy has, in recent times, become an irritant for New Delhi. External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj conveyed this to her Maldivian counterpart, Mohamed Asim, in as many words when they met in New Delhi last month, an official familiar with the development recalled. "The minister conveyed the message that the India-first policy is as important a part of taking bilateral ties forward as India's neighbourhood-first policy," he said on condition of anonymity.

Although the Chinese footprint in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region is something New Delhi has learnt to live with despite an understandable unease, the rapid expansion in ties between Male and Beijing has become a larger cause of concern. The Maldives - located around 700 km from Indian shores - has become a showpiece of mega projects-driven Chinese foreign policy as well as an important player in President Xi Jinping's marquee one-road-one-belt project. Chinese presence in the island nation has been growing steadily ever since Beijing opened an embassy in Male in 2011, about 37 years after India set up its mission there.

The Indian Ocean region has around 40 countries and is home to 40% of the world's population. It touches Australia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia and the eastern sea bend of Africa - making the countries that rim the ocean vital cogs in the geopolitical ambitions of both India and China.

Source: HT

## AFTER 70 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE ELECTRICITY REACHES ELEPHANTA CAVES



MUMBAI (TIP): After 70 years of Independence power supply has finally reached Elephanta Caves near Mumbai.

A 7.5-km long undersea cable has brought electricity to the world-famous Gharapuri Isle, which houses the UNESCO world heritage site.

"It's a historic day today. This is the first time that such kind of big wire cable is used in the Arabian Sea to spread the lines for electricity," said Chandrashekhar Bawankule, Minister of Energy, New and Renewable Energy.

He further said that the step would now increase the tourism and more people would visit the world heritage site.

The step will also benefit three villages including Raj Bander, Mora Bander and Shet Bander.

Source: ANI

## 'Act East Policy' to be reality: PM

KOHIMA (TIP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi today expressed firm resolve that the "Act East Policy" would be made a reality to connect people of the North-East with South East Asian countries to ensure speedy development.



He emphasised that the development of the North-East was an essential component to realise the dream of a developed country. "Transformation of the region by transportation is being worked out to bring about faster development in the region," he said. Modi was addressing a poll rally at Tuensang Town public ground in Nagaland ahead of Assembly poll on February 27.

He affirmed that the BJP-led NDA government was committed to the transformation of Nagaland. "The dream of having a new India will go alongside the vision of the Naga people towards having a new Nagaland," he said.

"Unless the North-East is developed, the dream of having a developed country will not be achieved and, therefore, the BJP government is paying special attention to the requirement of the region," Modi said. "Connectivity is a huge challenge in Nagaland. We are working relentlessly towards it. In less than four years, we have added 500 km of national highways. We plan to invest over Rs 10,000 crore in roads in Nagaland," he said.

## Kamal Haasan launches political party

CHENNAI (TIP): Kamal Haasan's telegenic charm was on full display on Feb 21 night when he told a rapturous crowd of supporters in Madurai that his new party would be called the Makkal Needhi Maiam.



The Tamil words roughly translate into People's Justice Party, or People's Justice Front, although technically, "maiam" means centre.

"The newly founded Makkal Needhi Miram is your party. It's here to stay, and to make the change we all aspire for. Guide us to serve you," Kamal Haasan wrote on Twitter, even as he was joined on stage in Madurai by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party's Tamil Nadu unit chief, Somnath Bharti.

He explained that people had asked him if he was on the Right or the Left. Maiam means "centre," and that's why he named his party Makkal Needhi Maiam, he said.

"Six hands is the representation of the six states and the star in the centre is you," he added.

Earlier, Kamal met former president APJ Abdul Kalam's elder brother and other family members at the residence here.

"Greatness can come from simple beginnings," he said.

"Actually it will come only from simplicity. Glad to start my journey from a great man's simple abode," the actor added in a tweet.





## COMMENT

Prof I.S.Saluja

## Listen to the Imploring Voice of the People, Mr. President

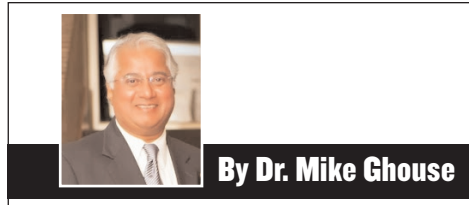
President Trump seems convinced that more guns in the hands of more people can secure school and community. In his listening session with survivors of Stoneman Douglas High School Parkland, Florida shooting which resulted in death of 17 young students, Trump suggested arming 20% to 30% teachers of a school as a safety measure at a school. Obviously, President is obsessed with the idea of more guns in the hands of more people. I recall how he said he planned to make America great again. One of the ways he suggested was to have more weapons and be the strongest nation in the world. Well, he has a right to his opinion. But so have others. Many were surprised at his idea. Many were simply shocked. Many pooh poohed the suggestion, as Sen Nelson who described it as "a terrible idea" later in the evening at the CNN Town Hall in Tallahassee. Even one of the most committed supporters of NRA Sen Marco Rubio, at the CNN Town Hall in Tallahassee scoffed at the idea. He said the job of the teachers is to teach, not to carry guns. At the same time, he expressed fear that an armed teacher may just as well cause another tragedy in having a gun in hand, in the event of an attack at a campus and arrival of a SWAT team who are more likely to act fast on seeing a gun in the hand of a person. They are not going to wait to know that it is a teacher who has been given a gun for protection. A teacher at the Town Hall said it plainly that she could not think of carrying a gun. Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel simply laughed at the idea, saying how could a few teachers secure a large school campus.

What is needed is a common-sense gun control policy. We must respect 2nd Amendment which was passed for the safety and security of people, not for their killing. Over the decades since it was passed there have been so many situational shifts that a fresh look has to be given with the objective of ensuring that dangerous guns do not get in to hands of everyone and that our schools and neighborhoods are safe.

Raising the age limit for securing a gun, background checks, mental health checks and taking off the shelf guns with high caliber could be some solutions to the problem, to begin with. What is needed is loyalty to people of America, not to NRA. I will repeat what I had said in an earlier comment, "gun in the hand of a good guy against a gun in the hand of a bad guy" policy does not work. I hope, President of America will listen to the voice of the people.

# AS I SEE IT

## Russian Meddling with India - Was the 2014 Indian Election rigged?



By Dr. Mike Ghouse



Deepa Seetharam, a reporter from Wall Street Journal called me and asked if I spoke in a rally at White House in September 2016? I said no, and then she reminded me that my name was listed as a speaker.

Seetharam wrote in WSJ's October 30, 2017, publication, "Representatives from the Facebook page 'United Muslims of America' asked Mike Ghouse, an interfaith activist, to speak at a Sept. 3, 2016, event in Washington, D.C. billed as 'a peaceful rally, to make mosques and their neighborhood safe!'"

The group sent Mr. Ghouse placards they intended to use that included anti-Trump messages, causing him to back out, he said. "I said they should be more pluralistic, more inclusive because there's no need to attack Trump," Mr. Ghouse said. "They wouldn't, so I didn't go." Obviously, I did not speak there either.

"Some events stoked public discord. At the rally in front of the Islamic center in Houston, about a dozen protesters gathered, some waving confederate flags or holding a sign that said '#WhiteLivesMatter,' according to video footage."

Russians had an elaborate plan of pitting one American against the other, their end goal was to weaken democracies and create discord within each nation - their logic was; for Russia to shine, other countries have to be weakened, and Russia will stand out as the strongest nation in the world with a strong man running the nation. Putin is the Czar under his skin.

CNN reports that "80 times Trump talked about Putin." Indeed, "Throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump consistently broke from political orthodoxy in his effusive praise of Russian President Vladimir Putin. His glowing statements on Putin have become central in stoking the suspicion that he and his campaign were somehow connected to Russian interference in the election."

Narendra Modi in Russia praises President Vladimir Putin's family for sacrificing lives

**"Do you see a correlation in getting the innocent Hindus to develop anti-Muslims sentiments through the communal riots, leading into to complete takeover of the Uttar Pradesh? The likes of which were done here in the United States. Did Russia pay for those riots through the Sangh Parivar organizations to weaken the Indian Democracy? Both Modi and Trump have a special affection for Putin; and both of them want to emulate Putin", says the author.**

for the country. Modi praises Putin's effort in convening 1st Tiger conservation Summit.

<https://www.theindianpanorama.news/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Pic-2-Russian-Meddling.jpg> Both Modi and Trump think Putin is awesome, someone to be modeled after, as they want to dictate to the public.

Senator John McCain said in an interview that Putin is determined to prove to the world that Democracies don't work. Indeed, that is what the fascists think about democracies - they get their devoted slaves to do whatever they want - attacking others as Sikularist and calling the news that goes against them as fake news. It's amazing how many people buy that stuff in India and the United States.

Both Modi and Trump have resorted to divide and rule policies; they are determined to pit one Indian against the other in case of Modi, and one American against the other by Trump.

Russians staged "Anti-Trump rallies" in the name of American Muslims. Perhaps, that may be the reason Trump is so anti-Muslim. Some of the rallies were held against Hillary to give the impression that it is the work of public, and some were devised against Trump just to make it look real. build up support for him.



What happens in India? Manohar Joshi writes in the Wire, "The fact that communal violence is rising in India is not hidden. Even the government acknowledges that there has been a steady uptick in communal incidents. In response to a question in parliament on Tuesday (February 6), minister of state Hansraj Ahir disclosed that as many as 111 people were killed and nearly 2,500 injured in 822 communal incidents in 2017, as compared to 751 incidents in 2016 that took the life of 97 people and 703 in 2016 when 86 were killed."

Did the Russians stage these events? Did

they pay these men to stage communal riots and murder people?

The fake encounters set up by the Gujarat police earned further support for BJP from an average innocent Hindu. Of course, Musharraf's Kargil invasion strengthened the hold of BJP in power.

Putin failed in France and Germany but succeeded in Austria, India, United States and other nations.

Most Indians will resist the idea of an investigation; they simply do not want to believe that the Indian Elections may have been rigged. They are afraid of even exploring the possibilities. If they have lost their loved ones, they would want to know if Russia is paying the goons to create chaos. Is Yogi Adityanath paid agent of Russia? The purpose of the investigation is to find the truths if they are clean, that would be good news. What if they were not? Should they continue in governing India and continue to pit one Indian against the other?

Do you see a correlation in getting the innocent Hindus to develop anti-Muslims sentiments through the communal riots, leading into to complete takeover of the Uttar Pradesh? The likes of which were done here in the United States. Did Russia pay for those riots through the Sangh Parivar organizations to weaken the Indian Democracy? Both Modi and Trump have a special affection for Putin; both of them want to emulate Putin.

Neither Trump nor Modi was expecting to win; all the surveys, reports and polls indicated the win for Congress in India and Democrats Trump in America. Both the men were surprised with the win, let alone landslide wins.

The Russians publicized or financed at least 60 events - on all sides of most polarizing issues - before and after the 2016 election. What about India's 2014 election?

Is it worth investigating Russian hand in the mess that is created in India? Should we save the nation from divisive men? These men will come and go in one or two terms, but it is the common men and women in India that will bear the brunt of their karma.

*(The author is an Indian-American committed to building cohesive societies and offers pluralistic solutions on issues of the day. As we learn to respect the "otherness" of others and accept the God-given uniqueness of each one of us, conflicts will fade, and solutions emerge. He is the president of the Center for Pluralism in Washington, DC.)*

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**The Indian Panorama**  
P.O. Box No. 190067, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419,  
Tel: 646-247-9458  
Email: editor@theindianpanorama.com  
**DALLAS EDITION**  
P.O. BOX 121695, ARLINGTON, TX 76012  
Lovlien Kaurr, VP & Bureau Chief

E-mail tipdallas01@gmail.com; Phone: 646-247-9458  
www.theindianpanorama.news  
Published by Prof. Indrajit Saluja

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# NiravGate: Another Case of Organized Loot

**India's biggest lender, State Bank of India has reported 1,069 loan fraud cases in the last five financial years but has not disclosed the amount. That is the magnitude of "accepted failure" in SBI under the Chairmanship of Arundhati Bhattacharya. That is perhaps why she wanted to decriminalize the NPAs so that the likes of Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi could lead their luxurious life at the expense of a common man.**

BY KISHOR SATWICK

Categorical Statement by whistleblower Dinesh Dubey on TV explaining how Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi were helped by the entire Board of Allahabad Bank in 2012-2013 leaves no doubt that the same drama must have been enacted in other Banks at the highest level.

Dinesh Dubey was the nominee director appointed by the UPA Government on the Board of Allahabad Bank. He had objected to the renewal of loans given to Mehul Choksi and Nirav Modi. His dissent note was not considered by the Board of the Allahabad Bank.

Dinesh Dubey had written to then RBI Dy. Governor Chakravarty. Except praising Dubey for his alertness, the then Dy. Governor Chakravarty did precious little to stop this loan. Role of then RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan also needs to be probed. The man is conspicuous by his silence in this matter. The RBI also had its nominee Mr. Udgatha as Director on the Board. His reaction to the objections raised by Dinesh Dubey that such sanctions/disbursement do happen in rare cases are equally shocking.

His charge against then Finance Secretary Takru that he forced him to resign as there was pressure from above is a testimony of involvement of powerful in this scam. This clearly shows the entire system was smoothly working to the advantage of scamster/fraudster Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi.

Who were the higher ups who could influence the Finance Secretary?

Was it Finance Minister Chidambaram? Or PM Dr Manmohan Singh? Or INC President and then de facto PM Sonia Gandhi? Or Rahul Gandhi who had reportedly inaugurated Nirav Modi's Delhi show room one day earlier? Or someone from the powerful coterie of Sonia Gandhi such as Ahmed Patel?

Even as the Congress targeted PM Modi for being pictured at the World Economic Forum 2018 in Davos, Switzerland, Congress rebel and Rahul Gandhi baiter Shehzad Poonawalla alleged that the Congress President had attended Nirav Modi's event in 2013:

A thorough, sincere and time bound investigation should reveal the brain and the collaborators in this fraud. This cannot be the brain of a mid-level Deputy Managerlike Gokulnath Shetty or Kharat.



Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi

**After PNB, Bank of Baroda had the highest amount of loan frauds reported, with 44.73 billion rupees from 389 cases. Bank of India ranked third, with loan frauds totaling 40.5 billion rupees from 231 cases.**

**The exposure of various banks is:**

● Allahabad Bank: Rs. 4,000 crore ● Union Bank: Rs. 2,300 crore ● Axis Bank: Rs. 2,000 crore ● SBI: Rs.960 crore ● BOI: Rs.300 crore. ● Total: Rs. 9,560 crore.

Raids on premises of Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi yielded recovery of 294 fake LOUs and 224 fake LCs.

It is said that the magnitude of fraud is around Rs. 35,000 crore and not Rs. 11,100 crore as is made out to be. Republic TV is carrying out expose in this regard.

So far, only 18 PNB officials are suspended. No one has yet been arrested. No action has so far been initiated against the members of the Allahabad Bank Board, the then Finance Secretary Rajesh Takru, then Dy. Governor of RBI Chakravarty, RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan for acting as a moot spectator to this loot.

No investigation has been ordered into other Banks mentioned above. Who was that higher authority that was forcing Finance Secretary Takru to silence the dissent towards disbursement of loans to Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi team? It does not require much of intelligence to infer that similar influence must have been exerted on the Boards of other Banks. If not, they were clearly in cahoot with the fraudsters.

If one applies for vehicle loan, the Banks cross check the proforma invoice with the dealer. In this case, no such crossverification that is known as 'confirmation' in banking parlance, was done by any of these Banks lending money on the basis of LOUs/LCs of PNB is difficult to digest. This cannot be brushed aside as mere failure - systemic or systematic.

In a FICCI session that was held in Kolkata on July 10, 2017, Arundhati Bhattacharya, Chairman of State Bank of India made

#PNBScam began with fraudulent LoUs & transactions which began in 2011 - Just FYI: Rahul Gandhi was spotted at Nirav Modi events - did not know he had interest in bridal jewelry - 2013 Imperial Hotel event in Delhi. SCAM began in 2011- should find out Nirav's political links <https://t.co/SfblQylosS>

- Shehzad Jai Hind (@Shehzad\_Ind) February 15, 2018

Challenge to @OfficeOfRG - was he not at Nirav Modi's event in Delhi's Imperial Hotel in 2013-SPG details will leave no doubt if made public- #PNBScam started in 2011;Nirav hobnobs with Rahul (whose govt in power) in 2013 ;Rahul had interest in women's jewelry? Or something else <https://t.co/kg9U8Hr7i>

- Shehzad Jai Hind (@Shehzad\_Ind) February 15, 2018

**It is high time Government came down heavily on this organized loot and prosecuted the higher ups in the hierarchy rather than making a scapegoat of ordinary foot soldiers.**

a jaw-dropping remark justifying emergence of NPAs: "In India NPA is treated as criminal, which it should not be. There is no permission for failures. Permission to fail is not given by the society. But failures will take place."

In its RTI request, Reuters sought data from 20 of India's 21 state-run lenders and obtained 15 replies.

PNB topped the list with 389 cases totaling 65.62 billion rupees (\$1.03 billion) over the last five financial years, in terms of the total amounts involved. Reuters was unable to obtain a detailed breakdown on the exact nature and method of the loan frauds the banks reported to RBI over the last five financial years.

After PNB, Bank of Baroda had the highest amount of loan frauds reported, with 44.73 billion rupees from 389 cases. Bank of India ranked third, with loan frauds totaling 40.5 billion rupees from 231 cases.

India's biggest lender, State Bank of India has reported 1,069 loan fraud cases in the last five financial years but has not disclosed the amount. That is the magnitude of "accepted failure" in SBI under the Chairmanship of Arundhati Bhattacharya. That is perhaps why she wanted to decriminalize the NPAs so that the likes of Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi could lead their luxurious life at the expense of a common man. And SBI has mastered that skill. SBI has already recovered Rs. 1,772 crore from small depositors in the form of penal charges for not maintaining minimum balance in their savings account during the period April 2017 to November 2017. Tax the poor to pay for the Failure.

It is high time Government came down heavily on this organized loot and prosecuted the higher ups in the hierarchy rather than making a scapegoat of ordinary foot soldiers.

(The author is a Chartered Accountant based in Mumbai, India)

## TRIBUTE

# Billy Graham: The Most Influential Spiritual Leader of the Modern World



By Rev. Wilson Jose

**Billy Graham played multiple roles on the world stage as a spiritual leader. He was the most admired religious leader in the world. He was considered to be America's pastor and a pastor to US presidents.**

When the Rev. Billy Graham passed on to eternity on Wednesday, February 21, 2018 one of the most influential spiritual leaders of the twentieth century left the world scene. There are not many parallels to the spiritual legacy that he leaves behind. William Franklin Graham Jr. was on November 7, 1918 in Charlotte, North Carolina to parents who were farmers.

Billy Graham rose to prominence through his successful large indoor and outdoor rallies which were broadcast through radio and television. He became the pioneer tele-evangelist proclaiming the Gospel to a global audience. Graham preached to live audiences of nearly 250 million people in more than 185 countries through his evangelistic campaigns. He also reached hundreds of millions more through television, video, film and webcasts. Billy Graham's life time audience is estimated to be over 2.5 billion.

Graham's message of peace, reconciliation and hope was mainly based on the Bible verse found in the Gospel of John Chapter 3:16 "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish

but have everlasting life". His messages were simple, clear, direct and passionate. They brought hope for a fallen sinful humanity to find peace and reconciliation with their creator through Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Billy Graham was a spiritual counselor to US presidents from Harry Truman to Donald Trump. During major personal, national and international crisis they turned to him for advice and prayer. Political leaders belonging to both Democratic and Republican parties held him in high esteem. He repudiated segregation and was instrumental in bringing Christians of all backgrounds together for humanitarian purposes and evangelism. World leaders sought his counsel and prayer.

Graham's first visit to India was in 1956 and he maintained a very close relationship with the Christian leadership in India. He had a heart for the Indian sub-continent and had personal friendship with many political and religious leaders in India.

Billy Graham played multiple roles on the world stage as a spiritual leader. He was the most admired religious leader in the world. He was considered to be America's pastor and a



Billy Graham will be remembered as a preacher who brought hope to millions around the world and as a spiritual icon who touched the lives of those who lived in palaces as well as in huts!

pastor to US presidents.

Graham was married to his Wheaton classmate Ruth Bell on August 13, 1943. Ruth Graham went to her eternal rest on June 14, 2007 at the age of 87. Graham and his wife had five children. His son Franklin Graham is the president of Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and he is also the president of the international relief organization, Samaritan Purse.

Billy Graham will be remembered as a preacher who brought hope to millions around the world and as a spiritual icon who touched the lives of those who lived in palaces as well as in huts!

May his Soul Rest in Peace!





Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with his wife Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, their son Xavier and daughter Ella-Grace paying obeisance at Golden Temple in Amritsar on Feb 21.

## TRUDEAU GETS PM MODI'S BEAR HUG



PM Narendra Modi greets Canadian PM Justin Trudeau at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.

# Canada doesn't support any separatist movement, Trudeau assures Amarinder

**AMRITSAR (TIP):** After slamming the Canadian government for its reported links with radical Sikh separatists, it was a rather mellow Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh who emerged from a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Wednesday, seemingly reassured by the visitor's pledges to tackle anti-India elements.

Talking to reporters after half-hour-long discussions, Singh described Trudeau as a "very wonderful person" with the meeting making him "feel good." While the conversation revolved around trade, cooperation in agriculture and the services sector, Singh said he had discussed the issue of Khalistan separatism with Trudeau. Later, Singh tweeted: "Really happy to receive categorical assurance from Canadian PM @JustinTrudeau that his country does not support any separatist movement. His words are a big relief to all of us here in India and we look forward to his government's support in tackling fringe separatist elements."

Previously, the Punjab chief minister had refused to meet Canada's defence minister Harjit Singh Sajjan in April, claiming he had links with supporters of the Khalistan movement—an allegation Sajjan denies.

A little more than 1% of



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh in Amritsar.



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with his wife Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, son Xavier and daughter Ella-Grace prepare chapatis in the Golden Temple kitchen in Amritsar on February 21.

Canada's 40 million people are of Indian origin and a vast number of them trace their roots to Punjab. Many of them are traditional supporters of Trudeau's Liberal Party.

At Wednesday's meeting—which took place after Trudeau visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar—Singh was seen on TV greeting Sajjan as he joined Trudeau for talks.

Singh's social media message mirrored what he told reporters—that Trudeau had promised to look into the thorny issue of Sikh separatists and that the visiting prime minister had conveyed to him that Canada believed in a united India.

Singh added that he had given him a list of suspected Khalistani sympathizers funneling money into Punjab in a bid to resurrect the movement. But the chief minister struck a conciliatory note as well, adding that those suspected of channelling money were not confined to Canada alone but were also in the US, Germany and other countries.

Earlier in the day, Trudeau was received by Union minister of state for housing and urban affairs Hardeep Singh Puri at Amritsar airport. Trudeau later drove down to the Golden Temple to offer prayers—a gesture laden with symbolism back home given the large Sikh immigrant population in Canada. *Source: Livemint*

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** As Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited India, both countries have strengthened their relations to promote innovation and entrepreneurship through a slew of MoU and partnerships inked between both countries.

On Feb 19, an Indo-Canada Innovation Bridge was formed. This was through an MoU signed between Canada-based public-private innovation hub Communitech and Hyderabad-based startup incubator T-Hub with intent to partner in support of global commercialization of each other's technology companies.

The MoU was signed in Mumbai by Lisa Cashmore, Communitech's Director of International Strategy and Jay Krishnan, T-Hub CEO in the presence of the Bardish Chagger, Leader of the Government in the Canadian House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism.

Communitech and T-Hub will share office space, programming and mentorship as well as create a program where companies of both countries will join to resolve corporate innovation challenges.

Through the partnership, a co-innovation program with joint development between Canadian and Indian innovators and entrepreneurs will be formed. Communitech entrepreneurs will have market access through T-Hub's India Market Access Program based on product-market fit and will promote Indian and Canadian startups and researchers working together on solutions to innovation challenges corporate businesses face in both countries.

"These partnerships also help to encourage

## India, Canada sign partnerships to promote innovation and entrepreneurship



investment and forward thinking, giving our best and brightest a stage on which they can shine. Today's agreement between Communitech and T-Hub will help to enable this important work. I congratulate both organizations on this agreement, and wish them, and the many great companies they will work with, the best of success for many years to

come," said Minister Chagger.

This partnership will help Canadian startups and technology firms have direct access to Indian markets and support on the ground.

"T-Hub and Communitech share a common philosophy to make our corresponding ecosystems vibrant, technology-driven, and also driven by international aspirations. With

the signing of this MOU, we will be providing a platform and opportunity for startups and corporates from both countries to access each other with support provided on the ground in a structured, programmatic way," said Jay Krishnan.

Canada's Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development also visited T-Hub to interact with startups and women entrepreneurs and addressed them on the necessity of inclusivity at startup incubators such as T-Hub.

The two countries also launched a Bilateral Entrepreneurship Program, with a focus on Women Entrepreneurs, in partnership with Mumbai-based Zone Startups on Tuesday. The program is jointly funded by respective ministries from Canada and India, under the aegis of the Canada-India S&T Agreement.

Zone Startups is a global brand of technology accelerators, operated by Toronto-based Ryerson Futures. Zone Startups' flagship program in India, Zone Startups India is set up as a joint venture with the BSE Institute and Simon Fraser University (Vancouver, Canada), and partly funded by Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.



# Nawaz Sharif alleges efforts to 'oust' him from politics for life

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** Pakistan's deposed premier Nawaz Sharif on Feb 22 alleged that efforts were being made to "oust" him from politics for life, a day after he was disqualified by the Supreme Court from leading his party.

Sharif spoke to the media after appearing before the accountability court in Islamabad where he is being tried for alleged corruption in the Panama Papers case.

"This decision (disqualification from leading a party) is not unexpected for me. First, they paralysed the executive and yesterday they snatched the powers of parliament," he said.

He did not specify who he meant by "they" but apparently it was a reference to the judges of the top court.

Sharif, 68, was disqualified as prime minister by the apex court in July last year under Article 62 for failing to declare a receivable salary as an asset.

He said yesterday's decision was a continuation of the apex court verdict of July 28 when he was sacked as prime minister, and added that "deliberations were being made to oust him from politics for life".

"In the decision of July 28 my premiership was snatched. In the decision of yesterday the post of president of Pakistan Muslim League (N) was snatched...My name is Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. If you want to snatch this name from me, go ahead and take it away," he said.

He criticised the decision of the court which said the Election Act 2017 was "person-specific" to facilitate Sharif to lead his party, adding that "decisions of the Supreme Court are Nawaz Sharif-specific".

"These decisions are being given in anger and smack of vengeance," he said.

Sharif appeared in court accompanied by daughter Maryam and son-in-law Mohammad Safdar, who are co-accused in one of the three cases.

It was his 18th appearance in the court.

The court reserved judgment on objections by Sharif about supplementary references by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB)



and postponed the hearing until this afternoon.

It also decided to record statements of two UK-based witnesses via video link.

Later, Sharif consulted his party leaders during a high-level meeting about the implications of the decision and appointing a new president of the PML-N.

Sources said Sharif's ailing wife Kulsoom Nawaz and his younger brother Shahbaz were favourites to get the coveted post of PML-N president.

Some party leaders favour Yaqoob Nasir or Raja Zafarul Haq as interim president before settling on a permanent choice, according to sources. Earlier, when Sharif stepped down as prime minister and PML-N chief after his disqualification by the Supreme Court, Nasir had been appointed as interim president of the party.

Sharif later on took over leadership of party after Election Law 2017 removed the disqualification bar to become head of a political party.

Sharif was given a warm welcome when he arrived at the Punjab House to participate in the meeting.

Meanwhile, PML-N leaders rejected the

decision by the court and promised that the party would bounce back to win the election this year.

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said the PML-N had faced a "worse time than the existing one and will overcome all difficulties".

Minister of State for Information Marriyum Aurangzeb said the future of the party will be decided in consultation with the senior leadership but that Sharif would take final decisions about who will lead the party.

The decision of court was welcomed by Sharif's arch rival Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan who today claimed that Sharif had secretly met Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"What sort of leader Sharif is, as he met Modi in secret because he wanted to keep it secret from the army," Khan said without sharing any details of the alleged meeting.

Sharif and some of his family members are facing charges relating to their ownership of posh properties in London.

Three cases were registered by the National Accountability Bureau against Sharif, his children and son-in-law in the court on September 8 (PTI)

## Pakistan court moved for renaming roundabout in Lahore after Bhagat Singh

**LAHORE (TIP):** A petition has been filed in a Pakistani court seeking renaming of Lahore's Shadman Chowk where freedom fighter Bhagat Singh was hanged 86 years ago and installation of his statue there.

Bhagat Singh was hanged along with his two comrades Rajguru and Sukhdev by British rulers on March 23, 1931 in the erstwhile Lahore Jail, which stood at the spot where the roundabout was built later.

During the hearing of the plea filed by Bhagat Singh Memorial Foundation Chairman Imtiaz Rashid Qureshi yesterday, the Lahore High Court was informed that a similar petition was pending with it.

Justice Shahid Jamil Khan ordered clubbing of both petitions and fixed March 5 for hearing.

The petitioner stated that Bhagat Singh was a freedom fighter of the sub-continent and gave his life along with his companions for the cause of freedom.

He pointed out that founder of Pakistan Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had also paid tribute to him saying, "There had never been any brave person in the subcontinent like Bhagat Singh."

He pleaded that it would be in the interest of justice to name Shadman Chowk after Bhagat Singh and also install his statue at the square so as to inspire the people of Pakistan and the world.

In the plea, Qureshi said that in India there were many roads and thoroughfares named after Muslim rulers like Akbar Road, Shah Jahan Road and Bahadar Shah Road. (PTI)

## Pakistan summons Indian envoy for fourth time this month

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** Pakistan today summoned India's Deputy High Commissioner J P Singh here for the fourth time in a month to condemn the "unprovoked firing" by Indian troops across the Line of Control (LoC).

Director General (South Asia and SAARC) Mohammad Faisal summoned Singh and "condemned the unprovoked ceasefire violations" by Indian forces on February 22 in Rawalakot/Satwal Sector, the Foreign Office said in a statement.

The firing killed a labourer, working at a civilian crush plant, at Poonch river bank, it said.

Faisal said despite calls for restraint, India "continues to indulge in LoC firing".

The Foreign Office had summoned India's deputy high commissioner on February 5, 15 and 20.

Last month, the Indian envoy was summoned five times on on January 15, 18, 19, 20 and 21.

Faisal said, "the deliberate targetting of civilian populated areas is indeed deplorable and contrary to human dignity, international human rights and humanitarian laws."

Faisal urged the Indian side to respect the 2003 ceasefire arrangement and investigate the repeated incidents of ceasefire violations, the statement said.

He also urged the Indian side to allow the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) to play its mandated role as per the UN Security Council resolutions.

India maintains that UNMOGIP has outlived its utility and is irrelevant after the Simla Agreement and the consequent establishment of the Line of Control. (PTI)

## India has nothing to worry about China-Bangladesh ties: Sheikh Hasina

**DHAKA (TIP):** India should not be worried about Bangladesh's growing ties with China, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said, asserting that the cooperation with Beijing was meant only for the country's development. Hasina said her government was only concerned about the development, and is ready to cooperate with any country that helps Bangladesh's growth. Bangladesh is the largest least developed country (LDC) in terms of population and economic size, according to the UN. The country is likely to leave the LDC category by 2024, propelled by better health and education, lower vulnerability and an economic boom, the UN said in its report last year.

"We want investment and cooperation from whoever offers it. We want development of the country... We have to think about our people as they are the beneficiaries of the development," Hasina on Tuesday told a delegation of visiting Indian journalists at her official residence. She said India, China, Japan and even the Middle Eastern countries were coming to Bangladesh for cooperation.

"India has nothing to be worried about it," Hasina said. "I will (rather) suggest India should have good relations with its neighbours, including Bangladesh, so this region could be developed further and we can show the world that we all work together," she said.

Hasina, 70, said Bangladesh and India shared "excellent" ties and the two countries have set an example of solving problems like maritime and boundary disputes. "If there is any problem, we could solve it through discussions as we did it in the past. We want to build a peaceful South Asia," Hasina said.

She said that during her 1996-2001 tenure, the two countries had signed the Ganges water treaty while in her second term maritime and boundary issues were resolved. China has vowed to boost military-to-military relations with Bangladesh by stepping up defence ties, including broadening of personnel training and cooperation in equipment technology. Earlier, China said it planned to provide Bangladesh with a whopping \$9 billion low-interest loan to build six rail projects including one close to the Indian border. Hasina also sought India's support in repatriation of over a million Rohingyas to Myanmar, fearing that their prolonged stay in Bangladesh could create security risks. (PTI)



## Taliban attack local police, killing 8: Afghan official

**Kabul (TIP):** An Afghan official says Taliban fighters have attacked a police security post in central Ghazni province, killing eight local police.

Arif Noori, spokesman for the provincial governor, said today the attack happened the previous night.

He said the insurgents attacked from four sides using heavy weapons, including artillery, killing eight police and wounding another in a two-hour attack.

Government reinforcement reached the area too late to stop the attack, Noori said.

Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for the Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement, and said nine local police were killed and one other captured in the attack. (AP)





## PARINEETI CHOPRA EXCITED TO WORK WITH AKSHAY KUMAR

Parineeti Chopra, who will be sharing screen space for the first time with Akshay Kumar, says she is excited to work with the superstar in "Kesari".

The film, being directed by Anurag Singh, will see Akshay essaying the role of Havildar Ishar Singh, while Parineeti plays his wife.

"(I) am very excited to be working with him. In three days I will be leaving for 'Namastey England'. But I am more excited for 'Kesari'.

"It has been a dream to work with Akshay for a long time. He is a Punjabi and so is I and we are doing a Punjabi film together. I am very excited to start the shoot," Parineeti told reporters here at an event last night.

Besides this, Parineeti will also be busy shooting for "Namastey England" with Arjun Kapoor.

"I, have to do it simultaneously as, unfortunately, the dates are planned like that. So I will be shooting in Amritsar (for 'Kesari') and in London (for Namastey England)," she says.

Recently, Akshay's look from the film was released, and talking about her look, Parineeti says, the makers will decide when to unveil it.

# KANGANA TO DON KHADI IN ON SILVERSCREEN IN MANIKARNIKA



Actress Kangana Ranaut will don khadi outfits in her upcoming film 'Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi'. In a statement, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) said the attire of the lead cast of the movie is being sponsored by it. The movie showcases the Queen's love for the country's heritage fabric khadi in the epic biographical film.

"It is official now - after dressing up officials in several government offices, Khadi is now making its way to silver screen! Kangana Ranaut, in her lead role in 'Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi,' KVIC said.

Sponsored by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), the costume line for the film shall be designed by ace designer Neeta Lulla. Lulla has already picked up fabric costing around Rs 26 lakh from KVIC. According to KVIC Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena, the fabric being used for the film includes a mix bag of silk, cotton, muslin and some wool too.

Kangana, who plays the lead role in this movie, would also be seen using a charkha in the film, which is also being sponsored by KVIC. The KVIC chairman said that it is a morale booster in terms of aggressive marketing and promotion strategy for KVIC that she would be spinning the wheel in this movie.

Source: PTI

## Women I play on screen are an extension of me: Vidya

Vidya Balan picked powerful women characters even before "female-centric cinema" became mainstream in Bollywood and the actor, who has pioneered a change in the concept of the Hindi film heroine in the last decade, says her choices are often guided by her personal experiences.

Vidya has successfully established herself as an actor par excellence with films such as "Parineeta", "Ishqiya", "No One Killed Jessica", "The Dirty Picture", "Kahaani" and "Begum Jaan" among others.

But she says the films that are among her personal favorites and have become turning points in her career, are "Kahaani", "The Dirty Picture" and her last release "Tumhari Sulu".

"Every film or role that I have done has had some personal connection. All these women (characters) follow their heart and do exactly what they want to do and in a way they were all an extension of me," Vidya told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"I am a shy person. There are two sides to me when the actor side comes out, I am



different. I can do anything for the character but as a person, I am quite shy," the actor adds.

Vidya, 39, counts her portrayal of Vidya

Bagchi in the Sujoy Ghosh-directed movie as one of her finest performances. She says the only brief that Ghosh gave her was that the film would be about a pregnant woman who comes to Kolkata to look for her missing husband.

"I found the story interesting and said, 'Let's do it'. It (climax) developed organically and when he narrated it to me, it blew my mind. People who were approached for the film were not told about the (twist) ending. Only, Sujoy, me, cinematographer, and the ADs knew about it. We kept it a secret," she recalls. Vidya reveals she even lied to her pregnant sister about the ending of "Kahaani", which is now counted among one of the best Hindi cinema thrillers.

The film, which went on to become a hit at the box office, however, faced many financial hurdles and was eventually shot on a shoestring budget.

"They could not get their head around the fact that it was about a pregnant woman and they were like, 'Why would audiences want to see a pregnant woman in theatres?'"

Source: PTI





## JENNIFER LAWRENCE WANTS YOUNG PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED IN POLITICS

Actor Jennifer Lawrence says she is taking a year off and in her free time she will work towards motivating young people to focus on politics.

The 27-year-old actor says she will step back from the spotlight in 2019 in order to focus all her energy on working with charity Represent Us. "I'm going to take the next year off. I'm going to be working with this organisation as a part of Represent Us... trying to get young people engaged politically on a local level.

"It doesn't have anything to do with partisan (politics). It's just anti-corruption and stuff trying to pass state by state laws that can help prevent corruption, fix our democracy," Lawrence told Entertainment Tonight. The "Red Sparrow" star is already working with the anti-corruption charity, and recently surprised a group of high school students at Cleveland Heights High School in Cleveland, Ohio with a talk about politics in association with the charity.

Source: PTI

# NATALIE PORTMAN'S SCI-FI MOVIE DISMANTLES EVERY GENDER CLICHE

Alex Garland's sci-fi blockbuster *Annihilation*, to be released in the US on February 23 and on Netflix worldwide a few weeks later, is a rare example of a sci-fi movie led by women that avoids some of cinema's worst cliches.

Here is a list of gender-related tropes in film that often have critics gnashing their teeth.

### The Smurfette principle

The Smurfette principle, coined by American poet and essayist Katha Pollitt in 1991, is the practice of including only one woman in an otherwise entirely male cast.

These movies are typically driven by a male-dominated narrative, with the woman existing only in relation to how she affects the men.

Examples: *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*, *Justice League* and *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*.

### 'Bechdel test' failures

The Bechdel test asks whether a movie features at least two named female characters who talk to each other about something other than a man.

Various surveys have shown that only around half of all movies pass the test, named after the American cartoonist Alison Bechdel, who credited the idea in part to the writings of Virginia Woolf.

Examples: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2*, *Avatar*, the entire *Lord of the Rings* and original *Star Wars* trilogies.

### Damsel in Distress

The Damsel in Distress is one of the most widely used cliches in cinema. This trope is a plot device placing a female character in peril from which she must be rescued by a male character.

She often provides the core motivation for



the male protagonist's quest or journey.

Examples: *Pirates of the Caribbean: Taken*, *Spider-Man* and the *Twilight* saga.

### Hotness Gap, or 'Beast and the Beauty'

It doesn't matter how schlubby, lazy and unkempt the man is -- he always ends up with the woman with supermodel looks.

Whether it's Fred Flintstone, Quasimodo or King Kong, these guys can skip brushing their teeth, spend all day drinking beer in front of the TV and crack silly dad jokes and they'll still get their girl.

Examples: Vince Vaughn and Jennifer

Aniston in *The Break-Up*, Jason Segel and Kristen Bell/Mila Kunis *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, Kevin James and Rosario Dawson in *The Zookeeper* and Jack Black in everything.

### The Straw Feminist

This trope, identified by the Feminist Frequency pop culture website, is an over-the-top caricature of a feminist designed to undermine the very idea of feminism.

Examples: *Mona Lisa Smile*, *Legally Blonde* and *Down with Love*.

Source: AFP

## Jennifer Aniston, Justin Theroux may not have been legally married

Former star couple Jennifer Aniston and Justin Theroux, who announced their separation earlier this week, might not have been legally married as there is no evidence about their wedding, a TMZ report has claimed.

The actress and actor-filmmaker seemed to be headed for a divorce court following the announcement of their split earlier this week, but based on TMZ.com's records search and sources, they may never have been married in the first place.

Aniston and Theroux announced the end of their two-year marriage and nearly seven-year relationship in a joint statement on Thursday. The pair, who shared a mansion in the upscale Bel Air neighbourhood of Los Angeles, met on the set of the 2008 film *Tropic Thunder* in Hawaii, and started dating in 2011. "In an effort to reduce any further speculation, we have decided to announce our separation," the former couple said in the statement released by Aniston's publicist Stephen Huvane.

However, Tmz.com checked marriage records in Los Angeles County all the way



back to 2010 and found that there is no record of a marriage license.

There's a confidential marriage license, but the site was told they did not get one in Los Angeles County.

The celeb couple could have gotten a marriage license in any of the 57 other counties in California, but according to some of Aniston's sources who have had regular contact with her for years, there's been talk for a long time they might not be legally married.

Tmz.com also checked with numerous divorce lawyers, and no one has been contacted either by Aniston or Theroux.

It was the second marriage for former *Friends* star Aniston, who wed Hollywood heartthrob Brad Pitt in 2000 -- forming one of Tinseltown's most glamorous couples at the time. They divorced in 2005 after Pitt met Angelina Jolie, from whom he is now estranged, on the set of *Mr and Mrs Smith*. Theroux (*Miami Vice*, *The Girl on the Train*) was in a relationship with stylist Heidi Bivens for 14 years but the 46-year-old had never been married before meeting Aniston.

Source: IANS



# OFFBEAT PLACES IN KERALA

**K**erala is a destination where beauty breathes, wonders are created and nature smiles in all its glory! The place has rightfully earned the sobriquet of 'God's Own Country' and is frequented by thousands of travellers, nature enthusiasts and explorers from far and beyond each year.

For those who have a quest to travel to offbeat places in Kerala, attractions that are less explored and off the beaten track, there are options aplenty. The state will surprise you in several ways with its grand and undiscovered landscapes. Here, to give you a glimpse of what lies under the blanket of mist and mountains of the other side of Kerala, we have come up with a list of some brilliant and less populated places that will dazzle you with their sunning scenery and natural splendour.

The National Geographic called Marari Beach one of the best 'hammock beaches' in one of its magazine editions. The place is extremely gorgeous and perfect for a relaxed and peaceful vacation. Located only 11 km from Alleppey, this less explored beach in Kerala is a cure for the sore eyes. The best feature of the beach is that not many people are aware of its existence and hence it is not yet hit by worldly developments. The place breathes in natural environment and makes for a perfect getaway from the city buzz! There are some pretty decent staying options available in the vicinity, where travellers can seek accommodation.

## Chembra Peak, Wayanad

This one is a trekker's delight, Chembra Peak! Perched at an elevation of 2100 m above sea level, this place is a wonderland for adventure seekers. Those looking for some offbeat, wondrous and out of the world experience, this peak in Wayanad will fill your heart with much-needed excitement! However, to go on your trekking expedition, you need to get prior permission from the forest office in Meppady and come back the same day as camping is not allowed at the top. For a normal or beginner level trekker, it doesn't take more than three hours to reach the peak. Stay there for some time, take in the gorgeous natural vistas and enjoy breathing in amidst lush greenery. While coming back, you will encounter a gorgeous heart-shaped lake called Hridaya Thadakam. It is believed that this lake has never dried up ever. So pack your trekking bag and get going!

## Vembanad Lake, Kumarakom

Beautiful, less-frequented, and absolutely perfect for solitude seekers! The Vembanad Lake in Kumarakom is comparatively one of the less explored lakes in Kerala, now fast developing as a backwater tourism destination.

The place is largely visited for picnic purpose by the locals. One can simply sit on the shores for hours amidst nature, and enjoy fishing or boating here. The green, algae-filled waters of Vembanad come alive during the occasion of Onam. If you are visiting Kottayam during this period, you'll be greeted with spectacular snake boat races as well. And we all know how amazing these boat races in Kerala are! Watching hundreds of oarsmen cutting their way through the backwaters singing songs of victory and joy is not a sight you get to behold every day. Staying options are also available here.

## Silent Valley National Park, Palakkad

The Silent Valley National park is as mysterious as its name and is one of the best kept secrets of South India! This sprawling



tropical evergreen rain forest is situated in the Nilgiri hills of Palakkad district, and is



home to a variety of flora and fauna. Wildlife lovers and people in the travel circuit are aware of this beauty, yet it remains one of the less-explored places in Kerala. However, it is the garden of curiosity for biologists, nature lovers and science students. As per the records, owing to its rich Western Ghats' biodiversity, this forest has more than a hundred species of orchids, butterflies, beetles, moths and birds. Needless to say, the Silent Valley National Park is gorgeous, mysterious and full of natural splendour. Those who were super impressed with the movie, Into the Wild, and have always wanted to have somewhat similar (positive) kind of experience, they can head into this gorgeousness and feel the same!

## Arekkal Waterfalls, Kochi

Another gem of a place in the south! Around 35 km from Ernakulam, this waterfall is a little hidden away and if you miss the signboard on the highway, you might just miss an experience. A popular picnic spot for the locals, this waterfall is surrounded with rubber trees and the area might experience unpredictable rainfalls, which adds to the beauty of the place! If you are planning a monsoon visit, then make sure to keep your eyes open for this spectacular hidden magnificence because this place is at its scenic best during the rains!

## Nelliampathy, Palakkad

You are most likely to get stunned with this gorgeously cascading waterfall in the hill station of Nelliampathy in Palakkad. The destination will give you much-needed thrills with its beauty and the cloud-kissed, soaring, Nelliampathy ranges are truly a sight to behold! You might fall short of words to describe the magnificence of the place and the calming effect it has on you. Reaching the destination is another adventure as there are more than 10 hairpin bends and the roads are as exquisite as the destination. Less crowded, full of pretty surprises and extremely soothing, this hill station is a peace lover's paradise in all the true senses. Surrounded with greenery and vast paddy fields, Nelliampathy is also renowned for its orange cultivation and gorgeous tea and coffee estates.



# HOLI: FESTIVAL OF COLORS

Holi, the festival of colors, is one of the most anticipated festivals in the year, and is celebrated with much gusto by Indians across the world every year. According to the Bikram Samvat Hindu calendar, the festival is celebrated on the day of Purnima, the full moon, in the month of Falgun for two consecutive days — the first day known as Chhoti Holi or Holika Dahan and the second as Rangwali Holi, Dhuleti, Dhulandi or Dhulivandan. This year, the festival falls on March 1 and March 2, respectively.

Holi celebration begins with lighting up of bonfire on the Holi eve. Numerous legends & stories associated with Holi celebration makes the festival more exuberant and vivid. People rub 'gula' and 'abeer' on each others' faces and cheer up saying, "bura na maano Holi hai".

## History of Holi

Holi is an ancient festival of India and was originally known as 'Holika'. The festivals finds a detailed description in early religious works such as Jaimini's Purvamimamsa-Sutras and Kathaka-Grhya-Sutras. Historians also believe that Holi was celebrated by all Aryans but more so in the Eastern part of India. It is said that Holi existed several centuries before Christ. However, the meaning of the festival is believed to have changed over the years. Earlier it was a special rite performed by married women for the happiness and well-being of their families and the full moon (Raka) was worshiped.

## Holika Dahan

There are numerous mythological explanations that are described in the historical books regarding the death of Holika and its reference for the celebration of Holi. In accordance to those historical explanations Holika was booned by Brahma for not getting any harm from fire or never getting burnt in fire. Following the order of his Brother Hiranyakashyap (who was also the father of Prahlad) Holika sat on fire with Prahlad in order to burn him in fire and let to death. It was Prahlad's prayers to Lord Vishnu that saved him from burning in fire. It was the protective shawl of Holika that flew to cover Prahlad's body from Holika who was having it. This is the story behind the celebration of Holika Dahan that is still followed by the people of India.

## Legend of Holika and Prahlad

There was once a demon king by the name of Hiranyakashyap who won over the kingdom of earth. He was so egoistic that he commanded everybody in his kingdom to worship only him. But to his great disappointment, his son, Prahlad became an ardent devotee of Lord Naarayana and refused to worship his father.

Hiranyakashyap tried several ways to kill his son Prahlad but Lord Vishnu saved him every time. Finally, he asked his sister, Holika to enter a blazing fire with Prahlad in her lap. For, Hiranyakashyap knew that Holika had a boon, whereby, she could enter the fire unscathed.

Treacherously, Holika coaxed young Prahlad to sit in her lap and she herself took her seat in a blazing fire. The legend has it that Holika had to pay the price of her sinister desire by her life. Holika was not aware that the boon worked only when she entered the fire alone.

Prahlad, who kept chanting the name of Lord Naarayana all this while, came out unharmed, as the lord blessed him for his extreme devotion. Thus, Holi derives its name from Holika. And, is celebrated as a festival of victory of good over evil.

Holi is also celebrated as the triumph of a devotee. As the legend depicts that anybody, howsoever strong, cannot harm a true devotee. And, those who dare torture a true



devotee of god shall be reduced to ashes.

## The Legend of Radha-Krishna

Young Krishna is known to be very playful and mischievous. The story goes that as a child, Krishna was extremely jealous of Radha's fair complexion since he himself was very dark.

One day, Krishna complained to his mother Yashoda about the injustice of nature which made Radha so fair and he so dark. To pacify the crying young Krishna, the dotting mother asked him to go and colour Radha's face in whichever colour he wanted.

In a mischievous mood, naughty Krishna heeded the advice of mother Yashoda and applied colour on her beloved Radha's face; Making her one like himself.

Well, there is also a legend to explain Krishna's dark complexion. It so happened that once a demon attempted to kill infant Krishna by giving him poisoned milk. Because of which Krishna turned blue. But Krishna did not die and the demon shriveled up into ashes.

## The Legend of Dhundhi

It is believed that there was once an Ogress called Dhundhi in the kingdom of Prithu (or Raghu). The female monster used to specially trouble little children who became fed-up of her. Dhundhi, had a boon from Lord Shiva that she would not be killed by gods, men nor suffer from arms nor from heat, cold or rain. These boons which made her almost invincible but she also had a weak point. She was also cursed by Lord Shiva that she would be in danger from boys going about crazy.

Deeply troubled by the Ogress, the King of Raghu consulted his priest. Giving the solution, the priest said that on Phalguna 15, the season of cold vanishes and summer starts. Boys with bits of wood in their hands may go out of their house, collect a heap of wood and grass, set it on fire with mantras, clap their hands, go around the fire thrice, laugh, sing and by their noise, laughter and homa, the ogress would die.

The legend has it that on the day of Holi, village boys displayed their united might and chased Dhundhi away by a blitzkrieg of shouts, abuses and pranks. It is for this reason that young boys are allowed to use rude words on the day of Holi without anybody taking offence. Children also take great pleasure in burning Holika.



## Lathmaar Holi

In what is known as the hub of holi in India - Barsana, Holi is known as Lathmaar Holi. Sounds violence?? There is more violence than the name signals off. The stick is in the hands of the women on this day and the men need to work a lot to save themselves from the immensely charged up womenfolk.

The birth place of Lord Krishna's beloved Radha, Barsana celebrates Holi with extreme enthusiasm as Krishna was famous for playing pranks on Radha and gopis. In fact, it was Krishna who started the tradition of colours by first applying colour on Radha's face.

Womenfolk, of Barsana it seems, after thousands of centuries want to take a sweet revenge of that prank of Krishna. Even men have not left their mischief and are still eager to apply colour on the women of Barsana.

Following the tradition, men of Nandgaon, the birthplace of Krishna, come to play Holi with the girls of Barsana, but instead of colours they are greeted with sticks.

Completely aware of what welcome awaits them in Barsana, men come fully padded and try their best to escape from the spirited women. Men are not supposed to retaliate on the day. The unlucky ones are forcefully led away and get a good thrashing from the women. Further, they are made to wear a female attire and dance in public. All in the spirit of Holi.

The next day, it is the turn of men of Barsana. They reciprocate by invading Nandgaon and drench the womenfolk of Nandgaon in colours of kesudo, naturally occurring orange-red dye and palash. This day, women of Nadagow beat the invaders from Barsana. It is a colourful site.

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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.'



# CHEATERS PERCEIVED AS LESS CAPABLE: STUDY

People who commit moral transgression like cheating and shoplifting are viewed as less able to do their jobs or complete tasks effectively and low in social intelligence levels, researchers say.

The study showed that people who acted immorally were simply less well-liked, struggle to get on with colleagues and foster a healthy working environment and therefore perceived as worse in every way, including being less competent.

This stems from our assumption that dishonest people have low social intelligence, the researchers said.

“Social intelligence is often conceived of as the ability to manage complex social situations.

“It includes characteristics such as taking the others’ perspectives, being adaptable, managing impressions of oneself and adhering to established social norms,” said lead author Jennifer Stellar from the University of Toronto in Canada.

“A person who is socially intelligent would understand when and why a co-worker is angry and effectively manage their co-worker’s potentially destructive emotional response,” she added.

For the study, published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, the team conducted a series of six experiments involving more than 1,500 participants.

Across these experiments, the researchers depicted individuals acting immorally in hypothetical scenarios (e.g., shoplifting), acting selfishly in economic games, cheating on a lab task or receiving low morality ratings from co-workers.

Individuals, who had acted immorally, were consistently rated as less capable of doing their jobs, and were viewed as generally less competent than someone who had acted morally by, for instance, donating to charity.

While most people rated immoral



behaviour in one’s private life as irrelevant to determining how good that person was at their job, but when provided with the moral information, they would use it to determine competence, Stellar said. *Source: HT*



## Your hug reveals how you feel about others

If you are feeling emotional, you are more likely to embrace others from the left side than from the right, a study has found.

Hugs, which have been part of social interactions between humans since birth, demonstrate emotions such as affection, love, sadness or afraid, depending on the side we embrace others. Hugs occur in both positive and neutral contexts: we hug when we are sad or afraid, or simply when saying hello.

While most people showed an increased preference for right-sided hugs, left-sided hugs occurred more frequently in positive as well as negative situations, the study showed.

“This is because of the influence of the right hemisphere, which controls the left side of the body and processes both positive and negative emotions,” said lead author Julian Packheiser from the Ruhr-Universitaet-Bochum in Germany.

“When people hug, emotional and motor networks in the brain interact and cause a stronger drift to the left in emotional contexts,” Packheiser added.

Moreover, predictions about which hand will be on top during an embrace can be based on the participants’ handedness and footedness, the researchers observed.

“Handedness and footedness can indeed predict the lateralisation of an embrace,” Packheiser said.

Right-handed people usually tend to hug the other person from the right side, much more often than left-handed people.

However, a strong left-hand drift was observed in an embrace between two men, even in neutral situations.

*Source: IANS*

## FOOD CORNER

### CHICKEN MANCHURIAN

#### Ingredients

250 gm chicken, 1 tablespoon all purpose flour, 1/4 cup refined oil, 1/4 teaspoon, crushed green peppercorns, 1/4 teaspoon, chopped green chilli, 120 ml chicken stock, 1/4, teaspoon ground black pepper, 30 ml water, 1 tablespoon corn flour, 1 beaten egg, 1/4 teaspoon crushed ginger, 1/4 teaspoon crushed garlic, 1 handful chopped into cubes cilantro, 10 ml light soya sauce, 1/4 teaspoon sugar, 1 finely chopped spring onions

#### Method

- To prepare this delicious Chicken Manchurian recipe, take a bowl and add corn flour, flour, salt and pepper along with the beaten egg in it. Mix all these ingredients properly and prepare a batter. Next, dip the chicken pieces in the batter one by one. Make sure it is properly coated.
- Meanwhile, heat oil in a pan over medium flame. Once the oil is sufficiently hot, place the coated chicken pieces in the oil and deep fry till they turn golden brown in colour. Once done, drain the excess oil and keep aside till



further use. Now, to prepare the manchurian sauce, heat oil in another pan over medium flame. Once the oil is hot enough, add the garlic and ginger in it. Fry till it becomes slightly brown in colour. Now add in green chillies and cilantro leaves. Saute these for about a minute or so.

- Then, bring the flame to low and add in the chicken stock, soya sauce, salt, sugar and pepper. Allow this mixture to simmer and cook for 5 minutes. Once done, add in corn flour along with water in it and bring the mixture to a boil.
- The last step is to place the fried chicken pieces into the manchurian sauce. Bring the flame to medium low and allow the dish to cook for close to 5 minutes. Once done, turn off the flame and transfer the Chicken Manchurian into a serving bowl.

### POTATO ROLLS

#### Ingredients

1 cup flour, 2 cup vegetable oil, 8 potato, 1/2 tablespoon cumin powder, 1 tablespoon coriander powder, 1 teaspoon red chilli powder, water as required, salt as required, 1/2 teaspoon dry mango powder, 1 green chilli

- Add flour to a bowl along with 1 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon red chilli powder, 1 tablespoon oil. Add water to this and mix all the ingredients to make a soft dough. Put the potatoes in a cooker along with water and salt and boil them. After this, let them cool down for a while. Peel the potatoes and then mash them.
- Add salt, 1/2 teaspoon red chilli powder, 1/2 teaspoon cumin powder, 1/2 teaspoon dry mango powder, 1 tablespoon coriander powder and 1 chopped green chilli to the mashed potatoes and mix properly. After this, divide the dough prepared in step 1 into 8 portions and roll the dough with a rolling pin to make thin chapatis.
- Now, spread the potato mixture on the chapati and roll them from one end to the other. Cut this roll into 1 inch thick pieces. Take a deep bottomed pan, add 2 cup vegetable oil and heat it on medium flame. Add the pieces to the pan and deep fry them until they turn golden brown. Take them out on a tissue paper to soak excess oil. Serve hot with green chutney and tomato sauce.



# EATING YOGURT MAY REDUCE RISK OF HEART DISEASES

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Higher intake of yogurt may lower the risk of cardiovascular disease among hypertensive men and women, a new study suggests.

According to the researchers, clinical trials have previously demonstrated beneficial effects of dairy consumption on cardiovascular health. Yogurt may independently be related to cardiovascular disease risk.

"Our results provide important new evidence that yogurt may benefit heart health alone or as a consistent part of a diet rich in fibre-rich fruits, vegetables and whole grains," said co-author of the study Justin R. Buendia from the Boston University School of Medicine in the US.

For the study, published in American Journal of Hypertension, researchers included over 55,000 women aged between 30-55 with high blood pressure from the Nurses' Health Study and 18,000 men aged between 40-75 who participated in the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study.

In the Nurses' Health Study, participants were asked to complete a mailed 61-item questionnaire in 1980 to report usual dietary intake in the preceding year.

Participants subsequently reported any interim physician-diagnosed events including myocardial infarction, stroke and revascularisation.

The researchers found that higher intakes of yogurt were associated with a 30 per cent reduction in risk of myocardial infarction among the Nurses' Health Study women and a 19 per cent reduction in the Health



Professionals Follow-Up Study men.

There were 3,300 and 2,148 total cardiovascular disease cases (myocardial infarction, stroke, and revascularisation) in the Nurses' Health Study and the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study, respectively, the researchers said.

Higher yogurt intake in women was associated with a 16 per cent lower risk of undergoing revascularisation.

In both groups, participants consuming more than two servings a week of yogurt had an approximately 20

per cent lower risks of major coronary heart disease or stroke during the follow-up period.

When revascularisation was added to the total cardiovascular disease outcome variable, the risk estimates were reduced for both men and women but remained significant.

Higher yogurt intake in combination with an overall heart-healthy diet was associated with greater reductions in cardiovascular disease risk among hypertensive men and women, the researchers noted. *Source: IANS*



## Wine may be good for oral health

**LONDON (TIP):** Sipping wine may be good for your oral health, say scientists who found that certain compounds in the drink can fend off harmful bacteria in the teeth and gums.

Traditionally, some health benefits of polyphenols have been attributed to the fact that these compounds are antioxidants, meaning they likely protect the body from harm caused by free radicals.

However, recent work indicates polyphenols might also promote health by actively interacting with bacteria in the gut. Plants and fruits produce polyphenols to ward off infection by harmful bacteria and other pathogens.

Researchers including M Victoria Moreno-Arribas from Institute of Food Science Research (CIAL) in Spain wanted to know whether wine and grape polyphenols would also protect teeth and gums, and how this could work on a molecular level.

The study, published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, checked out the effect of two red wine polyphenols, as well as commercially available grape seed and red wine extracts, on bacteria that stick to teeth and gums and cause dental plaque, cavities and periodontal disease.

Working with cells that model gum tissue, they found that the two wine polyphenols in isolation - caffeic and p-coumaric acids - were generally better than the total wine extracts at cutting back on the bacteria's ability to stick to the cells.

When combined with the *Streptococcus dentisani*, which is believed to be an oral probiotic, the polyphenols were even better at fending off the pathogenic bacteria.

The researchers also showed that metabolites formed when digestion of the polyphenols begins in the mouth might be responsible for some of these effects. *Source: PTI*

# Blood pressure drug may help prevent Type 1 diabetes

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** A drug commonly used to control high blood pressure may also help prevent the onset of Type 1 diabetes in up to 60 per cent of those at risk for the disease, a study has found.

The drug, methyldopa, has been used for over 50 years to treat high blood pressure in pregnant women and children, according to the study published in the Journal of Clinical Investigation.

It is on the World Health Organization's (WHO) list of essential drugs. But like many drugs used for one condition, researchers found it useful for something totally unrelated.

"With this drug, we can potentially prevent up to 60 per cent of type 1 diabetes in those at risk for the disease," said Aaron Michels from the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus in the US.

"This is a very significant development," Michels said.

Some 60 per cent of people at risk of getting Type 1 diabetes possess the DQ8 molecule which significantly increases the chance of getting the disease.

The researchers believed that if they could block specifically the DQ8



molecule they could also block the onset of the disease.

"All drugs have off-target effects. If you take too much acetaminophen you can hurt your liver," Michels said.

"We took every FDA approved small molecule drug and analyzed HLA-DQ8 binding through a supercomputer. We searched a thousand orientations for each drug to identify those that would fit within the DQ8 molecule binding

groove," Michels said.

After running thousands of drugs through the supercomputer, they found that methyldopa not only blocked DQ8, but it didn't harm the immune function of other cells like many immunosuppressant drugs do.

The research spanned 10 years and its efficacy was shown in mice and in 20 Type 1 diabetes patients who took part in a clinical trial. *Source: PTI*

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**DR. SATISH AND GITANJLI ANAND**



**DR. SATISH ANAND**  
Former Chairman, Board of Trustees, AAPI National  
E-Mail: [sanandmd@gmail.com](mailto:sanandmd@gmail.com)

**GITANJLI ANAND**  
Former President, India Association of Long Island (IALI)  
E-mail: [gitanjlianand@gmail.com](mailto:gitanjlianand@gmail.com)



## HOW HUMANS GOT BIGGER BRAINS DECODED



**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Average brain size of humans increased gradually and consistently over the past three million years, growing to over three times larger than our closest living relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos.

The study, published in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, shows that the trend was caused primarily by evolution of larger brains within populations of individual species, but the introduction of new, larger-brained species and extinction of smaller-brained ones also played a part.

"Brain size is one of the most obvious traits that makes us human. It's related to cultural complexity, language, tool making and all these other things that make us unique," said Andrew Du, a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Chicago in the US.

"The earliest hominins had brain sizes like chimpanzees, and they have increased dramatically since then. So, it's important to understand how we got here," said Du.

"Think about the entrance to a building. You can reach the front door by walking up a ramp, or you can take the steps," said Bernard Wood, from George Washington University (GW) in the US.

"The conventional wisdom was that our large brains had evolved because of a series of step-like increases each one making our ancestors smarter," said Wood.

"Not surprisingly the reality is more complex, with no clear link between brain size and behaviour," he said.

Researchers compared published research data on the skull volumes of 94 fossil specimens from 13 different species, beginning with the earliest unambiguous human ancestors, *Australopithecus*, from 3.2 million years ago to pre-modern species, including *Homo erectus*, from 500,000 years ago when brain size began to overlap with that of modern-day humans.

They saw that when the species were counted at the clade level, or groups descending from a common ancestor, the average brain size increased gradually over three million years.

Looking more closely, the increase was driven by three different factors, primarily evolution of larger brain sizes within individual species populations, but also by the addition of new, larger-brained species and extinction of smaller-brained ones.

The team also found that the rate of brain size evolution within hominin lineages was much slower than how it operates today, although why this discrepancy exists is still an open question. *Source: PTI*

## Most distant supernova ever confirmed

**LONDON (TIP):** Scientists have confirmed the discovery of the most distant supernova ever detected—a huge cosmic explosion that took place 10.5 billion years ago, or three-quarters the age of the universe.

A supernova is the explosion of a massive star at the end of its life cycle.

The exploding star, named DES16C2nm, was detected by the Dark Energy Survey (DES), an international collaboration to map several hundred million galaxies in order to find out more about dark energy—the mysterious force believed to be causing the accelerated expansion of the universe.

As detailed in the study published in *The Astrophysical Journal*, light from the event has taken 10.5 billion years to reach Earth, making it the oldest supernova ever discovered and studied.

The universe itself is thought to be 13.8 billion years old.

DES16C2nm is classified as a superluminous supernova (SLSN), the brightest and rarest class of supernovae, first discovered ten years ago, thought to be caused by material falling onto the densest object in the universe - a rapidly rotating neutron star newly formed in the explosion of a massive star. *Source: PTI*

# Google can now detect heart disease through AI-based retina scan

Using machine learning, scientists from Google and its health-tech subsidiary, Verily, can now detect a person's risk of getting a heart disease.

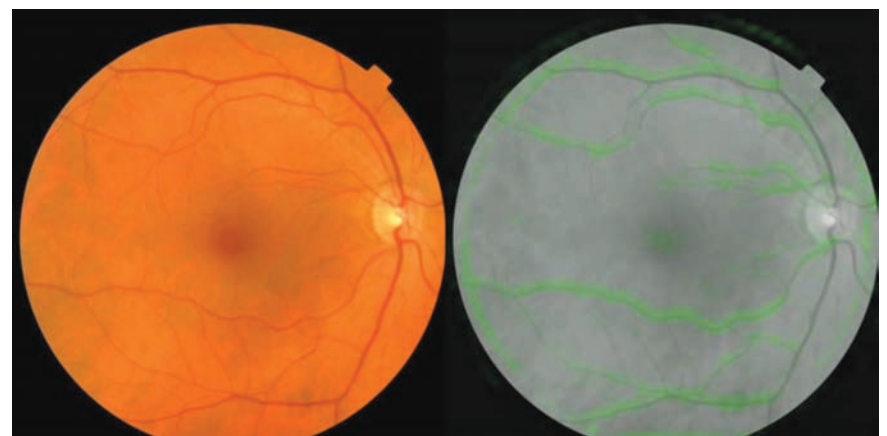
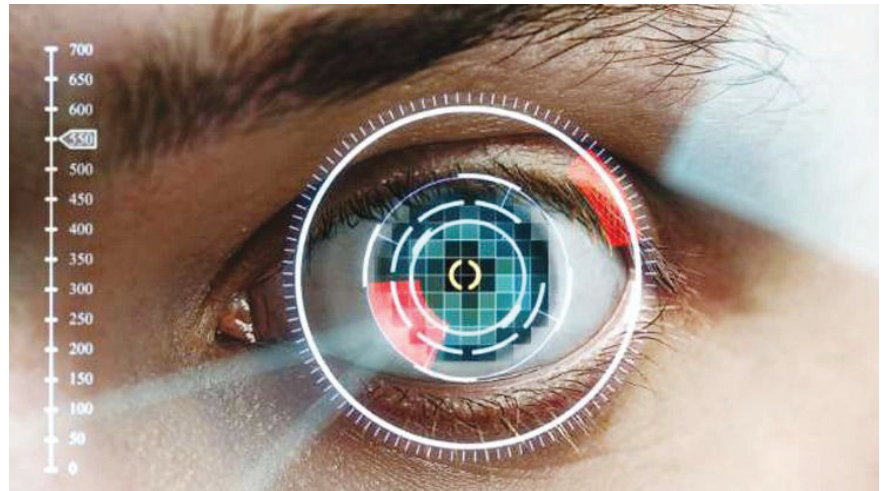
This new method scans the back of an individual's eye to analyse the factors that can cause heart disease, according to a report by *The Verge*.

Google said that it is using technology such as machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI), the company's software can accurately deduce data, including an individual's age, blood pressure, and whether or not they smoke. This can then be used to predict their risk of suffering a major cardiac event, such as a heart attack, with nearly the same accuracy as current methods.

With this in place, doctors can detect a patient's cardiovascular risk, as it doesn't require a blood test. However, scientists stated that the method will need to be tested more thoroughly before it can be used in a clinical setting.

Google and Verily's scientists used machine learning to analyse a medical dataset of nearly 300,000 patients, as per the report. This information included eye scans as well as general medical data. Neural networks were then used research information for patterns, detecting signs in the eye scans with the metrics needed to predict cardiovascular risks, such as age and blood pressure.

Research states that the rear interior wall of the eye (the fundus) is chock-full of blood vessels that reflect the body's overall health. By studying their appearance with camera and microscope, doctors can infer things like an individual's blood pressure, age, and whether or not they smoke, all of which are crucial indicators of cardiovascular



A scan of the back of the human eye (left), and how Google's algorithm sees it. The green highlights are the parts the algorithm found most helpful in predicting blood pressure.

health.

As part of the research, retinal images of two patients were presented, one of whom suffered a cardiovascular event and one of whom did not. Using the aforementioned technology, Google's

algorithm was able to tell the two apart.

If successful, this technology can significantly enhance the medical field in terms of early detection, primarily through minimum human involvement.

*Source: ANI*

## 3D printed clip-on can turn your smartphone into microscope

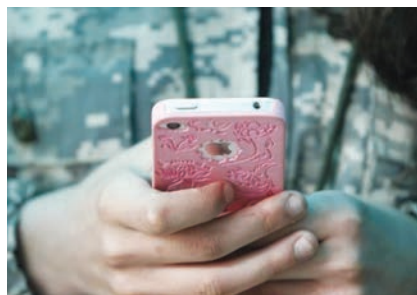
**MELBOURNE (TIP):** Scientists have developed a 3D printable clip-on that allows anyone to turn their smartphone into a fully functional microscope.

The smartphone microscope is powerful enough to visualise specimens as small as 1/200th of a millimetre, including microscopic organisms, animal and plant cells, blood cells, cell nuclei and more, researchers said.

They are making the technology freely available, sharing the 3D printing files publicly so anyone with access to a 3D printer can turn their own smartphone into a microscope.

Developed at the RMIT University node of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Nanoscale BioPhotonics (CNBP) in Australia, the clip-on technology does not rely on external power or light source to work, yet offers high-powered microscopic performance in a robust and mobile hand-held package.

According to lead developer Antony Orth, the technology has immense potential as a scientific tool, one that is ideal for use in remote areas and for field-



work where larger stand-alone microscopes are unavailable or impractical.

We have designed a simple mobile phone microscope that takes advantage of the integrated illumination available with nearly all smartphone cameras, said Orth, CNBP Research Fellow at RMIT.

The clip-on has been engineered with internal illumination tunnels that guide light from the camera flash to illuminate the sample from behind.

This overcomes issues seen with other microscopy-enabled mobile phone devices, said Orth in the research published in the journal *Scientific*

*Reports*.

Almost all other phone-based microscopes use externally powered light sources, while there is a perfectly good flash on the phone itself.

External LEDs and power sources can make these other systems surprisingly complex, bulky and difficult to assemble, he said.

A further advantage is that the clip-on enables both bright-field and dark-field microscopy techniques to be undertaken, Orth said.

Bright-field microscopy is where a specimen is observed on a bright background. Conversely, dark-field shows the specimen illuminated on a dark background.

"The added dark-field functionality lets us observe samples that are nearly invisible under conventional bright-field operation such as cells in media, he said.

Having both capabilities in such a small device is extremely beneficial and increases the range of activity that the microscope can be successfully used for," Orth added. *Source: PTI*



# RBI's new NPA norms may undermine bank earnings: Credit rating agency

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Reserve Bank's new norms for overhauling the mechanism to deal with bad loans are aimed at speeding up the NPA resolution, but would undermine the banking sector earnings in the near-term, credit rating agency Fitch said.

However, stronger regulatory efforts to clean up bad loan problems, combined with planned recapitalisation of state banks, could help support a recovery in the sector over the medium term, the US-based agency said in a statement.

Regulators appear increasingly impatient with the slow resolution of NPL stock, which has prolonged the non-performing loan (NPL) cycle, it added.

"India's new framework aimed at speeding up NPL resolution is likely to push up banks' credit costs and undermine earnings in the near term," said Fitch, which has a negative outlook on the banking sector.

The new framework gives banks less discretion over the reporting and resolution of bad assets and attempts to address the complexities involved in resolving the stressed loans of large borrowers.

"Banks will need to report defaults by large borrowers weekly, indicating a more invasive approach to tracking bad assets," it said.

The timeline for dealing with bad loans has also been made prescriptive, with banks and borrowers forced to implement a plan for resolving loans within 180 days of default or go to insolvency court.



"The new framework's overall focus is on recognising and quickly resolving bad loans. It is likely to result in a rise in NPLs, as banks are forced to reclassify stressed accounts previously recorded as special mention loans or restructured loans.

"More accounts are also likely to be pushed towards insolvency courts and into liquidation, particularly since the new guidelines require all of a borrower's lenders to agree on a resolution plan to keep it away from the courts," Fitch said.

Fitch said most of the USD 32 billion (Rs 2.11 lakh crore) of fresh capital the government plans to inject into state banks by end-March 2019 is likely to be absorbed by losses associated with NPL resolution. "Asset growth is, therefore, likely to remain low and earning will stay under pressure."

It said the USD 1.8 billion (Rs 11,400

crore) fraud in a Mumbai branch of Punjab National Bank (PNB) underlines the risks to bank performance posed by poor risk control and management supervision, which are a weakness across much of the sector, and have contributed to bad loan problems.

Fitch has placed PNB on 'Rating Watch Negative' with possibility of future downgrade.

In the new norms at dealing with NPAs, the RBI last week specified rules for "early identification" of stressed assets, timelines for implementation of resolution plans, and a penalty on banks for failing to adhere to the prescribed timelines.

It has also withdrawn mechanisms like Corporate Debt Restructuring Scheme, Strategic Debt Restructuring Scheme (SDR), and Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A). *Source: PTI*

## PNB TRANSFERS 1,415 EMPLOYEES POST SCAM



**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Punjab National Bank (PNB) has transferred 1,415 employees after the scam involving Rs 11,400 crore, using fake letters of undertakings (LoUs) to diamond jeweller Nirav Modi and associates, surfaced earlier this month.

Modi has allegedly cheated the country's second largest bank through issuance of LoUs in connivance with a few officials of the bank from one of its Mumbai branch. The bank filed a FIR in this regard on February 13.

"...the Bank has transferred 257 sub-staff, 437 clerks and 721 officers (total 1,415 employees) since February 19, 2018, as per prevailing Rotational Transfer Policy of the Bank," PNB said in a statement.

It however denied reports that the bank has transferred close to 18,000 employees saying it is "factually incorrect".

It has been alleged that certain employees involved in the scam remained posted in the same position and the same branch for a very long time in violation of the HR policy.

On February 19, the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) had held a meeting with senior officials of PNB to enquire about the scam involving Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi of Gitanjali group.

The lender further said that its branches are functioning smoothly and the "transfers are in no way affecting the customer service in the bank". *Source: PTI*

## Bid of Liberty House for Bhushan Steel rejected



**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Committee of Creditors has rejected the bid of UK-based Liberty House to acquire Bhushan Power and Steel Ltd, leaving Tata Steel and JSW Steel in the race for taking over the assets of the bankrupt firm, a source said.

"Committee of creditors (COC) in a meeting today has rejected the bids of Liberty House (of the UK) because the company submitted the bids after the last date of submission date which was February 8," a source privy to the development said.

Liberty House had submitted the bid yesterday, he said. In today's COC meeting the bids of Tata Steel and JSW Steel were disclosed and now the process as well as legal advisers will evaluate them, the source said.

The detailed terms and conditions of the bids were disclosed to the lenders at the meeting, the source said. Bhushan Power and Steel owes about Rs 45,000 crore to its lenders.

When contacted, Resolution Professional (RP) Mahender Kumar Khandelwal declined to comment on the developments.

The source said that Tata Steel offered Rs 17,000 crore to the lenders as upfront amount and Rs 7,200 crore for operations of Bhushan, JSW made an offer of Rs 11,000 crore to the lenders and Rs 2,000 crore for the operations of the beleaguered power firm.

The COC will now meet on March 6 to take the process forward, including declaration of the highest bidder. *Source: PTI*

## Ford ousts top exec over 'inappropriate behavior'

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Top Ford Motor Company executive Raj Nair has left the company following an internal investigation into reports of inappropriate behavior, the automaker said on Feb 21.

Nair has been president of Ford's North America division since June 2017. But he's held a number of key positions at the automaker over several decades, including as Ford's head of global product development and chief technical officer. Nair was one of four executives awarded a retention stock bonus last year, just days before Ford ousted Mark Fields and named Jim Hackett as CEO. Nair's stock bonus, which won't vest until 2020, was valued at about \$5 million.

Ford said in its announcement that the decision follows a recent internal investigation into reports of inappropriate behavior. The review determined certain behavior by Nair was inconsistent with the company's code of conduct. Ford didn't say who would take Nair's position, except to add that his replacement would be announced in the "near future."

"We made this decision after a thorough review and careful consideration," Hackett said in a statement. "Ford is deeply committed to



Raj Nair

providing and nurturing a safe and respectful culture and we expect our leaders to fully uphold these values."

Nair said in a statement issued by Ford that he regretted "that there have been instances where I have not exhibited leadership behaviors consistent with the principles that the company and I have always espoused."

## Gupta empire crumbles as Zuma exits South African presidency

**JOHANNESBURG (TIP):** For years, brothers Ajay, Atul and Rajesh Gupta were ranked among South Africa's most prominent businessmen and socialized with the ruling elite, including their friend, then-President Jacob Zuma.

They weathered accusations that they'd exploited their political connections to land an aircraft at a high-security military base to ferry guests to a private wedding, installed their allies in key positions at state companies, tried to influence cabinet appointments and looted billions of rand of taxpayer funds. Law enforcement agencies took no visible action against them, saying only that investigations were ongoing.

That all changed on February 14, when Zuma quit as president under pressure+ from the ruling African National Congress the same day the police's Hawks investigative unit staged a dawn raid on the Guptas' sprawling luxury estate in Johannesburg's Saxonwold suburb. Some of their top lieutenants were arrested and the eldest brother, Ajay, was declared a fugitive.



contd from page 1

## Students, Parents, Teachers...

responses such as: "What would you most want me to know about your experience?" and "I hear you." Trump said he wants to hear suggestions for addressing the issue, saying, "After I listen, we're going to get things done."

Trump listened intently to ideas from about 40 people, including those from six students who survived the Florida shooting.

The students, many weeping, described the trauma of the shootings and pleaded that the government bring an end to gun violence.

The Republican president, who has championed gun rights and was endorsed by the NRA during the 2016 campaign, said he would move quickly to tighten background checks for gun buyers and would consider raising the age for buying certain types of guns.

He said he had "many ideas" and promised, "We're going to be very strong on background checks."

Trump spoke at length during the televised White House "listening session."

"If you had a teacher ... who was adept at firearms, they could very well end the attack very quickly," he said, while acknowledging the proposal was controversial. Some of the meeting participants indicated support. Others were opposed.

Mark Barden, whose son was killed in the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Connecticut, said his wife, Jackie, a teacher "will tell you that school teachers have more than enough responsibilities right now than to have to have the awesome responsibility of lethal force to take a life."

"I don't understand why I could still go in a store and buy a weapon of war," said Sam Zeif, 18, sobbing after he described texting his family members during the attack. "Let's never let this happen again, please, please."

## US Women's Hockey Team...

"I knew she was going to pull something," forward Kendall Coyne said. "She is phenomenal in shootouts. She always had something up her sleeve."

Lamoureux-Davidson said the move is called "Oops, I did it again" and she has practiced it "thousands of times."

"I butchered it a thousand times," she said. "Just glad it worked this time."

That was the game-winner in a 3-2 victory that ends Canada's streak of four consecutive Olympic women's hockey gold medals and perhaps changes the course of U.S. women's hockey for years to come.

"This is greater than a trophy and a medal," said U.S. center Gigi Marvin, a three-time Olympian who also scored in a shootout.

The fact that the Americans won the game in dramatic fashion merely adds to its historical significance. The game was played on Feb. 22, 38 years to the day after Herb Brooks' team downed the Soviets on Mike Eruzione's goal in the "Miracle on Ice."

## Trudeau's India visit mired ...

to convey the displeasure of his government for his assumed close proximity to Sikh separatists in Canada. And, on February 22, Canadian Prime Minister's maiden India visit plunged into yet another controversy over a dinner invitation to a convicted Khalistani terrorist Jaspal Atwal by the Canadian High Commissioner to India.

Swiftly moving to control damage, High Commissioner Nadir Patel cancelled the invite for the dinner, hosted for Trudeau, while the external affairs ministry said it will "ascertain" how Atwal entered India.

"The High Commission has rescinded Mr Atwal's invitation. We do not comment on matters relating to the PM's security," the Canadian mission said in a statement.

Reacting to the controversy, Trudeau told reporters "Obviously we take this situation extremely seriously. The individual in question never should have received an invitation and, as soon as we found out, we rescinded the invitation immediately... The member of Parliament who included this individual has, and will, assume full responsibility for his actions."

The Canadian PMO also said in a statement that Atwal was not part of Trudeau's official delegation.

Atwal was convicted for trying to kill the then Punjab minister Malkiat Singh Sidhu in Vancouver in 1986.

When asked how Atwal got a visa, external affairs ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said the government is "ascertaining" details how he got a visa to enter India.

"There are two aspects of this. One is his presence at the event. I think this is something which should be addressed by the Canadian side. They have said that it was an oversight.

And that is the reason the invitation for the reception tonight has been withdrawn." "On the visa part, I cannot immediately say how that happened. There are different ways of people coming into India, whether you are an Indian national, or OCI card holder. We are ascertaining details from our mission. We will have to see how this happened," Kumar told reporters.

He also said that the fact the ministry issued a visa means that Atwal is not an Indian national.

On whether Atwal can be arrested in India, Kumar said there were cases against him for which he has served his sentence. The ministry is not aware whether there are cases against him in India, that has to be checked with the law-enforcement agencies, he added.

Union home ministry officials said Atwal no longer figured in the government's blacklist of Sikh extremists.

The invite cancellation comes at a time when Trudeau's pro-Khalistan approach is being criticized by many including Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, who raised the issue with the Canadian prime minister during a meeting.

On his part, Trudeau had assured Singh that his country does not support separatism in India or elsewhere.

Reacting to the controversy involving him, Atwal told Canada's Postmedia that he did not plan to attend the dinner as he was in Mumbai on business, The Vancouver Sun reported.

He also said it was unfair to raise his criminal conviction for shooting a visiting Punjabi cabinet minister on Vancouver Island in 1986 given how long ago the crime occurred.

*(With inputs from PTI)*

## Special Counsel Mueller Files...

they owned to fraudulently secure more than \$20 million in loans. The indictments show increasing pressure from Mueller on the former top Trump campaign officials and highlight his aggressive effort to investigate Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and any related matters uncovered during the investigation.

Last Friday, the special counsel produced grand jury indictments for 13 Russian nationals, accusing them of operating a misinformation campaign to hurt Hillary Clinton's presidential effort.

In the indictment released Thursday, prosecutors allege Manafort and Gates "hid the existence and ownership of the foreign companies and bank accounts" they oversaw and laundered more than \$30 million in income.

Some of the fraud was possible because the men disguised their income as "loans" from shell corporations they ran, the prosecutors said. More than \$75 million dollars flowed through offshore accounts the men had set up in foreign countries, including Cyprus, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Seychelles, the indictment alleges. These are small island nations where local laws make it easy to park money.

Manafort used some of the money to buy real estate in the US, and they both used the money on home improvement and to refinance their mortgages, the indictment alleges. They also allegedly used money from their offshore accounts to pay for luxury goods, and, in Gates' case, for his mortgage and children's tuition.

They were able to defraud banks because of the tens of millions of dollars they earned doing Ukrainian political work and lobbying from 2006 until 2015, the prosecutors allege.

Manafort faces 18 new charges in Virginia, while Gates faces 23 new charges.

Already, the pair face a combined 12 criminal charges in federal court in Washington for alleged money laundering and failing to disclose banking information and foreign lobbying work they did prior to 2015. Those charges are also connected to the offshore accounts in the new indictment.

Manafort and Gates pleaded not guilty to those charges in October.

Thursday's indictment adds more pressure on Manafort and Gates as their Washington trial approaches this year. With mounting legal expenses and the potential for lengthy prison sentences, Manafort and Gates might reconsider cutting a deal with Mueller's team.

But they can only make a deal if they have valuable information that Mueller can use in other prosecutions. Gates could testify against Manafort, and Manafort could testify about any potential crimes he witnessed during Trump's presidential campaign -- if any occurred.

## School officer waited outside...



from the shooting and taking statements from witnesses and Peterson himself, Israel said. "He should have went in, addressed the killer, killed the killer," Israel said.

## What is in store for a Possible...

Sensitivity, however, has not dissuaded local officials from full-throated support of the project.

Supporters call the project an honest attempt at taking Texas' size and shrinking it, so the metro regions will prosper. The train and its tracks -- 200 feet wide, 240 miles long -- are an all-electric attempt and a new option for convenience and conveyance, for Americans.

"It is just marvelous to go from the downtown of one city to the downtown of another city," said Felix Madrigal, a Hutchins resident who came to support the train in Dallas at a Jan. 29 meeting held by the Federal Railroad Administration.

When both metro areas have 10 million or more residents -- which demographers expect over the next 25 to 30 years -- Interstate 45 will be overloaded. Widening it won't handle the anticipated travel demand, even with autonomous cars cruising at more than 90 mph.

"It is false security to think automated technology will solve our travel," said Sam Lott, an engineer and professor who has overseen dozens of rail plans and feasibility studies in a roughly 40-year career.

Texas Central wants to build another way to move. It is seeking federal approval for a privately-funded high-speed rail line using Japanese Shinkansen trains. The line would be a sealed corridor between a station on the southern end of downtown Dallas and Northwest Mall in Houston at Loop 610 and U.S. 290.

Trains would operate every 30 minutes, with the trip taking 90 minutes end-to-end. A third stop is planned in the Roans Prairie area northeast of Navasota, aimed at luring travelers from College Station and Huntsville.

A ticket for the train would be comparable to airline prices, which average \$199 each way for Houston-to-Dallas flights. Like airline tickets, prices would fluctuate based on sales and how early in advance someone purchases a fare.

"We have different prices for families," Texas Central CEO Carlos Aguilar said, noting his priority is making the trains tempting for all travelers.

The company expects at least 5 million people to hop aboard annually, as airlines focus on other connections and travel times via I-45 prompt some to look for alternatives. A Federal Railroad Administration draft environmental report estimated ridership as high as 7.2 million a year.

The ridership estimate, which opponents call preposterous, is ambitious, compared to the roughly 700,000 travelers who fly between the metro areas each year. *(Source: NBC)*

## Indian-American seeks re...

Other successes and projects launched by the city during his previous term include the successful annexations of Greatwood and New Territory, the acquisition of a former prison site for re-development, the completion of drainage projects and the return to normal operations after the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey.

"As a member of City Council, I will continue to listen to my constituents and work with my fellow council members and the city staff to ensure that Sugar Land remains a premier city with a solid vision for the future," Gandhi said.

"Together, with our forward-looking residents, we can accomplish even more great things for this city," he said.

Gandhi is an attorney and shareholder with the law firm 'Roberts Markel Weinberg Butler Hailey PC'. He is board certified in commercial real estate law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. He has served leading roles in numerous community organizations.

In 2015, he was honored by the Houston Business Journal as one of the region's 40 Under-40 young leaders. *(Source: PTI)*





### Shree Ganeshaya Namah

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 011-91-8141234275 [www.bejandaruwalla.com](http://www.bejandaruwalla.com)

## Weekly Horoscope: February 26 - March 4, 2018

Ganesha says in digital terms speed + space + spirituality + showmanship = Sagittarius.

Add to it the great divide between illusion / reality, evolution / revolution, freedom / captivity, knowledge / wisdom. The archer pierces the eye of the Sun and hits infinity.

Finally, Sagittarius is all about freedom. Sagittarius is both fast and furious.

### Aries:

Ganesha says you feel a strong pull to explore new facets of your personality. Till now you have focused on your work and home and have seen glimpses of complex emotional issues emerge. You have tackled the professional front efficiently but now you are eager to explore the creative side of your personality. Hobbies, children, pets, intimate relations are highlighted, and you feel the urge to create. Innovation and ingenuity are the key words here.

### Taurus:

Ganesha rewards you with closer bonds, genuine love and romance. This fills you with a sense of peace and well-being which no amount of money or material success can buy. These relationships are your bedrock, inspiring you to take giant strides in your chosen field. At work a new outlook, one that is caring and tolerant, will get you the cooperation and support of your workmates and this will increase the kudos coming your way. Children will also be a source of joy.

### Gemini:

You switch from the relationship-rich period of the last period to professional concerns. Personal associations have been supportive on the road to material success, but you now realize that renewed efforts are required to push ahead. Rewards, promotions and other material gains pour in and you even begin to feel smug and self-satisfied in all this adulation. You need a balance for life to be more harmonious and must make time for family obligations too.

### Cancer:

This is a pleasant phase. You have delivered virtuoso performances in both the important sectors of your life - home and work. You are the toast of everyone, the blue-eyed boy / girl and also the center of envy. Your confidence and chutzpah, combined with your good heart, helps you negotiate these dangerous waters and emerge victorious. But this is not all, says Ganesha. Another trend overlaps - finances engage your attention too.

### Leo:

A whole new trend begins this period and Ganesha predicts that it will definitely be the main theme in this period. It involves the evolution of your fast-moving, impulsive nature into a calmer, more sober one in which you develop a love for humanitarian activities. No half-measures here, as you go all out to share your resources with the underprivileged. You are at the forefront, making things happen at home, work and in the community.

### Virgo:

The successful pursuit of your goals requires out of the box thinking and you whole-heartedly accept the challenges that confront you. Ganesha motivates you to seek greener pastures. You could be busy with funds / loans, negotiations and deals, a job change or even a surge in responsibilities. You could be also looking out for collaborations, partnerships and even dealerships.

### Libra:

Your spiritual practices have given you fortitude and the courage of your convictions. You feel much more calm and peaceful and ready to face life's challenges with equanimity. This doesn't mean that you are lethargic and laidback; quite the contrary really. Ganesha says that you will be full of pep and vigor, a joie de vivre, an unalloyed enthusiasm, which helps you fulfil your responsibilities at home and at work.

### Scorpio:

There is a repetition of last period's theme. The spotlight continues to shine on you at work, thanks to your awesome performance. Relationships are on the upswing with inter-personal tensions sorted out. Your home is your haven and you enjoy warm and caring interactions with your near and dear ones. Socializing, partying and entertaining your friends and family helps you unwind. Curb unhealthy ego drives, or you will be the target of envy.

### Sagittarius:

This phase kick-starts a trend of hard work and fervent play. Dedicated efforts and large doses of luck give you success on the domestic and

professional fronts. You are more organized at work and read the fine print. You are also enthusiastic and confident and filled with a new energy which ensures success. You use your resources in a prudent manner; introduce innovative and effective measures at work, revive old contacts and friendships and clear the air with those you may have had a run-in with earlier.

### Capricorn:

The work formats put into place last period take your productivity levels to dizzy heights. There is a lot of work, but the systems are in place and so while the productivity increases, the effort doesn't. This not only makes your work easier but also gives you more time to devote to domestic affairs. You will have tender moments with your loved one as you multi-task and juggle several projects effortlessly. Certain unforeseen legal matters could crop up; though not serious they could be time-consuming.

### Aquarius:

You need a break from the hectic activities and events of the past period. Stress levels are high, and you need to recuperate. You look at social work and may spend time at old people's homes and other charities. You look at ways to give back to society. Those in the health care professions such as nursing, psychiatry, psychotherapy, counselling etc. Could scale new heights, perhaps even win international acclaim for their work. Almost all of you will have unusual intuition which is actually quite different to your normal leanings, but this phase makes it happen.

### Pisces:

Astrology is a logical science, says your Ganesha devotee and you can definitely see the proof. You indulge in genuine self-evaluation and self-awareness and life inspires you to make changes that may be against your basic nature, but which help you reach your higher self. You are usually very impatient and hasty to get your work done. You will make rapid progress on all fronts and become a much more whole and rounded personality.





Special Report by  
Prabhjot Singh in  
PyeongChang

## PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympic Games



# 'DOUBLE' Olympians in limelight

**PYEONGCHANG (TIP):** One of the toughest things in sports is to be an Olympian. On an average, every four years only 5,000 to 7,000 sportsmen and women qualify to be Olympians and less than 1 per cent of them distinguish themselves and become Olympic medalists.

Naturally, it becomes much tougher to be both Winter and Summer Olympian. Though there are not many instances when athletes have competed in both summer and winter Olympic Games, yet few sportsmen and women, with their hard work and dedication, have scripted success stories in these mega sports events held within two years of each other.

Most recent case is of Kaillie Humphries and Phylicia George of Canada who won a bronze medal at PyeongChang.



Pita Taufatofua decided immediately after finding out he would be Tonga's flag-bearer that he would wear traditional Tongan dress instead of the usual team uniform at the opening ceremony.  
Photo / courtesy TODAY

Who does not remember Tonga's Pita Taufatofua who became a global sensation overnight when he arrived shirtless in freezing cold of the opening ceremony of the PyeongChang 2018 winter Olympic Games. He belongs to a select band of those athletes who have competed in successive summer and winter Olympic Games.

He competed in Taekwondo event in the 2016 summer Olympic Games in Rio and finished 114th in 15 km Cross-country skiing here.

It may be more than a dream for those who make it. It is the reality for a number of athletes from Canada who are competing here at PyeongChang. Two of them, Phylicia George and Seyi Smith, moved from track and field to Bobsleigh, an event that has also attracted some African athletes, including all-woman Nigerian team, to Winter Olympic Games.

"I started cross country skiing in 2017 and the training was perhaps the hardest I have ever done in my life," Pita told media. "Races where we hope we could do well were getting cancelled and we had to book last minute one way ticket to the race where myself and German Madrazo of Mexico could finally qualify for PyeongChang 2018."

Pita's story is for those who after setting a target stay determined to achieve it.

"I was one of those people who thought I could sort of walk on

and continue doing what I was doing before," says Canadian track and field star Smith, who competed in the 4 x 100m relay at London 2012. "The overlap between track and bobsled is not as much as people think."

Phylicia George, who competed in the 100m hurdles at London 2012 and Rio 2016, echoes Smith's sentiment about bobsleigh being a whole lot more than just running fast on ice.

"The biggest thing was getting stronger, lifting a lot heavier," says George. "I think I did not respect how much strength played a role and how much stronger I needed to get to be able to find the positions that I needed behind the sled."



Seyi Smith, moved from track and field to Bobsleigh

Beyond the need for physical strength, Smith and George also needed to dip into their reserves of psychological strength to overcome the inevitable obstacles of adapting to a whole new athletic discipline.

For Smith, though, there was never serious thought given to abandoning the quest.

"Everybody warned me when I first started out, saying, 'You better watch out, Seyi, this is not track, there is not the glamour, you are going to be working in the cold and lifting sleds,'" says Smith.

"It has been quite the opposite. Every month I have liked it more and more. I told one of the guys that the only time I actually said that I was having fun out loud is right before we crashed in training. So, I don't say it out loud anymore. But inside, I am still enjoying myself quite a bit."

George fared a bit differently, having competed at the Summer Games less than two years ago, and still being active in track and field. She says getting started in bobsleigh was "very rough" and she definitely second-guessed her decision.

But having been recruited to bobsleigh by Kaillie Humphries, the two-time reigning Olympic champion in the two-women event, it was perhaps inevitable that George's competitive spirit would eventually win the day.

"There definitely were days when I was like, 'man, what am I doing out here?'" says George. "But seeing myself get better and being a part of a team was a really cool and interesting aspect for me, where I'm used to being an individual. ... I am really happy I stuck with it and saw my potential through."

**I**t is not a usual combination that would end on Olympic podium. While one had two Olympic medals to her belt, she gets a new partner who happens to be veteran of two summer Olympic Games, and the new combination ends with Olympic Bobsleigh bronze.



Kaillie Humphries (right), and Phylicia George after winning bronze in women's bobsleigh on Wednesday, February 21

The pair is none other than mentor Kaillie Humphries and her new partner Phylicia George, otherwise Hurdler in Track and Field.

For Kaillie it has been her third straight Olympic bobsleigh medal.

With this medal, Canada has taken its tally to 21 with nine golds and is currently placed at overall number three position.

Humphries and George had been in fifth place after the first two runs, but were just four-one hundredths of a second out of a podium position. They made up that ground in their third run, moving into third place with a cumulative time of 2:32.12. That gave them a buffer of 0.05 on fourth-placed Americans Jamie Greubel Poser and Aja Evans.

In the final run, Humphries steered the sled down the track in 50.77 seconds for a four-run total time of 3:22.89, ensuring a podium finish with just the two leading tandems to go.

Humphries came to PyeongChang as the two-time reigning Olympic champion. She is now the first Canadian bobsledder to win three Olympic medals.

For George, it is her first Olympic medal and it comes in her Winter Olympic debut after she competed at two Summer Games in the 100m hurdles, making the final at both London 2012 and Rio 2016. She began bobsleigh training late last summer and competed in her first international race just this past November. She and Humphries won World Cup gold and silver together in January.

## Slovenian Ice Hockey player tests positive for doping

As the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympic Games are inching towards a close, another case of violation of doping controls saw a Slovenia Ice Hockey player voluntarily accepting the charge and offered to quit the Olympic village.

The Anti-doping Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS ADD) at the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games (OWG) announced that it has registered a new case.

Further to a request from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and based upon the agreement of the parties, the CAS ADD has issued the following decision:

Zika Jeglic, Ice Hockey, Slovenia, tested positive in-competition test with fenoterol (beta-2 agonist; specified substance). He accepted an anti-doping rule violation. As a



consequence, the athlete is suspended from competing in the remainder of the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018; the athlete will leave the Olympic Village within 24 hours; the procedure will continue and the CAS ADD will issue a final award after the conclusion of the Games.

At the start of the second week of the Games, the Anti-doping Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport, started procedure involving the athlete Aleksandr Krushelnitskii (mixed curling; OAR).

Though a date has been fixed for hearing, yet no further information is being provided at this point.

Earlier, a Japanese athlete also tested positive for doping and was suspended.

-Courtesy PTC News



A massive fraud of Rs. 11,300 crore at Punjab National Bank or PNB by its own officials has landed India's second largest bank in a huge controversy. The PNB scam came to limelight on February 14 after the bank complained to the CBI that its own officials violated rules and put out illegal guarantee documents to help celebrity jeweller Nirav Modi secure credit from banks abroad. PNB is now making attempts to recover the dues from the jeweller who fled the country last month. Two central agencies - the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) - are investigating the matter and so far, five persons have been arrested. Raids have also been conducted on Nirav Modi's firms and jewellery, luxury cars and other assets have been seized; property, bank accounts associated with him have also been attached.

### What is the fraud?

According to the bank's complaint, the PNB fraud surfaced after one of the key accused bank officials retired. When Modi's executives came calling for a letter of undertaking, or LoU (essentially a bank guarantee against which another lender gives a foreign currency loan), the new official in charge demanded the mandatory collateral. Modi's executives insisted they had never given collateral before, raising a red flag. An internal investigation showed the bank had issued hundreds of unauthorized PNB LoUs to Modi and his uncle, Mehul Choksi of Gitanjali Gems Ltd, baring the bank fraud that proceeded undetected for the past seven years.

"Nobody seems to be talking about what precisely needs to be done. This is important because the scam clearly shows that supervisory process at public sector banks failed to detect the fraud and, hence, it needs to be improved," said Abizer Diwanji, partner and national leader (financial services) at EY India.

On Monday, 19 February, when a MintAsia reporter visited the Brady House branch, the branch that was at the epicentre of the PNB fraud, bore the look of a makeshift jail, with shutters down and the branch sealed. The Brady House branch that exclusively serves mid-sized corporates barred entry to customers, while inside, officials from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's federal detective agency, pored over papers and questioned bank officials.

Financial frauds are not rare in India. The central bank's June 2017 Financial Stability Report says losses from financial sector frauds rose 72% in the five years to fiscal 2017 to Rs16,770 crore. Banks have filed recovery suits worth Rs64,743 crore against wilful defaulters. Wilful defaulters are those defaulting on bank loans even though they or their promoters have the ability to repay, or they have siphoned off money, or put it some other use than was agreed on.

Still, PNB's innocuously worded stock exchange notice stunned the nation. The bank fraud is the second largest in India after government-owned UCO Bank was found to have advanced \$3.2 billion in export advances to Iran against overseas sales that were never made. The PNB fraud showed the ease with which fraudsters could game the system.

The PNB notice to the stock exchanges, without naming anyone, said it had detected fraudulent and unauthorized transactions "for the benefit of a few select account holders, with their apparent connivance". The bank termed it a contingent liability.

Things became clearer during the day, when it emerged that the fraud the bank was referring to was the same one it had flagged two weeks earlier.

On 1 February, CBI had registered a case against Modi and some related entities for allegedly cheating PNB of Rs 280 crore through unauthorized transactions. The bank had said at that time that it was investigating further to see whether there were more such

# The great Indian bank robbery: How Nirav Modi pulled it off?



Nirav Modi's flagship store boutique at 727 Madison Avenue in New York.



Nirav Modi

**Diamantaire Nirav Modi has left a \$1.8 billion hole in Punjab National Bank's books, something that Indian tax payers will most likely have to fill**

**The PNB fraud is the second largest in India after UCO Bank was found to have advanced \$3.2 billion in export advances to Iran against overseas sales that were never made**

- Nirav Modi is a billionaire, who is known as a luxury diamond jewellery designer. Founder and creative director of the Nirav Modi chain, he has several retail outlets spread across the globe.
- Modi also feature in Forbes billionaire list in 2017, he was ranked number 57 in the India list.
- Modi is fairly well-known in the fashion circle. His designs have been worn by '50 Shades' star Dakota Johnson and Taraji P Henson of 'Hidden Figures' fame.

transactions. The Rs280 crore turned out to be just the tip of an iceberg.

As it investigated the case internally, before the public revelation, PNB found two junior branch officials had issued LoUs to foreign branches of Indian lenders, on behalf of firms associated with Nirav Modi and his uncle, Mehul Choksi. These bank guarantees were essentially to help these firms raise buyer's credit from these overseas banks to pay for their imports.

PNB's complaint to CBI named two bank officials—Gokulnath Shetty, a deputy manager in its foreign exchange department; and Manoj Kharat, who operated the financial messaging system SWIFT. Both have since been arrested. These individuals, says PNB, had issued LoUs without getting proper approvals and without making entries in the core banking system (CBS), the software used to support a bank's most common transactions. It also acts as a record keeper. SWIFT stands for the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication. The scam happening via SWIFT went undetected since it was not linked to CBS and because checks failed at several levels, said experts

In the normal course, when an importer goes to a bank for such a guarantee, one of two things happens. One, the bank asks him for collateral, which could be land or a fixed

deposit. Two, the bank sanctions a credit limit after a credit appraisal. Here, neither of these procedures were followed.

The bank claimed Modi did not use the funds obtained through this method for the intended purpose of paying import bills. In many cases, PNB alleged, the funds were used to settle earlier loans. In effect, every time a Modi-related firm asked for a bank guarantee, it was to settle an older loan taken through a previous bank guarantee. According to the PNB complaint, the scam had been going on for about seven years. When the new man at the bank spotted it, the amount had ballooned to around Rs11,400 crore.

The CBI approached Interpol to issue a so-called diffusion notice against Modi, his wife Ami Nirav Modi, brother Nishal Modi as well as uncle Choksi, all four of whom had left India in the first week of January. A diffusion notice is a request for arresting or locating an individual, or providing additional information in relation to a police investigation. Separately, the ministry of external affairs suspended the passports of Modi and Choksi for four weeks.

### Who is Nirav Modi?

Modi, 47, shot to prominence in the past decade when he became the first Indian to feature on the cover of a Christie's auction

catalogue in 2010 for a Golconda diamond necklace that fetched \$3.56 million at its auction in Hong Kong.

Born in India and raised in the Belgian city of Antwerp, the diamond capital of the world, Modi is a third-generation diamantaire. After dropping out of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, he joined the family business of his maternal uncle Choksi at Gitanjali Gems. Choksi, director at Gitanjali Gems, is also one of the accused in the ongoing CBI investigation. It was his initial nine years at Gitanjali Gems in the 1990s that laid the foundation for Modi's own jewellery business. Incidentally, a PNB complaint said the Gitanjali Gems group companies used the same methods as the Modi companies to secure guarantees or comfort letters.

Since 2010, Modi's fame only increased as he became a jeweller to the rich and famous. Many of India's biggest business families have been buying diamonds from him for years.

In October 2012, his Riviere Diamond Necklace was sold for \$5.1 million at a Sotheby's auction in Hong Kong. In 2013, Modi entered the Forbes list of billionaires. Competing with the likes of pedigreed luxury jewellers such as Tiffany and Co. and Cartier, Modi went on to set up Nirav Modi boutique shops around the world. His clients include Hollywood star Kate Winslet, who wore diamond creations by the jewellery designer for her red-carpet walk at the 2016 Oscars.





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