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Notorious inside trader Raj Rajaratnam is out of prison thanks in part to Kim Kardashian. **Page 4**

Imran Khan warns of 'bloodbath'



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Rohit Sharma will have another chance to resurrect his stop-start test career, but this time as an opener. **Page 23**

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More than 1,600 die in India's heaviest monsoon season for 25 years

By Devjyot Ghoshal and Saurabh Sharma

NEW DELHI - The heaviest monsoon rains to lash India in 25 years have killed more than 1,600 people since June, government data showed on Tuesday, as authorities battled floods in two northern states and muddy waters swirled inside a major city.

The monsoon, which typically lasts between June and September, has already delivered 10% more rain than a 50-year average, and is expected to withdraw only after early October, more than a month later than usual.

The extended rains have wreaked havoc, with northern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states the worst hit in the latest spell of intense downpours, killing 144 people since last Friday, two officials said.

In Patna, Bihar's riverside capital city that is home to around two million people, residents said they were wading through waist-deep water to buy essential items like food and milk.

Ranjeev Kumar, 65, a resident of Patna's Ashiyana neighbourhood, said that the entire area was stranded by the water.

"The government is not doing any rescue and the situation is



A man sits on a boundary wall of a house as he waits to be evacuated from a flood-affected neighbourhood in Patna, in the eastern state of Bihar, India on October 1, 2019.

very serious here," he said.

On Monday, relief workers rescued Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Modi from his home in Patna. Video footage showed him dressed in shorts and a t-shirt as he was brought out on a raft along with his family members.

Saket Kumar Singh said he was stranded for four days, with about two feet of water inside his house.

"There was no electricity, and despite having money I was

helpless," Singh, 45, said.

In neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, heavy rains have brought down more than 800 homes and swathes of farmland are submerged.

Data released by the federal home ministry shows that 1,673 people have died because of floods and heavy rains this year, as of Sept. 29.

Officials said that many of these fatalities were caused due to wall

and building collapses, including in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, the western state that has seen 371 flood-related deaths in 2019, the highest in the country.

India's flood prevention and forecasting systems are lacking, other experts say, even as the total flood prone area in the country has increased in recent decades because of deforestation, degradation of water bodies, and climate change.

India celebrates 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi

MUMBAI - India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to the "father of the nation" Mahatma Gandhi on the 150th anniversary of his birth at his memorial in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Alongside political figures, school children, and the public also assembled at the memorial to pay their respects.

India observes Oct. 2 not only as Gandhi's birthday but also as International Day of Non-Violence, the ideal that Gandhi fought for throughout his life.



People pay homage at the Mahatma Gandhi memorial on the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi at Rajghat in New Delhi, India on October 2, 2019.

Gandhi, who was born in 1869, played a key role in India's fight

for independence. He was assassinated by a Hindu radical on Jan.

30, 1948, just months after he led India to freedom from British rule through a non-violent struggle.

India celebrated the anniversary by organizing cleanliness drives and film screenings. On the outskirts of the capital New Delhi, government officials erected a 1,650 kg spinning wheel, an important symbol associated with Gandhi, made entirely out of plastic waste. Gandhi used a spinning wheel to spin his own cloth in a gesture of independence and Indian self sufficiency.

Thought of the Week: "When 'I' replaced with 'We', even the illness becomes wellness." - Malcolm X

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Police impose restrictions in Indian Kashmir after Pakistan PM's speech at UN



REUTERS/Danish Ismail

An Indian security force personnel stands guard in a street early morning during restrictions following scrapping of the special constitutional status for Kashmir by the Indian government in Srinagar on September 27, 2019.

By Fayaz Bukhari

SRINAGAR - Authorities in Indian Kashmir tightened restrictions on people's movements last Saturday to prevent possible protests following a speech by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan.

In an address to the United Nations General Assembly last Friday, Khan warned of a bloodbath once India lifts its restrictions in Kashmir, which have been in

force since it revoked the region's decades-old autonomy in August and detained thousands of people.

Soon after the speech, hundreds of Kashmiris came out of their homes, shouting slogans in support of Khan late last Friday night and calling for the independence of Kashmir.

Muslim-majority Kashmir has long been a flashpoint between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan, which have fought two of their

three wars over the divided territory. Both countries rule parts of Kashmir while claiming it in full.

Last Saturday, police vans fitted with speakers made public announcements in some parts of Srinagar about movement restrictions, while additional troops were deployed to prevent protests, according to officials and two witnesses.

The troops also blocked access to the main business centre of Srinagar with razor wire.

"This was necessitated after protests across Srinagar city last night soon after Imran Khan's speech," said a police official, who declined to be identified.

Two Indian officials said six militants and one Indian soldier had been killed in two separate incidents in the state, two officials said.

Three militants were killed in Ganderbal, about 12 miles (19 km) north of Srinagar, according to one of the officials, who declined to be named. Another three were killed in Batote, located on the highway connecting Jammu and Srinagar, Indian defence spokesman Lieutenant Colonel

Devender Anand said.

"INHUMAN CURFEW"

India's crackdown as it revoked Kashmir's special status was accompanied by severe restrictions on movement, as well as disconnection of telephone services. Though New Delhi has eased some of the movement curbs, no prominent detainees have been freed and mobile and internet connections remain suspended.

While warning of the consequences of lifting what he described as an "inhuman curfew," Pakistani premier Khan demanded India do so and free all detainees.

In some areas in Kashmir - including the Soura region near Srinagar which has witnessed protests in the past against India's decision - people clashed with security forces by pelting stones last Friday night, forcing police to use tear gas to disperse them, said the Indian official.

Khan addressed the United Nations a day after the senior U.S. diplomat for South Asia called for a lowering of rhetoric between India and Pakistan, while saying that Washington hoped to see rapid action by India to lift restrictions it has imposed in Kashmir and the release of detainees there.

Dozens die due to heavy rains in Uttar Pradesh

NEW DELHI - Almost 50 people have died in 24 hours due to heavy rains in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, an official said last Saturday.

The state, India's largest, has witnessed constant rainfall in recent days and rivers have been flowing several notches above warning levels.

The death toll "owing to torrential rain and rain related incidents" reached 48 in the past 24 hours, the state's relief commissioner G S Priyadarshi told Reuters.

The rains have impacted about 580,000 people, mostly in the eastern part of the state where there is increased risk of flooding, Priyadarshi said.

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Forbes: How Kim Kardashian helped get ex-billionaire Raj Rajaratnam out of jail



Kim Kardashian

NEW YORK - About two years before the end of his 11-year prison sentence for insider trading, ex-billionaire hedge fund manager Raj Rajaratnam was quietly released to house arrest, thanks to a new federal law that Kim Kardashian had lobbied President Trump to sign, Forbes reports.

Kardashian helped get the 2018 First Step Act signed into law by President Trump. It grants nonviolent criminal offenders, particularly those convicted for drug charges, early release from prison if they are over 60 or if they have a terminal illness.

Rajaratnam, whose net worth Forbes estimated at \$1.3 billion in 2009 when he was among the 400 richest Americans, was released July 23. Bloomberg first reported his release last month.

The law is intended to help undo the

effects of mass incarceration, which in the 1990s saw African Americans imprisoned at a much higher rate than white people.

It appears Rajaratnam qualified under the First Step Act due to his age - he's now 62 - and his health, as he's reported to have advanced diabetes. Rajaratnam will serve the remainder of his sentence on Manhattan's tony Upper East Side and is allowed to leave his home for work during the day.

Kardashian's foray into prison reform began in May 2018, when she visited the White House (and was photographed behind the Resolute Desk with Trump) during a clemency discussion for Alicia Marie Johnson, an elderly woman and first-time offender serving a life sentence for drug conspiracy.

After helping secure Johnson's early release, Kardashian decided to become a lawyer. She took on an apprenticeship with a San Francisco law firm, where she helped work on the First Step Act, and plans to take the bar exam in 2022.

Surprising fact: The prosecution against Rajaratnam was one of the first to use wiretapping to investigate insider trading. Prior to then, the technique was used to investigate organized crime.

Key background: Rajaratnam, a Sri Lankan by birth, came to prominence in



Raj Rajaratnam

New York's finance world in the 1990s. By age 34, he was president of Needham & Co., a boutique investment bank, and proceeded to found the Galleon Group hedge fund, which at its peak managed over \$7 billion. In October 2009, he was busted for insider trading, with prosecutors claiming he made \$72 million. Investors ended up withdrawing over \$1.3 billion from Galleon Group, causing the company's collapse. Rajaratnam faced up to 19 years in prison and was ultimately sentenced to 11.

Eight arrested for distributing opioid pills imported from India

NEW YORK - Last month in a federal court in Brooklyn eight defendants - Ezhil Sezhian Kamaldoss, Harpreet Singh, Parthiban Narayanasamy, Baljeet Singh, Deepak Manchanda, Gulab Gulab, Mukul Chugh and Vikas M. Verma - were charged with conspiring to possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance containing Tramadol, a synthetic opioid.

Since approximately January 2018, law enforcement agents have been investigating the large-scale importation of misbranded

controlled substances, including Tramadol, into the United States from India. As part of the defendants' scheme, distributors in India shipped misbranded Tramadol and other drugs to individuals and entities in the U.S. through the mail and other couriers. The defendants primarily operated out of a warehouse in Queens where they repackaged the pills and mailed them to customers throughout the U.S. During the course of the investigation, the defendants distributed millions of Tramadol pills.

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Houston man charged in first known case since bump stock ban

HOUSTON - A federal grand jury has indicted a 43-year-old Houston man on four counts of firearms violations including possession of a machine gun, specifically, a bump stock, announced U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Patrick.

The four-count indictment alleges Ajay Dhingra possessed a machine gun, made two materially false statements in the acquisition of two firearms and unlawfully possessed a firearm after having been adjudicated as a mental defective or who had been committed to a mental institution.

According to court records, on or about Aug. 17, 2019, Dhingra called the George Bush Foundation and left a concerning message. Authorities discovered Dhingra had previously been committed to a mental institution, according to the allegations. As such, he is prohibited

by federal law of possessing a firearm or ammunition.

The charges further allege law enforcement contacted Dhingra at his residence where they found two firearms in his possession, one of which law enforcement identified as a rifle with an installed bump stock.

Authorities obtained a search warrant, which allegedly resulted in the discovery of a Glock pistol, a Colt rifle with a bump stock and 277 rounds of 9 mm ammunition.

According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), this is the first case filed in Texas and what is believed to be the first nationwide involving illegal possession of bump stocks since the law was implemented in March 2019.

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U.S. agents raid genetic testing labs, charge 35 in Medicare fraud

By Sarah N. Lynch
and Elijah Nouvelage

WASHINGTON - U.S. federal agents raided genetic testing laboratories, and 35 people were criminally charged in four states in a crackdown on genetic testing fraud that officials said last Friday caused \$2.1 billion in losses to federal healthcare insurance programs.

Officials at the Justice Department and Health and Human Services Department Office of the Inspector General said charges were filed in Florida, Texas, Louisiana and Georgia in "one of the largest healthcare fraud schemes ever charged."

Among those facing charges was Khalid Satary of Suwanee, Georgia, owner of Clio Laboratories in Lawrenceville, Georgia, who was accused in an indictment of soliciting medically unnecessary genetic cancer tests and paying illegal bribes and kickbacks.

Satary is a convicted felon who previously also ran a toxicology lab that went bust in 2016 amid an ongoing federal probe into illegal kickbacks.

Several labs connected to Satary including Clio were featured in a special report by Reuters

last Wednesday that raised questions about Clio's Medicare billing practices and whether genetic tests the lab performed on elderly people were medically necessary.

A Reuters journalist early last Friday witnessed agents from the FBI and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services inspector general's office search Clio, Elite Medical Laboratories and medical billing company Laboratory Experts, which are all located in the same business complex.

All three of those companies are connected to Jordan Satary, the son of Khalid Satary. Neither father nor son could be reached for comment.

Victoria Nemerson, Clio's general counsel, did not respond to requests for comment. Nemerson previously said Clio's testing is proper and that the firm commits "substantial time and resources to meeting our legal duties."

The use of genetic testing, which helps people determine their risks of developing cancer and other diseases, has skyrocketed in the United States since 2015.

For Medicare, the public insurance program for elderly and disabled Americans, payouts for

genetic tests jumped from \$480 million in 2015 to \$1.1 billion in 2018, a Reuters analysis found.

Genetic testing has sparked more than 300 federal investigations involving healthcare fraud and illegal kickbacks.

The fraud schemes at issue in last Friday's announcement typically involved marketers' hiring sales reps to get elderly people to provide a cheek swab that they are told could be tested to help them understand their risks of developing cancer or whether their genetics could unlock clues about how they will respond to drug treatments.

Doctors signed off on the tests as being medically necessary, and the swabs were sent for testing to labs that sought Medicare payments.

But many of the lab tests are not relevant to the patient's history, and some of the doctors sign off on the results without conferring with the patient, investigators say.

By law, all diagnostic lab tests must be ordered by a doctor treating a patient for a specific condition.

Others charged included Minal Patel, the founder of Georgia-based LabSolutions, and Jamie Simmons, the founder of two



Federal agents execute a search warrant on Clio Laboratories in Lawrenceville, Georgia on September 27, 2019.

telemedicine companies called MedSymphony and Meetmydocc LLC.

Lawyers for Patel and Simmons could not be immediately reached.

Patel is accused of defrauding the Medicare and Medicaid insurance programs in connection with genetic cancer tests and paying kickbacks. Simmons is charged with conspiring to commit healthcare fraud and paying and receiving kickbacks that led

to Medicare billings of more than \$56 million.

A Reuters analysis of Medicare Part B billing data showed that LabSolutions dramatically increased invoices for genetic testing from \$292,303.56 in 2015 to \$68.2 million in 2017.

The Justice Department said that in total, LabSolutions billed Medicare programs more than \$494 million in connection with medically unnecessary cancer genetic tests.

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NATIONAL NEWS

Charges filed against 53 individuals alleging \$250 million in Midwest health care fraud

CHICAGO - Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benzckowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division announced last Friday a health care fraud law enforcement action in Detroit, Chicago and Minnesota.

Charges were filed against 20 individuals in the Eastern District of Michigan for their alleged involvement in Medicare fraud schemes resulting in \$144.8 million in illegitimate billings.

In the Northern District of Illinois, charges were filed against 12 individuals for their alleged involvement in Medicare fraud schemes resulting in over \$103 million in illegitimate billings. Of those charged in the two federal districts, seven were doctors or licensed medical professionals.

In addition, in the state of Minnesota, 21 defendants, including two licensed medical professionals, have been charged with defrauding Medicaid for almost \$3 million. Minnesota's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) investigated these cases.

The charges announced today aggressively target schemes billing Medicare, Medicaid and

private insurance companies for medically unnecessary procedures, medical procedures that were never provided and prescription medications that often were never purchased and/or distributed to beneficiaries.

"Health care fraud robs taxpaying Americans and corrupts the relationship between doctors and patients," said Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benzckowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division. "Today's actions in the Midwest are further proof of the Department's steadfast commitment to investigating and prosecuting those who put their personal greed above the public good."

Among those charged in cases handled by Strike Force attorneys in the Eastern District of Michigan are the following:

Yogesh Pancholi, 40, of Northville, Michigan, owner of Shring Home Health Care (Shring) of Livonia, Michigan, was charged in an indictment filed Sept. 24 and unsealed yesterday with one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud and wire fraud, two counts of health care fraud

and two counts of money laundering. The charges stem from Pancholi's alleged role in a \$2.8 million home health "bust out" scheme for the submission of request for advance payments or RAPs. Pancholi allegedly submitted RAP claims through Shring for services not prescribed or rendered to Medicare. The FBI and HHS-OIG investigated the case. Trial Attorney Patrick Suter is prosecuting the case.

Among those charged in cases handled by Strike Force attorneys in the Northern District of Illinois are the following:

Altamash Mir, 43, formerly of Oak Brook, Illinois and Palos Hills, Illinois, owner of a home health "consulting" business and concealed owner of home health agencies; Muhammad Ateeq, 31, of Rawalpindi, Pakistan, a biller and concealed owner of home health agencies; Nadir Mir, 31, of Las Vegas, Nevada, manager of a home health agency; Tasneem Jamal, 66, formerly of Oak Brook, Illinois and Palos Hills, Illinois, administrator and nominee owner of a home health agency; Hamdeh Chatat, 37 of Highland,

Indiana, administrator of a home health agency and a home health "consultant"; Bilal Malik, 41, of Palos Hills, Illinois, Las Vegas, Nevada, and San Bernadino, California, nominee owner of a home health agency; Kendria Cochran, 28, Chicago, Illinois, manager of multiple home health agencies; and Luis Ramos, 28, of Chicago Heights, Illinois, manager of multiple home health agencies, were charged on Sept. 26, 2019, in a 35-count indictment that alleges health care fraud, conspiracy to commit money laundering,

concealment of money laundering, false statements relating to health care matters, and engaging in monetary transactions in criminally derived property of greater than \$10,000 in value.

The charges stem from the defendants' alleged roles in at least approximately a \$40 million fraud scheme in which home health agencies were acquired using fake aliases and/or nominee owners and used to submit fraudulent claims for home health services that were never rendered.

Singer Drake lends \$185M jet to NBA's Kings for long trip to India

SACRAMENTO, CA - The Sacramento Kings will be making the 20-hour trip to India in luxury.

The Kings and the Indiana Pacers will meet Friday and Saturday in the first NBA games to be played in the country, and the rapper Drake is lending his \$185 million Boeing 767-200ER "Air Drake" to the Kings for the trip.

Team owner Vivek Ranadive

arranged for the swanky ride.

"They wanted to get the best available option, and they nailed it," coach Luke Walton told KXTV in Sacramento.

The players were appreciative of the efforts.

"Vivek definitely pushed to get us a better plane, and he did that, so we're very grateful to have an owner like that," point guard De'Aaron Fox said.



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Modi is India's prime minister, but to Trump he's the 'king'

By Deb Riechmann
and Darlene Superville

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - Narendra Modi may be prime minister of India. But to Donald Trump, Modi is "the King."

Trump last Tuesday compared Modi to Elvis Presley, the late American singer often referred to as the king of rock and roll, after the rock-star welcome Modi received last Sunday in Houston.

The president had carved out time to join Modi for a Texas-sized welcome from 50,000 cheering Indian Americans.

"Those people went crazy," Trump said as he and Modi met on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly, their second meeting in three days. "That was like Elvis. That was like, he's like an American version of Elvis."

Presley also drew throngs of cheering fans to his performances.

Asked to describe his personal chemistry with Modi, Trump said it's "as good as it can get."

"I have great respect, I have great admiration and I really like him, that's another thing," the president told reporters.

He went on to describe Modi as a "great gentleman" and "great leader" and suggested he be called the "father of India."

The prime minister, in turn, thanked Trump "from the bottom



U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during a bilateral meeting with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the annual United Nations General Assembly in New York City, New York on September 24, 2019.

India arrests woman who accused politician of sexual assault

NEW DELHI (AP) A 23-year-old law student who accused a leader of India's governing party of sexual assault was arrested on charges of extortion, police said.

Naveen Arora, a police officer handling the case, said the woman is accused of demanding nearly \$700,000 from the lawmaker, Chinmayanand, who uses one name, and "was arrested from her residence and will be produced before a court."

In August, the student accused Chinmayanand, a Bharatiya Janata Party leader and president of the college where she studies, of sexual assault, harassment and in-

timidation. She first mentioned his alleged harassment in a video clip posted on social media last month.

His lawyer has denied the allegations.

Chinmayanand, who was arrested on Sept. 20, has been shifted from a jail to a hospital in Lucknow, the capital of the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, where he is being treated for cardiac problems.

The 72-year-old is a former minister from Uttar Pradesh and had previously faced charges in a rape case filed in 2011. Those charges were withdrawn in 2017.

The law student had said earlier

that the case of extortion against her had been slapped to weaken her case against Chinmayanand.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has a checkered history of its leaders being accused of sexual assault. In August, lawmaker Kuldeep Singh Sengar was sacked from the party after being accused of raping a 17-year-old girl in 2017.

In January 2018, two BJP lawmakers attended protest rallies held by Hindu organizations defending the accused in the rape and murder of an 8-year-old inside a Hindu temple. It was only after a national uproar that the BJP made the two ministers resign.

of my heart" for flying to Houston to join him at the "Howdy Modi!" rally.

Modi also highlighted a \$2.5 billion agreement by Indian energy company Petronet that he said would produce \$60 billion worth of investment and 50,000 jobs.

Houston-based Tellurian Inc., a liquefied natural gas company, announced the deal with Petronet over the weekend.

Modi also showered Trump with equal amounts of praise.

"President Trump is definitely my friend, but he is also a friend of India," the prime minister said.

On a more serious note, Trump said he expects the U.S. and India will negotiate a trade agreement "very soon."

Trump also said it would be great if Modi and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan can resolve their standoff over the disputed region of Kashmir.

"We all want to see that," said Trump, who met with Khan last Monday.

India and Pakistan each administers a portion of Kashmir. The conflict between them dates to the late 1940s when the countries won independence from Britain.



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Unearthed Gandhi WWII letter wishes Jews 'era of peace'

JERUSALEM (AP) On the same day World War II broke out in Europe, Mahatma Gandhi wrote a short Jewish New Year greeting to a local Indian Jewish official, offering ominous good wishes to his "afflicted people."

The National Library of Israel recently unearthed the 80-year-old handwritten letter during a massive review of millions of its archival documents. It was publishing it online last Tuesday for the first

time, offering a glimpse into the father of modern India's complex relationship with the Holocaust.

"You have my good wishes for your new year," Gandhi wrote to Avraham Shohet, the head of the Bombay Zionist Association, on Sept. 1, 1939. "How I wish the new year may mean an era of peace for your afflicted people."

The famed pacifist who would ultimately lead the successful campaign for India's indepen-

dence from British Rule, inspiring future civil rights movements, expressed deep compassion for the plight of European Jews. But he also faced criticism for not speaking up forcefully enough against their persecution. Six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust.

Gandhi advocated only for non-violent resistance to the Nazis and sent a conciliatory letter to Adolf



India's Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and Finland's Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto attend unveiling of the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Helsinki, Finland on September 20, 2019.

Hitler in which he addressed the Fuhrer as a "friend" and wrote that he did not believe the German dictator was the "monster" his opponents described.

"My sympathies are all with the Jews," Gandhi wrote in a 1938 article in his Harijan publication. "If there ever could be a justifiable war, in the name of and for humanity, war against Germany to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race would be completely justified. But I do not believe in any war."

Gandhi was equally coy about supporting Jewish aspirations for

independence in the Holy Land, saying the Jews should engage only in non-violence against the Arabs and "offer themselves to be shot or thrown into the Dead Sea without raising a little finger against them."

Shohat, a prominent Indian Jew, sought to influence Gandhi into more active support of the Jews. He was introduced through Hermann Kallenbach, a wealthy Jewish Zionist and close friend of Gandhi, who funded "Tolstoy's Farm" the South African prototype for the Gandhian ashram where he and Gandhi had lived together.

Nine-year-old among nearly 150 children briefly held in Kashmir: court probe

NEW DELHI - Police in Indian Kashmir have detained 144 children, including a nine-year-old, since early August when the government revoked the disputed region's special status and imposed a lockdown, according to a court-appointed committee's report.

But all those arrested and lodged in police stations were released on the same day, police told the Jammu and Kashmir High Court's four-member Juvenile Justice Committee, which had been asked by India's Supreme Court to look into allegations of child detentions after a petition filed by two

activists last month. As of Sept. 25, only two children, both aged 17 years, were lodged in juvenile homes, said the committee's Sept. 26 report, which was reviewed by Reuters on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has maintained an iron grip on Jammu and Kashmir - India's only Muslim-majority state, which is also claimed by Pakistan - since August, deploying thousands of troops, restricting movement, and snapping communications.

Local authorities also rounded up thousands, including poli-

ticians, leaders of separatist groups, and other civil society members to prevent large protests from erupting over the decision to withdraw Kashmir's autonomy.

The detention of children spans the whole of the Kashmir valley, from Sopore in the north to the southern district of Shopian, with a large number from the region's main city of Srinagar, according to the justice committee's report.

Some children are listed as having been taken under preventive detention, while others have been held for various criminal offences, including disturbing public tranquillity.

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DiCaprio urged not to endorse 'disastrous' Indian river project



Leonardo DiCaprio speaks onstage at the 2019 Global Citizen Festival at Central Park in New York on September 28, 2019.

By Annie Banerji

NEW DELHI - Almost 130 civil society groups and environmentalists have urged actor Leonardo DiCaprio to withdraw his support for a controversial Indian river project, which they said could hurt local ecology and lead to the loss of millions of livelihoods.

The Hollywood environmentalist urged his Facebook

followers to join the "Cauvery Calling" campaign to plant more than 2 billion trees along the banks of the Cauvery river, which is drying up due to urbanisation and pollution.

"(DiCaprio's) supposed to be advised by some of the best ecologists," said Leo Saldanha, coordinator of the Bangalore-based Environment Support Group, describing the project as "anti-environmental and

disastrous".

"What were they doing? What were they thinking?" asked Saldanha, one of 128 signatories to an open letter to DiCaprio.

DiCaprio did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Oscar-winning actor is a keen conservationist and has granted millions of dollars to environmental causes through his Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, set up in 1998. He also met the Pope to discuss their mutual concern about climate change.

The sharing of water in the Cauvery river has caused tension between India's southern states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu for more than a century, leading to deadly riots.

Cauvery Calling was started

in July by the Isha Foundation, founded by celebrity Indian yogi and mystic Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev who rides motorcycles, travels the world and gives talks on spirituality and yoga.

The Coalition for Environmental Justice in India, which organised the letter, said the project was too simplistic and promotes monoculture tree plantations that could dry up streams and destroy wildlife habitats.

It also zaps nutrients from the earth and leaves soil weak. All of this, it said, could lead to displacements and affect the livelihoods of millions of farmers and fishermen.

"Support for this kind of a campaign sets a very wrong precedent," the letter said.

The Isha Foundation did

not respond to requests for comment.

Cauvery Calling - endorsed by Bollywood celebrities and high-profile politicians including Prime Minister Narendra Modi - said on its website that it has already collected enough funds to plant more than 40 million trees.

Vasudev has come under scrutiny in the past. Last year, India's comptroller and auditor general found that he built his ashram headquarters on protected forest land.

There is a pending court case in Karnataka brought by a lawyer seeking to stop Cauvery Calling fundraising to plant trees on protected government land without receiving official environmental clearance.

U.S. Commerce Secretary Ross to hold talks in India amid hopes of trade deal

NEW DELHI - U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross will be holding talks with Indian leaders this week and three sources in government and industry in New Delhi said there were renewed expectations of a trade deal on farm goods and

pharmaceuticals.

The two countries have been locked in trade disputes for months and were expected to announce a limited deal during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to the United States last month.

But no deal was sealed and an Indian government source said negotiators were trying to tie loose ends related to some farm products and generic drugs.

Ross is expected to meet his Indian counterpart Piyush Goyal on Thursday.



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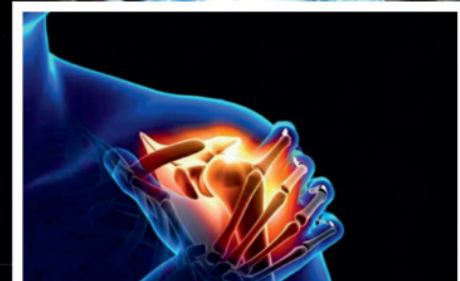
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Modi's big tax cut unlikely to spur job bonanza in India



FILE PHOTO: Job seekers line up for interviews at a job fair in Chinchwad, India on February 7, 2019.

By Alexandra Ulmer
and Aftab Ahmed

MUMBA - With one eye on flagging demand, businesses in India are likely to bank the government's \$20.4 billion corporate tax windfall rather than unleash the investments that Prime Minister Narendra Modi hopes will create millions of jobs and revive the economy.

The tax cuts, which Modi

vowed would woo global private investment and improve India's competitiveness, came as a surprise to investors, many of whom had been complaining that Modi's government was not listening to their pleas for action on the economy.

But while the tax rate cut brings the cost of doing business in India into line with its main Asian rivals, the government giveaway will do little to fix the lack of spending

power, economists say.

GDP fizzled to a six-year low of 5% in the April-June quarter and India's unemployment rate reached 8.19% in August, up from 6.27% in the same month last year, according to data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

Modi is counting on companies to quickly relocate or expand and hire but many businesses will need the cash just to tide them over and won't want to take a risk when demand for everything from cars to biscuits has been hit.

"Hopefully this tax cut will give companies a bit more financial space to maintain operations. For the moment I think this is more about job-saving, not job-creating," said Richard Rossow, an India expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Economists and finance ministry officials expect India's spending plans to mean it will miss its fiscal deficit target this year and be pushed to borrow. That will pile stress on state finances and make any boost in infrastructure spending, which can be a source of quick employment for rural migrants, unlikely.

Although broadly welcomed by businesses, electronics manu-

facturers are so far among the few to indicate the tax cuts would be enough to trigger investment as they seek to hedge their bets amid the China-U.S. trade war.

"The psychological stimulus from this 'New Deal' will be higher than the fiscal stimulus," said V.K. Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist with Geojit Financial Services.

"WHY ARE COMPANIES SHUTTING DOWN?"

With an estimated 1.2 million youth entering India's labour market each month, Modi has made job creation a priority in his 'Make in India' plan, but manufacturing has been sluggish.

India's auto sector has laid off about 350,000 workers this year, while Parle Products, a major Indian biscuit maker, recently warned it may shed some 10,000 workers.

Jewellery designer Shaji Balan said he was laid off in June after his employers sold their factory. The father of three secured another job, but it pays half of what he used to earn, so he has joined the gig economy delivering food for online service Swiggy.

"Too many people are jobless. Why are companies shutting down?" said Balan.

Although markets surged after the tax announcement last Friday they have already given back some gains, with investors waiting to see if there is more to come.

"Further structural reforms to the labour market, land acquisition and regulatory environment," would help generate sustainable growth, said Arnab Das, global market strategist at Invesco in London.

Economists and business leaders who see low wages and depressed crop prices as playing big parts in India's economic slowdown would have preferred measures to stimulate consumption.

The tax cut "is a welcome move by the government," said Mayank Shah, category head at biscuit maker Parle, but he added that a goods and services tax (GST) cut to reduce prices for consumers would have had a more significant impact.

At least some of the unemployment growth, business leaders say, is tied to two of Modi's major economic reforms from his first term - demonetisation to tackle unaccounted wealth and the nationwide rollout of a goods and services tax - both of which caused short-term pain with the promise of long-term gain.

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Pakistan summons Indian diplomat over deadly shelling in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's government on Monday summoned India's top diplomat in the country over accusations of deadly shelling by India in its portion of the disputed region of Kashmir, as tensions run high between the nuclear-armed rival nations.

A 60-year old woman and 13-year old boy were killed and three wounded in shelling over the Line of Control (LOC), near

the informal border with India, last Saturday and Sunday, Pakistan's foreign ministry said.

"The ceasefire violations by India are a threat to regional peace and security and may lead to a strategic miscalculation," said Pakistan's foreign ministry statement, adding that its spokesman had summoned Indian Deputy High Commissioner Gaurav Ahluwalia to condemn the incident.

A spokesman for India's for-

eign ministry said it had no immediate comment on the matter.

India and Pakistan both accuse each other of breaching a 2003 ceasefire agreement by shelling and firing over the LOC, killing dozens this year.

India has also accused Pakistan of providing support for militants on its territory, a claim Pakistan denies.

The latest incident comes amid tension between the neighbours

India shelves plan on countrywide ban on single-use plastic products

NEW DELHI - India has held off imposing a blanket ban on single-use plastics to combat pollution, officials said on Tuesday, a measure seen as too disruptive for industry at a time when it is coping with an economic slowdown and job losses.

The plan was for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to outlaw six items on Wednesday, the 150th anniversary of the birth of independence leader Mahatma Gandhi, as part of a broader campaign to rid India of single-use plastics by 2022.

But two officials said there would be no immediate move

to ban plastic bags, cups, plates, small bottles, straws and certain types of sachets and instead the government would try to curb their use.

For now, government will ask states to enforce existing rules against storing, manufacturing and using some single-use plastic products such as polythene bags and styrofoam, said Chandra Kishore Mishra, the top bureaucrat at the ministry of environment.

"There is no new ban order being issued," Mishra said. "Now, it's a question of telling people about the ill-effects of plastic, of collecting and sending for recy-

cling so people don't litter."

The government's proposed countrywide ban had dismayed consumer firms, which use plastic in packaging for everything from sodas and biscuits to ketchup and shampoo.

The Confederation of Indian Industry, a lobby group, said the move had become an existential issue for several economic sectors because alternatives were not immediately available.

India, which uses about 14 million tonnes of plastic annually, lacks an organized system for management of plastic waste, leading to widespread littering.



A general view of mileage sign on a road leading to the Line of Control (LoC) in Chakothi, Kashmir on September 9, 2019.

that escalated sharply following New Delhi's move to revoke the autonomy of its portion of Kashmir in August.

Pakistan expelled India's ambassador and suspended bilateral trade soon after and launched an international diplomacy campaign in an attempt to draw global condemnation of India's treatment of Kashmiris.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan made an impassioned address at the United Nations General Assembly in New York last Friday, saying there would be a bloodbath once India lifts a cur-

few and that any all-out conflict between the nations would reverberate far beyond their borders.

Both India and Pakistan control Kashmir in part while claiming it in full. India says its revocation of autonomy is an internal matter that will allow its portion of Kashmir to develop economically.

At home, Khan faced the risk that rising anger in his country's portion of the disputed region could spiral into a confrontation with India as calls gathered for Kashmiris to storm the LOC.



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Pakistan PM warns of 'bloodbath' when Kashmir curfew lifted



REUTERS/Lucas Jackson

Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan addresses the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters in New York on September 27, 2019.

By David Brunnstrom
and Arshad Mohammed

UNITED NATIONS - Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan warned last Friday there would be a bloodbath once India lifts its curfew in disputed Kashmir and that any all-out conflict between the two nuclear-armed nations would reverberate far beyond their borders.

Khan made the remarks in an

impassioned speech to the annual United Nations General Assembly after India last month removed the decades-old autonomy in the part of Kashmir it controls and detained thousands of people.

"If this goes wrong, you hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst," Khan said.

"If a conventional war starts between the two countries ... anything could happen. But supposing in a country seven times smaller

than its neighbor is faced with the choice - either you surrender or you fight for your freedom till death?"

"What will we do? I ask myself this question ... and we will fight. ... and when a nuclear-armed country fights to the end, it will have consequences far beyond the borders."

In its clampdown in the Indian-controlled part of Kashmir, which has a Muslim majority, India flooded the territory - already one of the world's most militarized zones - with troops.

It imposed severe restrictions on movements and cut all telephone, mobile phone and internet connections. Thousands of people were arrested.

New Delhi has since eased some of the curbs, although no prominent detainees have been freed and mobile and internet connections remain suspended.

While warning of the consequences of lifting what he described as an "inhuman curfew," Khan demanded India do so and free all detainees.

He sketched out a scenario under which he said he would pick up arms if had been forced to live under curfew, to witness rapes and to suffer humiliation.

"I picture myself. I am in Kashmir. I have been locked up for 55 days ... and there are rapes, Indian army going into homes, soldiers. Would I want to live this humiliation? Would I want to live like that? I would pick up a gun," he said.

"You are forcing people into radicalization."

Muslim-majority Kashmir has long been a flashpoint between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan, which have fought two of their three wars over the divided territory. Both countries rule parts of Kashmir while claiming it in full.

Khan addressed the United Nations a day after the senior U.S. diplomat for South Asia called for a lowering of rhetoric between India and Pakistan, while saying that Washington hoped to see rapid action by India to lift restrictions it has imposed in Kashmir and the release of detainees there.

Khan took direct aim at Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his speech and accused him of being a "life member" of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a Hindu nationalist organization that he said believed in the "ethnic-cleansing" of Muslims.

The RSS denies any prejudice

against Muslims but says it is opposed to appeasement of any community.

Modi, in his address to the U.N. assembly shortly before Khan spoke, made no mention of Kashmir, or Pakistan, concentrating mainly on Indian's efforts to protect the environment.

In Pakistan's portion of Kashmir where many in recent days have been waiting keenly for Khan's address, people were glued to their television sets.

Sohail Iqbal Awan, a lawyer and political activist from the PML-N party, a rival to Khan's, praised the speech and predicted that the United Nations would have to "open its closed ears, eyes and mouth" on the Kashmir issue.

"As a Kashmiri, I felt proud at his balanced, comprehensive and well grounded speech ... despite being his political opponent I am compelled to shower praise on him," he said.

U.S. President Donald Trump met separately with both Modi and Khan on the sidelines of the U.N. gathering. Trump urged Modi to improve ties with Pakistan and "fulfill his promise to better the lives of the Kashmiri people," the White House said.

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India defends e-cigarette ban in court with attack on Juul

By Aditya Kalra and Subrata Nagchoudhury

KOLKATA, India - The impending introduction of Juul e-cigarettes in India was a factor in the government's decision to ban the sale of vaping products, a top government lawyer said in court on Tuesday while defending the order.

The government took the step last month, warning Indians of a

vaping "epidemic" among young people and dashing plans of companies such as U.S.-based Juul Labs Inc and Philip Morris International to sell products in the country.

Juul had aimed to start offering e-cigarettes in India in late 2019 and had hired several senior executives in recent months, Reuters has previously reported.

"What was impending was a nationwide launch of Juul ... it

(the government) chose to act immediately," additional solicitor general Aman Lekhi told the court in Kolkata.

Lekhi was defending two challenges against the ban that have been filed by e-cigarettes importer Plume Vapour and another company Woke Vapors.

He told the judge the cases were a "proxy for Juul" but did not elaborate. He later told Reuters: "We feel they are a proxy for Juul,



REUTERS/Achhan Abid/Illustration

A man uses a vape device in this illustration picture on September 19, 2019.

Two lower caste children in India beaten to death for 'open defecation'

By Saurabh Sharma

LUCKNOW - Two children from India's lowest caste were beaten to death by two men after they defecated outside, officials and relatives said last Thursday, in the latest case of communal violence in the country.

Rajesh Chandel, superintendent of police in Shivpuri, a district in the central state of Madhya Pradesh, told Reuters the children, identified as 12-year-old girl Roshni and her nephew Avinash, a 10-year-old boy, were attacked at around 0630 local time last Wednesday.

Two men, whom Chandel identified as Hakam Singh and Rameshwar Singh, have been arrested, he said.

"The accused are mentally stable and during the interrogation they have said they committed this crime," Chandel said, adding the investigation was continuing.

It was not possible to reach the accused or their representatives for comment.

The two children belonged to what are known officially as "scheduled castes", but also called "Dalits", or "untouchables" for their position in In-

dia's ancient caste hierarchy.

Discrimination on the basis of caste is illegal but still widespread in India, especially in rural areas where hundreds of millions of people live.

Both Chandel and Avinash's father, Manoj Balmiki, said the murders followed an earlier verbal altercation between the two families where "casteist slurs" were used by the accused.

"There is a lot of untouchability issues in our village," Balmiki, 32 told Reuters.

"Our children cannot play with their children."

there's a very real possibility".

Two senior Juul executives were in the courtroom, seated for most of the two-hour hearing next to the federal health ministry's bureaucrat who oversees tobacco control, Vikas Sheel.

Juul Labs, in which tobacco company Altria Group Inc owns a 35% stake, is facing increased scrutiny in the United States, its home market, as teen use of e-cigarettes surges.

Even before the ban was announced, the Indian government had said products such as Juul were harmful and could potential-

ly undermine its tobacco control efforts. More than 900,000 people die each year in India because of tobacco-related illnesses.

However, India has 106 million adult smokers, second only to China, making it a lucrative potential market for companies selling both tobacco and vaping products.

The government's counsel Lekhi said e-cigarette's novelty and attractiveness pose a public health danger, and the product needs to be nipped in the bud.

"You don't want a new substance to cause addiction," he told the court.

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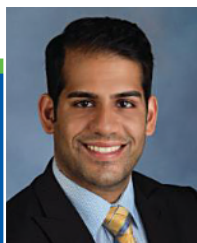
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BOLLYWOOD Insider™

Bollywood Beat

Dua Lipa confirms joining Katy Perry to perform in India



International pop star Dua Lipa has expressed excitement over her first-ever live concert in India. Dua Lipa said that “(I am) So excited to perform in India for the first time ever. I’m excited to get back on stage, (and) I feel like it’s going to be such a fun night.”

In August, there were rumours that Dua Lipa might join pop star Katy Perry as one of the headline acts at the OnePlus Music Festival. The festival is set to take place on Saturday, November 16 at the DY Patil Stadium in Mumbai.

A teaser announcing the one-day music extravaganza was launched in July, and it was subsequently confirmed that it would take place at DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai. Incidentally, it is the same venue where pop sensation Justin Bieber had performed a while back.

Music legend Lata Mangeshkar turns 90

Music legend Lata Mangeshkar, whose voice has serenaded millions for years, turned 90 last Saturday. Celebrating the day, Bollywood took to social media to shower love and wish the singer.

Superstar Amitabh Bachchan had a special message for Mangeshkar, which he conveyed via a seven minute long video posted on his Facebook account. Wishing her a very happy birthday, he said, “Lataji aapke suro ke bina sangeet adhoora hai.”

Laal Kaptaan

Banner:
Colour Yellow Productions
Eros International

Producer:
Sunil Lulla
Anand L Rai

Director:
Navdeep Singh

Starring:
Saif Ali Khan
Zoya Hussain

Music By:
Samira Koppikar

Release Date:
October 18, 2019

Laal Kaptaan is an upcoming Indian Hindi-language action drama film written and directed by Navdeep Singh. The film is produced by Eros International and Producer Anand L Rai’s Colour Yellow Productions. Starring Saif Ali Khan, it revolves around a Naga Sadhu on the hunt to seek revenge.

If *The Hunt*, the first trailer of Saif Ali Khan’s *Laal Kaptaan* left you spellbound then a new trailer *The Chase* is sure to send chills down your spine! *The Chase* introduces a new character (Deepak Dobriyal) who finds people by sniffing like a dog. Featured in a wild and rough look, the man then describes his two pet canines.

Sonakshi Sinha too is part of *The Chase* as posted by her a few days ago on her Instagram account in which she sports a veiled look.



Mukkabaaz actor Zoya Hussain is also introduced in the second trailer.

Navdeep Singh, the film’s director explained it to be “made keeping in mind that the audience needs to get an idea around what the journey of this Naga Sadhu is exactly.”

“It also introduces other characters who are very important to the film. So this time, the focus is not just on Saif Ali Khan, but others also,” Singh added.

Though, the film surely will

thrill te audiences as because its is breaking the stereotypical film approach that usually fancies the couple in romance and the plot revolving around it. But, this film is already interesting the audience to keep an eye on its release.

The director is sure of its success and infact the production house seems confident for the film too. The Nawab of Pataudi will be seen hitting silver screen after a long haul as the Nawab previously appeared in Netflix’s series that brought him much applause from

all around.

Director of the film told the reporters that the film is one the best stories written and directed by him starring Saif Ali Khan who director thinks will do justice to the film.

The movie seemingly promises to take viewers on a rollercoaster ride into the dark world of drama, suspense, thriller, and revenge. Navdeep’s directorial is produced by Anand L Rai and Eros International is set to hit the big screens on October 18.

UNKNOWN FACTS ABOUT BOLLYWOOD CELEBRITIES



Shahrukh Khan has had 226 nominations across popular Bollywood awards and has won 207 of them. He won the best actor award 29 times.



Katrina Kaif was named the ‘World’s Sexiest Woman’ by FHM India five times from 2008 to 2013. Katrina loves painting and is a great chess player too.

Top 3 Bollywood Films

- 1) **Chhichhore** - Directed by Nitesh Tiwari
Starring: Sushant Singh Rajput, Shraddha Kapoor, Varun Sharma, Tahir Raj Bhasin and Prateik Babbar
- 2) **Dream Girl** - Directed by Raaj Shaandilyaa
Starring: Ayushmann Khurrana and Nushrat Bharucha
- 3) **Pal Pal Dil Ke Paas** - Directed by Sunny Deol
Starring: Karan Deol and Sahher Bambba

Top 10 Bollywood Film Songs

- 10) “Khairiyat” - *Chhichhore*
- 9) “Baby Won’t You Tell Me” - *Saaho*
- 8) “Ho Jaa Awara” - *Pal Pal Dil Ke Paas*
- 7) “War” - *Ghungroo*
- 6) “Dil Ka Telephone” - *Dream Girl*
- 5) “Odhani” - *Made in China*
- 4) “Kal Ki Hi Baat Hai” - *Chhichhore*
- 3) “Kaash” - *The Zoya Factor*
- 2) “Dil Hai Toh Hai” - *The Sky is Pink*
- 1) “War” - *Jai Jai Shivshankar*

Bollywood Trivia

Shahrukh Khan made his debut in which film?

- 1) Deewana
- 2) Koyla
- 3) Kuch Kuch Hota Hai
- 4) Mohabbatein

Rohit Shetty made his directorial debut in which film?

- 1) Bol Bachchan
- 2) Zameen
- 3) Golmaal
- 4) Dilwale

BOLLYWOOD Insider™

MOVIE REVIEW

The Zoya Factor

Banner:
Fox Star Studios

Producer:
Fox Star Studios
Pooja Shetty
Aartri Shetty

Director:
Abhishek Sharma

Starring:
Sonam Kapoor
Dulquer Salmaan

Music By:
Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy

Released Date:
September 19, 2019

Last month, during the promotions of his flick *Mission Mangal*, Akshay Kumar made a startling revelation. He said that he believes that success depends on 70% luck and 30% hard work. His statement surprised many but the fact is that many around the world of different nationalists, communities and even class believe a lot in luck and the concept of lucky charm. No wonder, the business of numerologists and astrologists is thriving. Anuja Chauhan's novel 'The Zoya Factor' tackles this idea and it was written so well that it became a bestseller. The rights were soon picked by Shah Rukh Khan's Red Chillies Entertainment but the production house failed to make the film within the stipulated period. Aartri Shetty and Pooja Shetty Deora then bagged the rights and turned the novel into celluloid, while keeping the title of the film the same as the book. So does *The Zoya Factor* turn out to be as entertaining as the novel? Or does it fail to impress? Let's analyse.

The Zoya Factor is the story of a girl who considers herself unlucky but is the lucky charm for the country. Zoya Solanki (Sonam K Ahuja) is born on June 25, 1983, the day India won the

1983 Cricket World Cup final. Her father Vijayandra Singh Solanki (Sanjay Kapoor) declares that she'll prove beneficial for the cricket team, having born on such an auspicious occasion. While growing up, Zoya indeed turns out to be a lucky charm for Vijayandra and her brother Zorawar (Sikandar Kher) when they used to play Gully Cricket. As an adult, Zoya however considers herself unlucky. The madness that her family members have for cricket makes her dislike the sport. She works as junior copywriter at an ad agency called AWB and is constantly making mistakes, much to the annoyance of her boss Monita (Koel Purie). Monita sends Zoya on ad campaign comprising of the Indian cricket team in Sri Lanka and warns not to make an error in what she calls a small, simple shoot. Zoya reaches Sri Lanka and becomes friends with Nikhil Khoda (Dulquer Salmaan), the captain of the Indian team. This is a time when the players have lost back to back matches. The World Cup is just a month away and the pressure is killing them. On the day of their match in Sri Lanka, Nikhil invites Zoya to have breakfast with the players. Here, Zoya casually mentions about her date of birth and lucky charm bit. On that day, India miraculously wins the match. The players realise that she is indeed a lucky charm. They make flimsy pretext to stop her from going back to India and try to get her to have breakfast with them for the next match. As expected, they win again. Nikhil however doesn't believe in luck and *The Zoya Factor* and feels that it's hard work that works. Yet he can't help but fall for Zoya who too is in love with him. Meanwhile, the Indian Cricket Board's Jogpal Lohia (Manu Rishi Chadha) comes to know about Zoya. He approaches her with an offer – dine with the boys in blue before every World Cup match and get paid Rs 1 crore! Zoya however refuses the offer. Jogpal realises that they need Zoya



anyhow and hence, they hand over the World Cup campaign to AWB with instructions that Zoya should be leading it. Jogpal is also aided in this plan by his nephew Robin (Angad Bedi) who is also in the team and is Nikhil's rival. He wants to see Nikhil being removed from captaincy and he uses Zoya for his ulterior motive. What happens next forms the rest of the film.

The performances are great by all actors. Sonam K Ahuja suits the part to the T. One can't imagine anyone else for this role and she does total justice, whether in the scenes of her being love struck or acting pricey or even acting mature and giving out some important lessons to Nikhil in times of need. Dulquer Salmaan is super-dashing but he also gets his act right. He's totally into his character and convincingly seems the captain of the team. Angad Bedi gets a great part and also screen space and is fine as the baddie. Sikander Kher is the

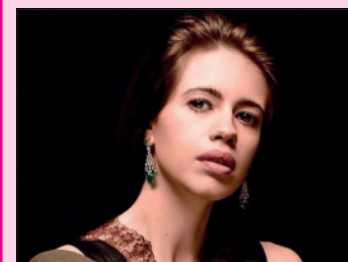
surprise of the film. His role might remind one of Prateik's character in *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na* [2008] but his part stands out and Sikandar ensures that happens. One of his best scenes is when he offers tea to the very protestors who have come to vandalize his house! Sanjay Kapoor is a natural. Manu Rishi Chadha is fine and it's good that he doesn't overdo the lisp bit. Koel Purie is strictly okay. Pooja Bhamraah (Sonali) looks quite glamorous and plays the supporting part well. From the other crickets, the ones who leave the mark are Abhilash Chaudhary (Shivi), Gandharv Dewan (Harry) and Sachin Deshpande (Lakhi).

On the whole, *The Zoya Factor* is a feel-good popcorn entertainer that works chiefly due to concept, treatment, humour and performances. At the box office, it has the potential to grow dramatically due to a good word of mouth.

Rating: ★★☆☆

Bollywood Beat

Kalki Koechlin expecting first child with boyfriend



Guess who's set to embrace motherhood soon? We were in for a delightful surprise when actor Kalki Koechlin revealed in a recent interview that she was into the fifth month of her pregnancy. Kalki is expecting her first child with boyfriend Guy Hershberg, an Israeli classical pianist. She also revealed that she'd opt for a water birth of her baby.

Elaborating on the behavioural changes that her pregnancy has brought, she shared how she is now more patient and slower. While she wants to continue working, she says she doesn't want to be a part of the rat race anymore and would rather choose work that helps her nurture herself. She also emphasises that her priority would be to connect to her child and not set rules and expectations for him/her.

Bachchan deeply grateful for Dadasaheb Phalke Award

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan has had a tremendous career who gave some of the brilliant performances in the history of Indian cinema. Now, the highest honour, the Dadasaheb Phalke award, will be conferred to Big B for his outstanding contribution for the growth and development of Indian cinema.

The Dadasaheb Phalke award comprises of a golden lotus, a shawl and a cash prize of Rs. 1,000,000.

Celebrity Birthdays

October 5th Anuj Sachdeva (1984)	October 10th Rekha (1954)	October 17th Simi Grewal (1947)
October 6th Sunny Singh Nijjar (1985) Amit Varma (1983)	October 11th Amitabh Bachchan (1942)	October 18th Kunal Kapoor (1977) Freida Pinto (1984)
October 7th Shikha Talsania (1990) Sharad Kelkar (1976)	October 15th Ali Fazal (1986) Mona Vasu (1982)	
October 8th Mona Singh (1981)	October 16th Hema Malini (1948)	

Upcoming Films

Street Dancer Varun Dhawan, Shraddha Kapoor and Prabhu Deva	Good News Akshay Kumar, Kiara Advani, Diljit Dosanjh and Kareena Kapoor	Jhund Amitabh Bachchan Rinku Rajguru
Sooryavanshi Akshay Kumar Katrina Kaif	Mardaani 2 Rani Mukerji	Marjaavaan Sidharth Malhotra, Tara Sutaria and Riteish Deshmukh
Jawaani Jaaneman Saif Ali Khan Tabu	Dabangg 3 Salman Khan Sonakshi Sinha Arbaaz Khan	Made in China Rajkumar Rao, Mouni Roy and Boman Irani

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No vaping ban U-turn, says Indian official, as protests fizzle

By Aditya Kalra and Manas Mishra

NEW DELHI - India's government has no plan to roll back a ban on electronic cigarettes, an official told Reuters last Saturday, as protests against the move by vapers in six cities drew scant support.

India banned the sale and import of e-cigarettes this month, warning of an "epidemic" of

vaping among young people.

The action has affected users nationwide and the plans of international companies including Juul Labs Inc and Philip Morris International, as well as triggering court challenges by local firms.

Protesters convened last Saturday to call for vaping devices to be regulated rather than prohibited. But organisers Association of Vapers India said only about 400

people turned up across six cities, adding that some opponents of the ban feared being targeted by police.

At one protest in the capital New Delhi, several people used vaping devices. Among them sat a child with a poster that read: "I don't want my dad to be a smoker".

The government argues the ban is essential to protect people as vaping can lead to nicotine addic-



People hold placards during a protest against the ban on the sale, import and manufacture of e-cigarettes by the Indian government, in New Delhi.

Senators press Trump administration on India pecan tariff

CARLSBAD, NM (AP) - New Mexico's U.S. senators want the Trump administration to defend the state's pecan growers from tariffs during ongoing trade negotiations with India.

U.S. Sens. Martin Heinrich and Tom Udall, both Democrats, recently signed on to a bipartisan letter from 12 senators urging U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to negotiate the lifting of a trade barrier, the Carlsbad Current-Argus reports.

The senators argued that rising imports from Mexico, Chinese tariffs and tree loss after Hurricane Michael strained U.S.

pecan prices, and India's growing middle class represented a market that could help minimize the economic damage.

"Gaining access to new markets for pecans will help stabilize the pecan markets while orchards are replanted, and a trade deal is negotiated with China," read the letter.

Records show India charges a 36 percent tariff on pecan imports, while other tree nuts such as pistachios and almonds are charged tariff rates of 10 percent or less.

New Mexico became the largest pecan-producing state last

year, after Hurricane Michael ravaged Georgia's crop.

The pecan industry contributes more than \$3.57 billion to the economies of the U.S.' 15 pecan-producing states, with exports contributing about \$1.25 billion in additional economic activity in rural America over the past decade, the senators' letter said.

Trump did signal a purported allegiance with India during a rally on Sunday in Houston, where he met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and expressed a desire to work with the country on trade.

tion and push users towards consuming tobacco. Vapers say the devices help them stay away from more harmful tobacco cigarettes.

More than 900,000 people die each year due to tobacco-related illnesses in India, the government estimates. But the country has 106 million adult smokers, second only to China, making it a lucrative potential market for companies selling both tobacco and vaping products.

An Indian health ministry official said the government was determined to stick by its ban, despite the protests and court

challenges. "There is no question of a rollback or anything like that," the official said.

Two court challenges that could be pivotal for whether the ban can continue to be enforced are under way in the eastern city of Kolkata, including one by e-cigarette importer Plume Vapour.

New Delhi protester Aryaman Chaudhary, 25, said he stocked up on vape refills ahead of the ban, but was worried he would eventually run out. "I just want this regulated, not banned ... Everybody has an addiction."

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BUSINESS

BIZ BRIEFS

India to borrow gross 2.68 trillion rupees

India will borrow gross 2.68 trillion rupees (\$37.82 billion) from the market between October and March through dated securities, Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu Chakraborty said on Monday.

The government was scheduled to borrow 7.10 trillion rupees for the 2019-20 fiscal year that ends next March, of which it has already borrowed 4.42 trillion rupees in the April-September period.

The government has set a fiscal deficit target of 3.3% of the gross domestic product for 2019-20.

GST collection falls to 19-month low in September

Collections from India's nationwide goods and services tax (GST) fell to a 19-month low in September, data showed on Tuesday, increasing the risk of fiscal slippage at a time when demand continued to remain weak in Asia's third largest economy.

The tax collections for September stood at 919.16 billion Indian rupees (\$12.93 billion), a fall of 2.7% from last year and the first drop since the beginning of the 2019/20 fiscal year in April.

The government needs an average monthly collection of more than 1 trillion rupees every month to meet its budget target.

The lower collection will further exacerbate the risk of the country slipping from its fiscal deficit target of 3.3% of gross domestic product in 2019/20, especially after government tax revenue for the current fiscal year was reduced by 1.45 trillion rupees due to cuts in corporate tax rates.

Amazon and Flipkart make record first-day festive sales in India

BENGALURU - Walmart Inc-owned Flipkart and rival Amazon Inc said on Monday they made record sales in the opening day of their annual festive season sales in India that kicked off over the weekend.

Flipkart and Amazon began their flagship annual sales on Saturday, with both vying for customers during the October-December festive season when Indians make most of their big-

ticket purchases.

This comes as growth slows in Asia's third-largest economy, denting sales of everything from cars to cookies, and prompting the government to step in with tax cuts and a raft of other measures to revive growth.

Amazon reported record sales of about 7.5 billion rupees (\$7.07 million) in 36 hours in the premium smartphone brands category, while Flipkart said

Gold price dip prompts Indian jewellers to stock up for festivals

BENGALURU - Physical gold demand remained subdued for most of the week in major Asian centres, with elevated rates impeding purchases, though Indian jewellers stocked up for festival season as local rates dropped to more than six-week lows last Friday.

Gold futures were trading around 37,445 rupees per 10 grams last Friday after falling to 37,399 rupees earlier in the day, the lowest level since Aug. 13.

"The phone was ringing continuously (today). Jewellers were placing orders from across the country," said one Mumbai-based dealer at a bullion-importing private bank.

Dealers were offering a discount of up to \$12 an ounce to official domestic prices last Friday, down from a \$40 discount last Thursday and up to \$47 last week. The domestic price includes a 12.5% import tax and 3% sales tax.

Retail demand, however, remained lacklustre this week because of the Shradh period, which is considered inauspicious for buying bullion, said one Kolkata bullion dealer.

"From next week retail demand will start improving," he said.

"We are entering peak festive

season." Demand for gold usually strengthens in the final quarter as India gears up for festivals such as Diwali and Dussehra.

However, Singapore dealer GoldSilver Central's managing director, Brian Lan, said that demand could be tempered during that period if prices remain very high, noting a six-year peak scaled early this month.

In China, the world's biggest gold consumer, dealers charged premiums in a range of about \$8 to \$12 an ounce over the benchmark, compared with \$10 a week ago.

Premiums in Hong Kong were largely unchanged for a third week running, in an approximate range of 50 cents to \$1, traders said, citing recent civil rights protests for curbed jewellery demand.

There have been some investments in bullion as the U.S.-China trade war and Hong Kong protests increased safe-haven interest in gold, but overall demand has been muted, one Hong Kong-based trader said.

Having risen to a more than two-week high earlier in the week, global benchmark spot gold prices are now on track for a weekly decline of about 1.8%.



A shipment is seen at an Amazon fulfilment centre on the outskirts of Bengaluru, India in this file photo.

all major categories, including beauty, baby care, private labels and furniture, saw double-digit sales growth from a year ago in the first day.

Both, the "Big Billion Days" sale and Amazon's "Great Indian Festival", will finish on Oct. 4, according to their websites.

Amazon has successfully grabbed a large chunk of the Indian e-commerce space even though it entered seven years after Flipkart in 2014, winning over millions of customers with its Prime loyalty programme,

which gives users early access to deals during sales, free music and video streaming services.

Earlier this month, a leading trader body asked the government to ban the festive sales, citing that the deep discounts they offered was violating the country's foreign investment rules for online retail.

Both Amazon and Flipkart offer deep discounts on everything from clothes, smartphones to home appliances ahead of important Hindu festivals Dussehra and Diwali.

India banned onion exports. Now Asia has eye-watering prices

By Rajendra Jadhav and Ruma Paul

MUMBAI - From Kathmandu to Colombo, it's a kitchen nightmare: Onion prices have gone crazy.

That's because India, the world's biggest seller of the Asian diet staple, has banned exports after extended monsoon downpours delayed harvests and supplies shrivelled. And dedicated buyers across the region, like Nepalese housewife Seema Pokharel, are flummoxed.

"This is a terrible increase," said Pokharel, out shopping for vegetables in Kathmandu. "Onion prices have more than doubled in the last month alone."

Whether it's Pakistani chicken curry, Bangladeshi biryani or Indian sambar, Asian consumers have developed a serious dependence on Indian onion supplies for go-to dishes. Shorter shipment times than from rival exporters like China or Egypt play a crucial role in preserving the taste of the perishable commodity.

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RBI to pick up slack as India stimulus measures to fall short

By Indradip Ghosh

BENGALURU - Recent stimulus measures announced by the Indian government will be insufficient to boost economic growth significantly, said a majority of economists in a Reuters poll who predicted two more interest rate cuts this year, in October and December.

To revive the ailing economy, the government in September announced a steep cut in the corporate tax rate - to 22% from 30% - triggering the biggest intraday gain in Indian stocks in more than a decade.

That along with other measures, including a rollback of a higher surcharge on foreign portfolio investment - introduced in the budget in July - led

international investors to become net buyers of Indian assets in September.

But nearly 60% of around 50 economists who answered an additional question said those stimulus measures were unlikely to have a notable impact on the economy.

"While the cut in corporate taxes is sharp, its actual impact on growth is uncertain. Given that the current problem is of weak demand, a demand augmenting measure would have been more productive," said Rini Sen, India economist at ANZ.

Although the economy is expected to have recovered last quarter from the sharp slowdown in the three months prior, economists downgraded their growth outlook for this fiscal year and

next from three months ago.

The Sept. 24-30 poll of over 50 economists predicted gross domestic product growth to average 6.1% this fiscal year, the lowest since polling began for the period in April last year.

If realised, that would mark the slowest pace of growth in seven years.

The economy was then expected to expand 6.8% next fiscal year, a downgrade from 7.2% predicted in the July poll.

That weak outlook was driven by lack of clarity on when and how the U.S.-China trade war will end, which has already hurt business sentiment, manufacturing activity and the global economy.

But some economists argued recent measures announced by



Police stand guard as depositors (unseen) of the Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank (PMC) attend a protest over the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) curbs on the bank, outside a RBI office in Mumbai, India on October 1, 2019.

the Indian government, along with monetary policy easing, would likely boost Asia's third-largest economy.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has already eased policy by a cumulative 110 basis points this year.

It is now expected to cut its repo rate by 25 basis points last Friday, making it the fifth meeting in a row of easing, and is then predicted to follow that up by with another 15 basis points slice in December, taking the key rate to 5.0%.

But the RBI is then forecast to

keep rates unchanged until 2021 at least.

"It looks like the authorities - both the government and the central bank - are firing up all cylinders to provide stimulus to the economy...with stimulus announced so far should start to revive growth going forward," said Prakash Sakpal, Asia economist at ING.

When asked how many more rate cuts it would take to boost growth significantly, nearly 45% of economists said cumulative rate cuts up to 50 basis points will be needed.

Reliance Communications CEO steps down to focus on U.S. unit's bankruptcy process

BENGALURU - Indian telecom company Reliance Communications Ltd's (RCom) Chief Executive Officer Bill Barney will step down but remain as head of its U.S. unit, Global Cloud Xchange (GCX), as it goes through bankruptcy proceedings, GCX said.

GCX, an under-sea cable supplier, expects to complete the liquidation process by the end of the fourth quarter.

"With GCX's recent voluntary Chapter 11 filing, it will be in the best interest of both RCOM and GCX for me to step down at this

time to focus on GCX restructuring," Barney said in a filing.

Anil Ambani-led RCom filed for bankruptcy in India earlier this year as lack of regulatory approval for asset sales hampered the company's efforts to solve its debt crisis.

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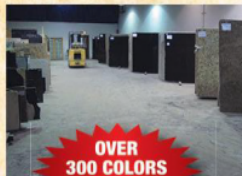
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Ford close to JV deal with Mahindra in India: sources



FILE PHOTO: A visitor is reflected as he takes pictures of a new Ford Aspire car during its launch in New Delhi, India on October 4, 2018.

By Aditi Shah
and Aditya Kalra

NEW DELHI - Ford Motor Co and Mahindra & Mahindra are likely to sign a deal next week to form a joint venture in India, two sources told Reuters, in a move that will see the U.S. carmaker end most of its independent operations in the country.

The two companies have for months been structuring the deal

to create a new entity in which Ford will hold a 49% stake, while Indian rival Mahindra will own 51%, Reuters reported in April.

Under the deal Ford will transfer most of its automotive assets and employees in India to the new company, but the carmaker will retain an engine plant in Sanand in the western state of Gujarat, according to the two sources, who asked not to be

named as the talks are private.

A Ford spokeswoman did not comment directly on the deal, but said the company was engaged with Mahindra "to develop avenues of strategic co-operation that help us achieve commercial, manufacturing and business efficiencies".

Mahindra did not respond to a request for comment.

By shifting to a joint venture, Ford is changing its decades-old India strategy focused on running an independent operation. Under pressure from shareholders to make profits, the U.S. carmaker has been globally restruc-

turing its businesses with an aim to save \$11 billion over the next few years.

Ford's decision is a setback for the country at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration is trying to boost local manufacturing by cutting corporate tax rates and offering cheap loans to push car sales. Sale of cars by manufacturers to dealers have fallen at their steepest pace in two decades.

Ford's two manufacturing plants - one in Chennai in southern India and the other in Sanand which was inaugurated in 2015 - will be moved to the

new joint venture, but Ford will keep the engine plant at Sanand. Together, they have a maximum annual manufacturing capacity of 440,000 vehicles.

Ford-brand cars will continue to be built and sold in India and exported by the new company, one of the sources said.

Over two decades, Dearborn, Michigan-based Ford invested more than \$2 billion in India but it has consistently struggled - it currently has a share of about 3% in a market where Maruti Suzuki (MRTI. NS) is the top player with a 50% share.

PMC Bank created over 21,000 fake accounts to hide loans says complaint

MUMBAI - Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank (PMC) used more than 21,000 fictitious accounts to hide loans it made, according to a police complaint lodged by Indian officials, in the latest banking fraud case to spook the country's depositors and investors.

The complaint, filed with the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Mumbai Police on Monday and later seen by Reuters, accuses the

bank's management of concealing non-performing assets and disbursing loans leading to a loss of at least 43.55 billion rupees.

A single realty firm and its group companies were the beneficiaries of 44 loans, according to the complaint.

"The actual financial position of the bank was camouflaged, & the bank deceptively reflected a rosy picture of its financial parameters," said the complaint, noting

that the fictitious loan accounts were not entered into the bank's core banking system - a factor key in the perpetration of a \$2 billion fraud at Punjab National Bank that was uncovered in 2018.

The complaint names the bank's Chairman Waryam Singh and its Managing Director Joy Thomas, along with other bank officials, and accuses them of criminal breach of trust, forgery and falsification of records.

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India's Rohit auditions as opener as South Africa face spin test

By Sudipto Ganguly

MUMBAI - Limited-overs batting stalwart Rohit Sharma will have another chance to resurrect his stop-start test career, but this time as an opener, when India kick off their three-match home series against South Africa at Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

India axed struggling opener KL Rahul after he went 12 test innings without a 50-plus score and struggled on the recent tour of West Indies where India won both

the matches to top the World Test Championship table.

Rohit, 32, has cemented his place at the top of the batting order in the Twenty20 and 50-over formats and finished with most number of runs in the World Cup in England recently.

The only player in the world with three double hundreds in one-day internationals, the right-hander bats in the middle order in the longest format but has never really flourished as a test batsman.

Despite his World Cup exploits

he was not able to break into the side as a middle order batsman during the two tests in the Caribbean, leading former players and local media to clamour for Rohit to be tried as an opener in tests.

With regular opener Prithvi Shaw, who is currently serving a doping ban, not available for selection Rohit is all set to walk out to open the innings on Wednesday with Mayank Agarwal in his 28th test for India.

"We want to give Rohit Sharma an opportunity to open the innings



India's Rohit Sharma celebrates his century.

Reuters/Andrew Boyers/File Photo

India drop Pant with Saha set to don gloves against South Africa

India are set to select Wriddhiman Saha to replace Rishabh Pant for the first test of a three-match series against South Africa starting in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday, with skipper Virat Kohli describing Saha as the best wicketkeeper in the world.

The 34-year-old Saha played the last of his 32 tests against South Africa in Cape Town in January last year but had struggled to find a way back into the squad with shoulder and hamstring injuries hampering his progress.

Pant, 21, stepped in to fill the

gap and has scored centuries in England and Australia. But Kohli suggested the experienced Saha would don the gloves this time, partly in view of the spin-friendly wickets in India.

"Yes, Saha is fit and fine to go, and he's going to start for us this series, and his keeping credentials are there for everyone to see," Kohli told a news conference on Tuesday.

"He's the best wicketkeeper in the world, so in these conditions, with what he's done in the past, he starts for us."

"He's played well whenever he's got a chance, with the bat also, and it was unfortunate that he was out for such a long period."

Kohli said India had stuck with Pant in the recent two-test series in the West Indies to ensure Saha was not rushed back into action.

"We felt Rishabh, given the opportunities, had done well and although Saha was almost going to start (in the West Indies), we felt it was better to just let him ease back into things rather than forcing him into starting immediately," Kohli said.

in tests," chief selector MSK Prasad had said after naming India's 15-member squad for the series.

While opening is the only shaky spot in an otherwise settled Indian batting order, the top-ranked test side in the world were dealt a body blow when their pace bowling ace Jasprit Bumrah was ruled out of the series with a stress fracture in his back.

India will also have to choose between experienced wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha, who was recalled after being out injured for more than a year, and the young

Rishabh Pant for the wicketkeeper's role.

While Saha is considered a better glovesman, Pant has been earmarked as the successor in all three formats to Mahendra Singh Dhoni but has been short of runs with his temperament and shot selection under the lens.

The onus will be on India's slow bowlers to deliver the goods on spin-friendly tracks for the hosts with off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and his left-arm colleague Ravindra Jadeja expected to inflict maximum damage on the South Africa batsmen.

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People don't recognize heart attacks when symptoms come on slowly



When heart attack symptoms start gradually and don't follow exertion, patients are much slower to get to an emergency room and risk missing a critical window for preserving heart function, researchers say.

By Vishwadha Chander

When heart attack symptoms start gradually and don't follow exertion, patients are much slower to get to an emergency room and risk missing a critical window for preserving heart function, researchers say.

Among 474 U.S. patients who arrived in emergency departments with dangerous reductions in blood flow to the heart, those whose symptoms had come on gradually took up to six hours longer than recommended to call

for medical help and get to the hospital, the researchers found.

Gradual symptoms were not recognized or taken seriously, despite reflecting a medical emergency, and patients took up to eight hours to get help compared with an average of 2.57 hours among those with abrupt or sudden symptoms, the research team reported in the *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*.

The American Heart Association recommends that heart attack patients receive care within less than two hours to provide the best

chance of avoiding permanent damage to the heart muscle.

In a sudden heart attack, patients have severe pain from the start. But symptoms of a gradual attack - mild discomfort, breathing trouble and tightness of the chest - are not so obvious, the authors note.

"Heart attack victims must not worry their symptoms might be a false alarm," said Dr. Sahereh Mirzaei of the University of Illinois at Chicago, who led the new study. "Call 911 and get to the emergency department quickly."

The authors analyzed data on patients participating in a larger, multi-state study. The current analysis focused on 343 men and 131 women, ages 29 to 93, who

were admitted to hospital emergency department with what was later confirmed to be acute coronary syndrome, which includes conditions that suddenly reduce blood flow to the heart such as heart attacks and unstable angina.

Nearly half of the respondents, 44%, reported a gradual onset of symptoms; the rest reported abrupt symptoms. And half of the patients took four hours or more to get to the hospital.

Being uninsured and having gradual symptom onset were the factors most strongly associated with a longer delay. Having sudden symptoms, or symptom onset after exertion, were strongly tied to getting to the hospital quickly.

People with a heart condition,

type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, or who are smokers, may be at greater risk and should be alert to gradual symptoms, especially after physical exertion, Mirzaei told Reuters health in an email.

"People with gradual symptoms don't describe what they are feeling as pain, just pressure and tightness. Doctors must explain that tightness and pressure are just as serious," said Dr. Ashish Jha, a physician and professor at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston, who wasn't involved in the study.

"The innovative part of this study was that the authors tried to examine what slowed people down," Jha told Reuters Health in a phone interview.

Responsive mothers may have kids with better language skills

Mothers who are more responsive and warmer in their interactions with their kids may have children with better language skills, especially in low-income households, a small study suggests.

Researchers examined data from 37 previous studies that focused on the association between different types of parenting behaviors and early language devel-

opment in young children.

Children whose caregivers showed higher levels of sensitive responsiveness and warmth were nearly three times more likely to have strong language skills than kids whose parents didn't display much warmth or responsiveness, the analysis found.

Responsive caregiving is when the adult pays close attention to what the child is signaling and

gives a response that meets the child's needs.

"While it's helpful for children to be read to and played with, responsive parenting goes one step beyond, by ensuring that exchanges between parents and children are matched to the child's signals," said Sheri Madigan, lead author of the study and a researcher at the University of Calgary.

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Competition can help overweight people get moving

By Lisa Rapaport

People who are overweight or obese may get more physical activity when they participate in step-counting contests than when they simply use activity trackers to monitor their own steps, a recent experiment suggests.

Researchers asked 602 overweight and obese adults to wear step trackers and set goals to increase their daily steps. Then researchers sorted participants into four groups: one that only counted steps, and three different groups that also had games designed to inspire more movement through encouragement, prizes or competition.

The games lasted 24 weeks. By the end, all three of the games-based groups increased step counts by more than the control group of people simply tracking their own movements.

After another 12 weeks went by, however, only the people who competed against each other continued to log increases in their daily steps, researchers reported September 9 online in JAMA Internal Medicine.

“We found that participants were motivated the most by competition and it encouraged them

to create habits that stayed in place once the game was over,” said Dr. Mitesh Patel, lead author of the study and director of the Penn Medicine Nudge Unit at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

Over the entire nine-month study period, the average person assigned to do step-counting games with competition walked about 100 miles more than the average person in the control group, Patel said by email.

Participants were 39 years old on average and typically obese, with an average body mass index (BMI) of 30. At the start of the study they logged an average of 6,100 to 6,300 steps a day.

When the study started, researchers asked each participant to set their own goals for increasing their daily steps. People could choose to boost their step counts by 33%, 40%, 50%, or by at least 1,500 steps.

Setting goals in advance can help people stick to them, Patel said.

People in the games groups also got awarded 70 points at the start of each week, and kept or lost 10 points for each day that they hit or missed daily step targets. In addition, people in the

games groups could move up or down levels within the games based on their performance each week.

By the end of the 24-week intervention, people who did games based on competition logged an average of 920 daily steps more than the control group that only counted steps, while games with encouragement from family or friends were associated with 689 more daily steps and games with team collaboration to win prizes were tied to 637 more daily steps.

After another 12 weeks without any games, people in the competition group still logged an average of 569 more daily steps than participants in the control group that only counted steps.

The study didn't look at whether any added daily steps resulted in weight loss or other health benefits for the participants.

Still, the results suggest there are ways to get moving that may be more effective than simply wearing a step tracker, Patel said.

“Exercising with a friend or partner is definitely more effective for sticking to a goal compared to doing it on your own,” said Dr. Ichiro Kawachi, a researcher at the Harvard T.H.



People who are overweight or obese may get more physical activity when they participate in step-counting contests than when they simply use activity trackers to monitor their own steps, a recent experiment suggests.

Chan School of Public Health in Boston who wasn't involved in the study.

“If you're a very organized person, you could even start a team competition in your own workplace to encourage everyone to get off the couch,” Kawachi said by email.

Games can work even when people don't know their competitors, said Dr. David Geier,

orthopedic surgeon and sports medicine specialist in Charleston, South Carolina, who wasn't involved in the study.

“Competition with someone else, even if you don't know that person, can increase your activity level,” Geier said by email. “There are also smartphone apps with gamification tools that allow you to compete for prizes and even money.”

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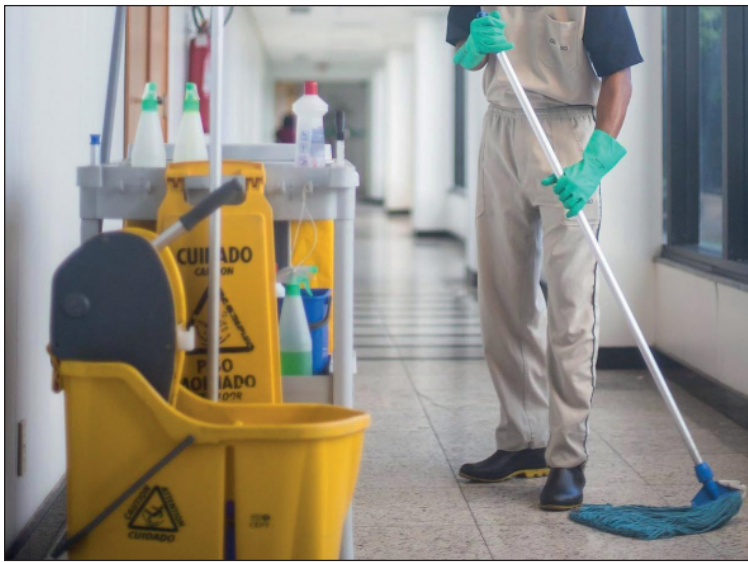
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Workplaces could be good setting for diabetes prevention



People in certain occupations have a three-times-higher risk of type 2 diabetes compared to those in other jobs, probably because of lifestyle factors, a nationwide study in Sweden suggests.

By Vishwadha Chandler

People in certain occupations have a three-times-higher risk of type 2 diabetes compared to those in other jobs, probably because of lifestyle factors, a nationwide study in Sweden suggests.

Getting these workers to ramp up physical activity could be the first step to preventing the disease, the researchers say.

“The way to target the workplace is by finding employees at the highest risk,” study leader Dr. Sofia Carlsson from the Institute of Environmental Medicine at the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm told Reuters Health by phone. “We wanted to go through all occupations in the entire Swedish population and see where the risks and prevalence of type 2 diabetes were highest.”

About 7% of Swedish adults, and 4.2% of the working population, have diabetes.

Carlsson’s team used population registries to identify more than 4.5 million Swedish citi-

zens born between 1937 and 1979 who were gainfully employed between 2001 and 2013.

Rates of diabetes varied by profession, from 2.5% to 8.8% in men and from 1.2% to 6.4% in women, the researchers reported at the annual meeting of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes and in the journal *Diabetologia*.

Among male professional drivers, for example, 8.8% had diabetes, as did 7.8% of manufacturing laborers but only 2.5% of computer scientists. Among women, prevalence was highest in manufacturing workers, at 6.4%, followed by kitchen assistants (5.5%) and cleaners (5.1%). It was lowest among specialist managers, at 1.2%.

Professional drivers, manufacturing workers and cleaners were at the highest risk, and the irregular hours and shifts, stress and sleeping time associated with these occupations could be the cause, Carlsson said.

“We see risk factors early in the working career, and this could be targeted through work-

place intervention,” she added.

While association is not the same as causation, the research provides direction for next steps, said Dr. Ronald Tamler, Professor of Medicine, Endocrinology, Diabetes and Bone Disease at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, who was not involved in the study. “Is there a causative effect in certain occupations and if so, how can we mitigate that?”

Carlsson pointed to attempts in the U.S. to implement diabetes prevention programs at work.

“A randomized clinical trial in the U.S. in the early 2000s showed lifestyle modification counseling reduced the risk of type 2 diabetes by around half,” she said. And it didn’t ask much from the people with diabetes: “A 5% reduction in weight, more physical activity, and a 70-minute brisk walk every day,” Carlsson said.

The findings are significant for the U.S. population, too, where according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one out of every 10 people has diabetes.

In earlier U.S. studies, professional drivers and shift workers were more likely to have diabetes.

“In the U.S. too, people with lower socioeconomic status, less physical activity, poor access to healthcare and lower health literacy are at greater risk,” Tamler said.

“Ultimately, diabetes is a massive cost driver in healthcare and a considerable source of absenteeism at work,” Tamler said, adding the current study offers a chance for employers to start preventive programs.

Carbs like sweets, fries, white bread remain staples of U.S. diet

By Lisa Rapaport

Americans are cutting back a bit on carbohydrates like sugary foods, refined grains, and starchy vegetables but these unhealthy options still make up about 42% of U.S. adults’ daily calories, a new study suggests.

From 1999 to 2016, the proportion of calories U.S. adults get from carbohydrates declined from 52.5% to 50.5%, researchers found when they analyzed nationally representative nutrition surveys. Over that same period, the proportion of calories from protein increased from 15.5% to 16.4% and the proportion from fat climbed from 32% to 33.2%.

The proportion of calories from so-called “low quality” carbs like sweets, white bread and French fries decreased from 45.1% to 41.8% during the study period. Calories from “high quality” carbs like whole grains and brown rice increased from 7.4% to 8.7%.

“Our findings show that we

still have a long way to go to meet dietary recommendations,” said Shilpa Bhupathiraju, senior author of the study and a nutrition researcher at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston.

“This includes further increasing intakes of whole grains, whole fruit, non-starchy vegetables, nuts, and legumes, and lowering intakes of refined grains, added sugars, and saturated fat,” Bhupathiraju said by email.

Under U.S. dietary recommendations, adults should fill about half their plate with a variety of fruits and vegetables and make half of their grains whole grains, not white bread or white rice.

Adults should also consume less than 10% of calories from added sugars, and less than 10% of calories from added fats.

People in the study did cut back on calories from “low-quality” carbs by reducing their intake of added sugars, and fruit juice.

Increased consumption of animal protein, meanwhile, was

driven by people getting more calories from poultry and eggs.

Higher plant protein intake was driven by increased consumption of whole grains, nuts, and soy.

The study didn’t assess whether specific factors impacted shifts in U.S. eating habits.

One limitation of the study is it relied on surveys asking people to recall and report everything they ate in the previous 24 hours. These 24-hour recall questionnaires don’t always give an accurate picture of how people really eat, the study team notes.

Researchers also lacked data on any health outcomes that might have changed as a result of shifts in eating habits.

Still, some changes for the better found in the study should help move Americans’ health in the right direction, said Linda Van Horn, author of an editorial accompanying the study and chief of nutrition at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University in Chicago.

CVS suspends sales of Zantac brand and generic heartburn drug

CVS Health Corp said it will discontinue sales the popular Zantac heartburn treatment and its own generic ranitidine products from its pharmacies after traces of a known carcinogen were found in some of the products by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The FDA said earlier this month that some of the pills contained small amounts N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), which has also been found in some widely used blood pressure medicines, leading to shortages of those drugs.

CVS said the move to suspend sales of the over-the-counter heartburn drug was taken out of

caution while the FDA continues to review if low levels of NDMA in ranitidine - the active ingredient in Zantac - poses a health risk to patients.

“Zantac brand products and CVS brand ranitidine products have not been recalled, and the FDA is not recommending that patients stop taking ranitidine at this time,” CVS said in a statement.

Novartis AG’s Sandoz unit said last week it was halting distribution of Zantac in all its markets, including the United States and Canada, following safety review of the drug by U.S. and European drug regulators.

U.S. vaping-related deaths rise to 12, illnesses climb to 805

U.S. health officials reported 805 confirmed and probable cases and 12 deaths so far from a mysterious respiratory illness tied to vaping, with the outbreak showing no signs of losing steam.

Last week, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 530 cases and seven deaths due to severe lung illnesses.

U.S. public health officials have been investigating these illnesses, but have not linked it to any specific e-cigarette product.

As of Sept. 24, the confirmed deaths were reported in Cali-

fornia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, and Oregon, the CDC said.

The House of Representatives began public hearings about the illness this week while Massachusetts imposed a four-month ban on sales of all vaping products, including those used for tobacco and marijuana, which is legal in the state.

Investigators have, however, pointed to vaping oils containing marijuana ingredient tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) or vitamin E acetate, a substance used in some THC products, as a possible cause of these illnesses.

The increased scrutiny also prompted leading e-cigarette maker Juul Labs to suspend all broadcast, print and digital product advertising in the United States and bring in a longtime Altria Group Inc executive as its CEO.

Altria owns a 35% stake in Juul.

Public health officials have advised consumers to quit vaping and urged those who continue using the devices to avoid buying such products on the street, using marijuana-derived oil with the products or modifying a store-bought vape product.

Handwashing beats sanitizer for killing flu virus on hands

By Lisa Rapaport

Health workers who use hand sanitizer between patients may be more likely to spread flu germs than those who take the time to wash their hands, a recent experiment suggests.

That's because fresh mucus from infected patients interferes with the ability of the alcohol in hand sanitizer to reach the concentrations needed to deactivate the flu virus, researchers report in mSphere.

Previously, it was recognized that rubbing hands with sani-

tizer and handwashing with an antiseptic cleanser have similar disinfection effects against flu viruses, said Dr. Ryohei Hirose, an infectious disease researcher at Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine in Japan who led the study.

"However, in this study, we show that the physical properties . . . of mucus protect influenza A virus from inactivation by ethanol-based disinfectants," Hirose said by email. "This increases the risk of (active influenza virus) transmission, and hinders the eradication of healthcare-

acquired infections."

Researchers did a series of lab tests and computer simulations to examine how much active influenza A virus remained after exposure both to an ethanol-based disinfectant sanitizer and handwashing with an antiseptic cleanser. Influenza A is the most common form of seasonal flu.

Flu virus in wet mucus from infected patients wasn't destroyed after two minutes of exposure to sanitizer - it took about four minutes for the virus to be completely deactivated. That compares to just 30 seconds with



Health workers who use hand sanitizer between patients may be more likely to spread flu germs than those who take the time to wash their hands, a recent experiment suggests.

Diabetics who delay treating hypertension have more strokes and heart attacks

By Lisa Rapaport

Among people with diabetes who develop high blood pressure, those who delay getting it under control may be more likely to have heart attacks and strokes than their counterparts who manage it promptly, a recent study suggests.

Researchers examined data on 43,986 patients with diabetes who started treatment for high blood pressure between 2002 and 2007. People who waited until blood pressure was more elevated to start treatment were 10% more likely to have events like fatal heart attacks and strokes, the study found.

"Hypertension (high blood pressure) is a risk factor for atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, which includes coronary artery disease, myocardial infarction (heart attack), and stroke. Diabetes is also a risk factor for the same clinical endpoints," said Dr. Sridharan Raghavan, a researcher at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center.

"Lowering blood pressure in

diabetes patients with hypertension can mitigate some of the risk of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease," Raghavan said by email.

As they do with other groups at high risk for cardiovascular disease, doctors recommend that diabetics consider treating blood pressure at a lower threshold than low-risk individuals would start at.

The American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology recommend that people with diabetes start treatment for hypertension when the "top number" - the systolic blood pressure - is above 130 mmHg (millimeters of mercury). The goal is to bring systolic blood pressure below 130 mmHg.

The American Diabetes Association recommends that people with diabetes start treatment when systolic blood pressure exceeds 140 mmHg, with the goal of getting it below that number.

Results from the current study suggest that individuals with diabetes and hypertension who begin blood pressure lowering therapy when their systolic blood pressure exceeds 130 mmHg may have fewer deaths from heart at-

tacks and strokes than diabetics who wait until blood pressure is higher to initiate treatment.

After an average follow-up period of more than nine years, many people in the study who achieved systolic blood pressure below 130 mmHg after two years of treatment also fared better than individuals whose blood pressure didn't get that low.

But among people whose systolic blood pressure exceeded 140 mmHg when they started treatment, even if they got that number below 130 they still fared worse than patients who started out with systolic pressure below 130.

The study wasn't a controlled experiment designed to prove whether or how the timing of blood pressure treatment directly impacts the risk of having or dying from events like heart attacks and strokes.

The results still underscore that even among diabetics, blood pressure management may not be one size fits all, said Dr. Costantino Iadecola, director and chair of the Feil Family Brain and Mind Research Institute at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City.

handwashing.

To see how mucus might make it harder to fight the flu, researchers dabbed volunteers' fingers with either mucus or a saline solution containing the flu. Then they tested how long it took to deactivate the virus so it would no longer be contagious.

The ethanol-based hand sanitizer could destroy flu virus in saline solution within 30 seconds. Sanitizer could also deactivate flu virus in dried mucus in a little under 8 seconds. But in moist mucus it took almost three minutes.

The key to effectiveness was reaching an alcohol concentration of just over 30%, which happened more slowly in the gel-like consistency of fresh mucus.

These results suggest that until infectious mucus has completely dried, active flu virus can remain on the hands and fingers even after using hand sanitizer, the study team concludes.

Mucus containing the flu virus can take more than a half hour to dry, the experiments also found.

Handwashing, however, could effectively destroy the flu vi-

rus in both wet and dry mucus quickly, the tests showed.

One drawback is that the experiments don't reflect what would happen outside a laboratory setting when clinicians cleaned their hands between patients.

Still, handwashing is the best approach when hands have mucus on them because alcohol-based sanitizer can't physically remove organic material, said Elaine Larson, a researcher at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University in New York City.

"Handwashing is the method of choice for physically removing anything from the hands by mechanically washing them down the drain rather than killing germs," Larson, who wasn't involved in the study, said by email.

"Alcohols are preferable, better and faster, for actually killing germs but not removing dirt, residue or organic material," Larson added. "It is, however, clearly the best option whenever a sink and clean materials (soap, towels) are not available."

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WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

(October 13-19, 2019)

Aries (March 21 to April 20)

It's an eventful week. There may be situations where you are forced to take quick decisions; there's a strong desire to follow your instinct rather than use logic. Sometimes, that's helpful, too.

Taurus (April 21 to May 21)

You may be pulled in different directions - there is a desire to do different things and also a keenness to learn new things where religion and spirituality are concerned. Familial relationships give warmth and comfort now.

Gemini (May 22 to June 21)

There is significant focus on work and you try different methods to widen your reach and increase your income as well. There is an increase in confidence, too. The support and motivation from friends and family may motivate some to initiate a business venture.

Cancer (June 22 to July 22)

You are likely to have a successful run in your work. You may be asked to spearhead a project or given a leadership position. Some may be rewarded for their contribution on a public forum. Personally, there is happiness as some of you may be blessed with the birth of a child.

Leo (July 23 to August 22)

The coming week brings sudden travel and exploration of a new avenue. You consider a new job proposal, but there could be moments of doubt. There is some financial gain as well and this boosts your morale.

Virgo (August 23 to September 23)

This is a very rewarding week for you. There is quite a lot of activity in the workplace and some clamouring, too, about who may get a coveted role or position. There is success and you may finally feel that all the hard work you have put in the last few years is worth the while.

Libra (September 24 to October 23)

You are quite committed to achieving all-round growth and not just material success. You may have felt disenchanted with the behaviour of someone you admired till recently and you are determined to be a better person.

Scorpio (October 24 to November 22)

This could be a slightly different phase in your life where you may get misunderstood if you do not frame your communication clearly. There is always some stuff to be done for others and there is little gratitude in return.

Sagittarius (November 23 to December 21)

The coming week brings with it some mixed results. While you seem to be making some headway in a difficult project, there could be a rebellion of sorts where subordinates are concerned. People may not agree with your approach to work and could find it too aggressive or insensitive.

Capricorn (December 22 to January 20)

You need to be prepared as there may be some events during this time that disrupt your normal schedule. You may have to make time to attend to a sick or ailing family member. There could be some worry as well as irritation.

Aquarius (January 21 to February 19)

You try to get things in your personal life under control the coming week. Do other people get the better of you by triggering your anger? You will need to remain constructively engaged at work and avoid unnecessary confrontation.

Pisces (February 20 to March 20)

The coming week continues to propel you into a powerful phase. You may think that there are certain regrets, but it's best to lay the past to rest. Talk to someone you trust, instead of letting the issues simmer inside of you.

Slain deputy devoted life to Sikh faith and serving others

By Corey Williams
and Tammy Webbers

HOUSTON - (AP) Sandeep Dhaliwal carried a badge and a gun while devoting his life to a faith that teaches love and peace.

Dhaliwal, who was fatally shot from behind during a traffic stop, was the first Sikh sheriff's deputy on a force that covers an area including the nation's fourth largest city of Houston. Four years ago he won an accommodation to wear his turban and a beard while patrolling.

Friends said Dhaliwal, 42, was an example of how love-inspired service to others can tear down walls of distrust and misunderstanding.

"He was just a gem of a person. He was a beautiful soul," Simran Jeet Singh, a senior religion fellow at the New York-based Sikh Coalition, said. "Everyone who knew him admired him greatly."

Robert Solis, who has an extensive criminal history, has been charged with capital murder in Dhaliwal's killing. Solis, 47, was denied bond at a hearing early last Saturday.

Authorities haven't speculated as to Solis' motive or suggested that it was a hate crime. Solis was wanted on a warrant for violating parole, and authorities said last Saturday that they had received "credible information" that he might have a mental illness or intellectual disability and ordered an evaluation.

The killing came at a time when the U.S. has seen a string of mass shootings, including several recent ones in the Texas cities of El Paso, Odessa and Midland, stoking the debate over the nation's gun laws.

The country also is riven over President Donald Trump's push for restrictions on immigration and efforts to build a wall on the southern border with Mexico.

Some friends of Dhaliwal said



Sandeep Dhaliwal

his life showed how the presence of multiple cultures and faiths can enrich the country.

"It's such a powerful message to send to the community that a man in a turban and beard is just as much American as you," said Simran Jeet Singh.

Even so, Dhaliwal's primary motivation was the ability to live his faith, said his friend Manpreet Kaur Singh, an attorney and Sikh Coalition board member who is not related to Simran Jeet Singh. Sikh men often take Singh as a last name, while women take the last name Kaur, rather than using surnames that would identify them by caste. Manpreet Kaur Singh has both her mother's and father's last names.

"When you wear your articles of faith, you're telling the world 'I stand up for injustice, for people and for the greater good,'" she said.

Sikhism, a monotheistic faith, was founded more than 500 years ago in the Indian region of Punjab and has roughly 27 million followers worldwide, most of them in India.

There are more than 500,000 Sikhs in the U.S. Male followers often cover their heads with turbans, which are considered sacred, and refrain from shaving their beards.

Some were targets of anti-Islam violence following the 9/11

terrorist attacks, even though Sikhism is unrelated to Islam.

About 7,000 to 10,000 live in the Gulf Coast Region of the U.S., according to the Houston Chronicle. More than a half-dozen Sikh temples can be found in the region.

Dhaliwal was a member of the Sikh National Center in Houston, said its chair, Hardam Azad.

Azad said Dhaliwal often would speak with young people at the center, showing his sheriff's badge. A widely-shared video of Dhaliwal posted on the Facebook page of the Harris County Sheriff's Office showed him laughing as he allowed a boy to handcuff him and then unlock the handcuffs with the key.

"Ever since 9/11 happened, a lot of hate crimes have occurred against the Sikhs," Azad said. "The way to counter that was exactly the kind of service Sandeep Dhaliwal provided to the larger community."

Prior to Dhaliwal's hiring, Azad said the center had been in conversations with then-Sheriff Adrian Garcia to bring a Sikh onto the force.

Dhaliwal stepped up, he added.

"His passion for public service was obvious to us all," Azad said. "There are some people who live angry lives. He was anything but angry."

Dhaliwal's father was a police officer in India before moving his family to the United States. The deputy said in a 2015 interview that "serving in the police force is natural" to Sikhs who value service.

"Sikhs have been in this country for more than 100 years (but) we've been absent from the national conversation," Simran Jeet Singh said. "One of the values of serving in uniform gives us a sense as a community that we are being seen and are being understood."

New York realtor swindles \$600,000 out of prospective homeowners

By Victoria Merlino

NEW YORK CITY - A former Richmond Hill realtor was sentenced to 2 to 6 years in prison after scamming \$600,000 out of prospective homeowners on "short-sale" properties.

Reshmi Maharaj, 53, told multiple clients that she was selling "short-sale" properties, or properties where the price of the house is less than what the current owner owes in liens on the property.

Short sales are typically more desirable to lenders than initiating a costly foreclosure process.

From 2014 to 2016, clients gave Maharaj sums of money ranging from \$34,500 to \$199,000 to purchase the homes, which were said to be located throughout Queens and Brooklyn. However, they discovered that they were unable to move in to their homes.

Instead, Maharaj took the money and spent it on personal entertainment and expenses, such as

travel expenses, cash withdrawal in trips to Trinidad and Tobago and trips to a local casino.

"The sentence meted out yesterday by the Court brings much-needed justice to these buyers who were robbed of their chance to fulfill their American Dream," Acting Queens District Attorney John Ryan said in a statement. "The defendant will now spend a significant amount of time in prison for operating this coldhearted scam."



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