

# India Bulletin

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## Indians line up at banks to deposit savings or see them disappear

By Mayank Bhardwaj

NEW DELHI - Indians lined up outside banks across the country on Friday, the last day for them to deposit their savings or see them become worthless after large denomination notes were scrapped in a bid to fight corruption.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month said 500 and 1,000 bank notes - worth a combined \$256 billion and 86 percent of cash in circulation - would cease to be legal tender after Dec. 30, disrupting the lives of hundreds of millions.

Only 35-40 percent of ATM machines were currently dispensing cash, according to Ramaswamy Venkatachalam, managing director, India and South Asia, Fidelity Information Services, a banking technology provider.

Modi had said his government would end the chaos and restore normality in 50 days. But analysts said the impact would last at least six more months, with concerns about lower economic growth, job losses and a fall in demand for goods.

"Economic growth, the obvi-



A cashier counts Indian banknotes as customers wait in queues inside a bank in Chandigarh, India, December 10, 2016.

ous casualty, will tank to about 6.5 percent in the second half of the 2016/17 fiscal year against an average 7.2 percent in the first half," said D.H. Pai Panandiker, president of RPG Foundation, an economic policy group in New Delhi.

Another cost would be job losses, especially in the informal sector, where most poor people work, Panandiker said.

The informal sector accounts for 20 percent of gross domestic product and more than 85 percent

of total employment.

"I also believe that even after the 50-day deadline, people will face immense difficulty in withdrawing money as remonetising 86 percent of India's cash will take a long time," he said.

## India to crackdown on 'nameless' properties

By Rina Chandran

MUMBAI - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vow to take on benami, or nameless properties, can bring greater transparency to a notoriously opaque sector and help check prices if a new law is implemented properly, experts said on Monday.

The practice of buying a property in the name of someone other than the buyer has been widely misused to buy real estate with undeclared income and with fake names and identities to avoid paying tax.

It is estimated benami properties worth billions of dollars are held under fictitious names across India, bypassing laws to check ownership and depriving states of valuable revenue that could be spent on development and welfare schemes.

A 1988 law on such properties was amended this year to ban illegal benami transactions with stricter punishments including imprisonment and a fine of up to a fourth of the property's fair market value. These properties can also be confiscated.

"We are going to take action

against the properties which are purchased in the name of others. It is the property of the country," Modi said in his monthly radio address on Sunday.

"This law will be put to use in the coming days to fight corruption," he said.

Property as defined under the 1988 law includes not only land and homes, but also assets such as gold, stocks and bank deposits.

"If the new law is implemented properly, there will be greater transparency in the real estate sector, there will be less corruption, and we may see a correction

in prices," said Vinod Sampat, a property lawyer in Mumbai.

"But these transactions are hard to track, and the government has a poor record of implementation. While the intention is good, it remains to be seen if the law can be implemented properly," he said.

"When titles are clear and transactions transparent, the confidence of lenders increases, so we will see a pickup in lending to buyers," said Anuj Puri, chairman of real estate firm Jones Lang LaSalle India.

"This will increase the supply of residential real estate."

**Thought of the Week:** "You will never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks." - Winston S. Churchill

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## INSIGHT

# India's flawed generic drug trials business

By Zeba Siddiqui

HYDERABAD - Vasudeva Prakash left his job as a mechanic in Hyderabad three years ago for what he calls a more lucrative career: taking part in clinical trials on generic drugs.

For two years, Prakash participated in trials of drugs being tested to treat HIV/AIDS and other diseases for contract research organizations (CROs) hired by global pharmaceutical companies. The drugs tested at Indian CROs have been key in getting several hundred medicines approved for sale around the world.

Yet, Prakash did not follow international guidelines for testing – and the CROs that hired him didn't require him to. He says that to earn more money he would participate in back-to-back trials on different drugs with gaps of only a few weeks or even a few days, instead of waiting the 90 days that the World Health Organization recommends.

Half of more than a dozen volunteers interviewed by Reuters across four cities - Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and New Delhi - also said they waited much less than 90 days between trials. In the past three-to-four



A woman talks on a mobile phone as she walks past the closed research facility of Semler Research Centre in Bengaluru, India on October 13, 2016.

years, they said they spent several months at a time in different cities so that they could participate in as many studies as possible.

Prakash provided documentation proving he underwent trials with short gaps at Apotex Research Pvt Ltd, owned by Canadian drugmaker Apotex Inc; Lotus Labs, owned by U.S. generics giant Actavis; Ethics Bio Lab, owned since last year by U.S. drugmaker Par Pharmaceutical Inc; and India's Semler Research Center Pvt Ltd, among others. Ethics Bio and Apotex did not respond to requests for comment. Lotus Labs and Semler said they had systems in place to check for cross-participation by trial volunteers.

The guidelines of the WHO,

which decides on approvals for drugs sold in several countries dependent on United Nations programs for basic medicines, are not legally-binding for the CROs. While India has guidelines on clinical trials, they don't specify the length of time participants should take between trials.

Still, the serial testing of some volunteers is raising new questions about the level of oversight of India's generic drug trials industry, after some CROs came under recent international regulatory scrutiny. Last year, the European Medicines Agency banned about 700 medicines across Europe after an investigation revealed data tampering in some trials of generic drugs in India.

International medical experts said that undergoing back-to-back trials endangers the health of patients participating. It can also compromise clinical data gathered through these trials, on the basis of which drugmakers seek approval to sell generic medicines around the world.

"The time gap between participation in two different trials should be 90 days minimum," said Stephanie Croft, a lead inspector at the WHO. "When [data] is incomplete or incorrect it could pose a serious risk to patients."

India's Health Ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

## GLOBAL REACH

Several large international drugmakers, including Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd and Mylan NV, rely on CROs in India to carry out tests on cheaper versions of branded drugs. The aim of these so-called "bioequivalence" studies is to gauge whether non-branded drugs are equally safe and effective. The faster the trials are undertaken, the faster the drugs can come to market.

In some major markets, such as the United States, being the first to launch a generic guarantees market exclusivity for a period

of time, which can reap millions more in sales.

International and local regulators have struggled to keep its oversight in line with the growth of an industry that expanded rapidly in the 2000s, as drugmakers shipped clinical trial work to India to save money. The market is estimated to have crossed \$1 billion in 2016, according to consultants Frost and Sullivan.

Over the past two years, international regulators have suspended or banned medicines tested by four major Indian CROs after finding manipulation of clinical trial data and other violations.

Issues found at Indian CROs are "a big problem that is gaining more and more attention from all sorts of agencies," said Anders Fuglsang, a consultant and former regulator long involved in audits and inspections of CROs around the world on behalf of international regulatory agencies and companies.

Last year, the European Union banned about 700 medicines that had been approved based on clinical trial data provided by GVK Biosciences, then India's largest CRO. European regulators said they found GVK had manipulated data concerning the heart readings of patients taking part in the study.

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## NATIONAL NEWS

## U.S. charges Pakistani exec in \$140 million fake diploma scheme

NEW YORK - The executive of a Pakistani company was charged in a U.S. federal court last Wednesday for his part in an alleged \$140 million "fake-diploma mill" scheme, the latest step in a global crackdown touched off by arrests in Pakistan last year.

Umair Hamid, 30, was charged in a criminal complaint filed in federal court in Manhattan with wire fraud, conspiracy to commit wire fraud and aggravated identity theft in connection with a scam that impacted tens of thousands of consumers.

Hamid, an executive at software firm Axact, was arrested last Monday, according to

a statement by Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara.

Hamid's lawyer could not be immediately identified. An email sent to Axact seeking comment bounced back.

Pakistan had asked U.S. authorities last year to help it investigate Axact, which had been suspected of earning millions of dollars from the sale of bogus university degrees online.

Hamid resumed selling fake diplomas, duping U.S. consumers into paying upfront fees to enroll in fake high schools and colleges even after Pakistani authorities shut Axact down in May 2015, according to Bharara's statement.

"Hamid allegedly took hefty upfront fees from young men

and women seeking an education, leaving them with little

more than useless pieces of paper," Bharara said.

## Ohio man ran gambling house out of gas station

CINCINNATI (AP) - Authorities say a southwest Ohio man ran an illegal gambling house out of a Springfield Township gas station where investigators also found \$11,000 worth of counterfeit clothing.

The Ohio Investigative Unit announced Monday that 46-year-old Indrjit Singh was charged with operating a

gambling house and other offenses after investigators concluded their probe of the Seven Hills Sunoco last week.

Agents with the OIU, which is part of the Ohio State Highway Patrol, seized two gambling machines and more than \$5,000 cash from Singh's business.

Agents also uncovered

approximately 400 counterfeit items including bogus apparel from The North Face, Under Armour, Major League Baseball and the National Football League.

Singh will appear next in Hamilton County Municipal Court on Jan. 5.

It's unclear if he has an attorney who could comment.

## 16-year fugitive gets prison term in wedding guest's death

MINEOLA, NY (AP) - A man who spent 16 years as an international fugitive after killing a guest at a New York wedding on Long Island has been sentenced to 19 years to life in prison.

Balkumar Singh was sentenced Monday in Nassau County Court. He pleaded guilty last month to murder in the 1999 fatal shooting of 19-year-old Abzal Khan.

Authorities say Singh shot

Khan seven times following a dance floor dispute at a wedding hall; scores of guests witnessed Khan's death.

Singh, who had several aliases, traveled to Canada and Guyana before an international manhunt ended in Trinidad in March 2015 with his capture by law enforcement.

He was featured in a 2009 episode of "America's Most Wanted."

## Prosecutors: Man fondled woman in air, apologized in notes

NEWARK, NJ (AP) - Authorities say an Indian citizen living in New Jersey who's accused of fondling a passenger on a flight from India to Newark wrote notes to the victim apologizing for a "moment's stupidity."

Federal prosecutors say 40-year-old Ganesh Parkar, of Robbinsville, moved from his ticketed seat in business class Wednesday and sat next to a woman in economy class on an Air India flight from Mumbai. They say he touched

one of her breasts after she fell asleep.

Investigators say he apologized in two short notes written while on the flight.

Parkar was charged last Thursday with abusive sexual contact. He was released on a \$50,000 bond, put under home electronic monitoring and ordered to relinquish his passport.

The charge carries a maximum two-year prison sentence.

Parkar's attorney says his client "asserts his innocence."

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) - A Northern California woman found her missing husband's body before the authorities by using a smartphone app, officials said.

The unidentified Pacifica woman reported him missing last Friday night and used an app to trace her husband's cellphone to San Mateo last Saturday,

the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Investigators believe 49-year-old Jayesh Patel's Mercedes fell about 30 feet from an elevated ramp at the interchange of Highway 101 and state Highway 92 in San Mateo late last Friday or early last Saturday. His wife located the crumpled car underneath the interchange and

called police last Saturday, the California Highway Patrol said.

First responders had to use the "jaws of life" to tear off the crushed car's doors and remove Patel's body, Montiel said.

It's not clear what caused Patel to lose control of the Mercedes and slam into the concrete barrier hard enough to vault the car over it.

## U.S. calls Pakistan student group wing of banned militant organization

WASHINGTON - The United States on Wednesday announced it was adding the student wing of the Pakistan-based militant organization, Lashkar-e-Taiba, to its list of "foreign terrorist organizations."

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), or Army of the Pure, is an anti-Indian militant group with historical ties to Pakistan's top spy agencies. It has been accused of orchestrating numerous attacks, including a 2008 assault in Mumbai that killed 166 people, six of them Americans.

The State Department move against the student group, Al-Muhammadiyah Students, came as the Treasury Department added two Lashkar-e-Taiba leaders to the U.S. list of "specially designated global terrorists," subjecting them to U.S. sanctions.

LeT was banned by the Pakistani government in 2002 but it has continued operating through front organizations, according to U.S. officials, and their leaders conduct public rallies and interviews.

The State Department announced that it amended the designation of LeT as a "foreign terrorist organization" to include what it called the group's student wing.

"Since the original designation occurred, LeT has repeatedly changed its name and created front organizations in an effort to avoid sanctions," the State Department said, adding that the student group aided senior LeT leaders in recruiting and other activities.

The State Department action subjected the student group to sanctions, including a ban on Americans providing or attempting to provide it with material support.

The Treasury Department said it was adding Muhammad Sarwar and Shahid Mahmood to the U.S. list of "specially designated global terrorists," freezing any U.S. property or other assets they hold and banning Americans from doing business with them. Both are involved in fund-raising activities, it said.

Sarwar, the department said, is the LeT leader in Lahore and Mahmood is a senior LeT leader in Karachi and has routinely traveled outside Pakistan on the group's behalf.

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# India official met Trump national security adviser this week

By Matthew Pennington

WASHINGTON (AP) - India's national security adviser made a low-key visit to Washington earlier this week to meet with a senior aide to President-elect Donald Trump, Indian diplomats said last Friday, in a sign of New Delhi's desire to forge close ties with the incoming U.S. administration.

India's Ajit Doval met for

more than one hour with Michael Flynn, Trump's national security adviser, and they discussed their respective security priorities, including counterterrorism. The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the unannounced meeting.

Doval then met Tuesday with current U.S. National Security Adviser Susan Rice and Secretary

of State John Kerry.

New Delhi hopes a Trump administration will take a tougher line against Islamic militancy by India's historical rival, Pakistan, but likely has concerns over a Nov. 30 phone call between Trump and Pakistan's prime minister.

In its readout of that call, Pakistan said that Trump described the country as "amazing" and expressed a desire to visit -



U.S. President-elect Donald Trump talks to members of the media as retired U.S. Army Lieutenant General Michael Flynn stands next to him at Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, U.S., December 21, 2016. India's national security adviser Ajit Doval made a low-key visit to Washington earlier this week to meet with Flynn, who is Trump's national security adviser, in a sign of New Delhi's desire to forge close ties with the incoming U.S. administration.

## Delta says removes plane passengers for 'provocative behavior'

NEW YORK - Delta Air Lines Inc removed two men from a plane at London's Heathrow Airport before takeoff on Wednesday, and one of the men accused the airline of acting on passenger complaints that he had been speaking on a phone in Arabic.

In a statement after Delta Flight 1 landed in New York, Delta said the man, Adam Saleh, and the other passenger were removed because they "sought to disrupt the cabin with provocative behavior, including shouting." The airline said its information was based on statements collected from the flight crew and other passengers.

Saleh, a Muslim American and

YouTube personality, has posted what he calls "experiment" videos in the past showing him speaking Arabic on planes.

On Wednesday, Saleh posted a video to his verified Twitter account, followed by 315,000 users, showing himself and a second passenger being escorted off of the flight.

"We're getting kicked out because we spoke a different language ... Six white people against us bearded men," he said from the plane's cabin.

Several passengers can be seen heckling him and waving goodbye as he leaves the aircraft.

It was not immediately clear

what took place before the recording began.

"What is paramount to Delta is the safety and comfort of our passengers and employees. It is clear these individuals sought to violate that priority," the Delta statement said.

Airlines have in recent months battled negative publicity over incidents in which Muslim passengers were removed from flights.

In November, a supporter of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump was allowed to stay on a domestic U.S. flight after going on an expletive-filled rant. He was later banned for life from Delta flights.

something that President Barack Obama has not done during his eight years in office, although his predecessor George W. Bush did.

Under Obama, there have been periodic strains between the U.S. and India, but relations have picked up since Modi was elected in 2014. When Modi addressed Congress this June, he described the U.S. as an "indispensable partner" and said together they could anchor stability and prosperity from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific.

The world's two largest

democracies share strategic concerns about the rise of China. While India steers clear of a formal alliance with Washington, the two militaries conduct frequent joint drills and India has turned to U.S. suppliers to help modernize its armed forces.

During the election campaign, when Trump often used negative rhetoric against foreign nations, he was largely positive about India. He praised Indian nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi for championing bureaucratic reform and economic growth.



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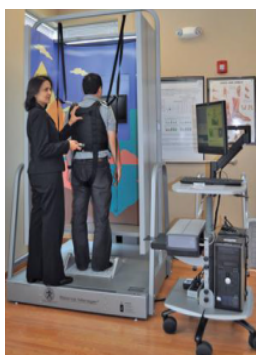


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## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

# Hundreds resist eviction from Delhi slum as new housing falls short



A woman warms herself by a fire along a road on a cold winter evening in New Delhi, India on December 28, 2016.

By Rina Chandran

MUMBAI - Hundreds of residents in a New Delhi slum are resisting eviction by city officials and police in the third such protest this month in India's capital city, as anger mounts over a shortfall in housing for the urban poor, campaigners said.

Evictions began this week in Kathputli Colony, home to 3,500 families of street performers and puppeteers, after authorities marked it for development as part of a plan to upgrade the city.

City officials say residents were notified of the plan which involves moving them to a temporary location while a private builder constructs modest high-rise homes for a nominal sum.

They say more than 500 families have already moved to temporary accommodation.

"Residents were given sufficient notice. The police are on hand to maintain law and order," said J.P. Agrawal, a principal commissioner with the Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

But some residents said they were not given the option of

relocation, and that they received no notice of the eviction.

"No one told us it would be this week. Suddenly one morning we woke up and found hundreds of policemen in the colony," said Dilip Bhatt, head of an artistes' cooperative in the settlement.

"We are surrounded by the police like we are criminals, and they have cut off water and power," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Television images showed police in riot gear, holding assault rifles and shields as residents gathered around them.

About a third of India's 1.25 billion population lives in cities,

with numbers rising every year as tens of thousands of people leave villages to seek better prospects. Many end up in overcrowded urban slums.

A government plan to provide housing for all by 2022 is meant to create 20 million new urban housing units and 30 million rural homes.

But the slow pace of implementation is leaving thousands homeless, according to advocacy group Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN).

More than 33,000 families living in urban areas across India were forcefully evicted since January 2015 to make way for redevelopment projects, HLRN

said last Thursday. In rural areas, more than 75,000 people were displaced.

Only 2,776 houses were built in urban areas under the housing plan from June 2015 to August 2016, HLRN said.

In several evictions, violence and arbitrary detentions have been reported, and there has been little or no consultation, advance notice, consent or compensation, HLRN said.

"It is a sad irony that despite claims of providing 'housing for all', the government has destroyed many more homes than it has built over the last two years," said Shivani Chaudhry, executive director of HLRN.

## 5 men sentenced to death in India for Hyderabad bombings

NEW DELHI - Five men were sentenced to death by an Indian court on Monday for their role in two deadly bombings in 2013 in the city of Hyderabad, including the co-founder of an outlawed Islamist group accused of involvement in a series of attacks.

The convictions last week of Yasin Bhatkal, founder of Indian Mujahideen, and the others marked the first time members of the group had been found

guilty, the National Investigation Agency, India's chief counter-terrorism organisation, said after the sentences were handed down.

Two bombs ripped through a busy market in Hyderabad, a major information technology centre in southern India, in February 2013, killing at least 17 people.

The man police accuse of masterminding the blasts remains

on the run.

The trial took place in a special court run by the NIA and the five convicted are expected to appeal against the judgment.

India sentences dozens of people to death each year but had been reluctant to carry out executions. An undeclared moratorium on capital punishment ended in 2012 when India executed a militant convicted for an attack in 2008 in Mumbai.



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# India's Jet Airways plane skids off Goa runway, 12 hurt

MUMBAI - A Jet Airways Boeing 737 aircraft with 161 people on board veered off an airport runway in Goa shortly before take off just before daybreak on Tuesday, crossing a field before spinning into a ditch on the side of a service road.

A dozen people suffered injuries as the 154 passengers and seven crew on the Mumbai bound flight were evacuated, Jet said in a statement.

"The flight 9W 2374 from Goa-Mumbai skidded off the runway at Dabolim airport this morning due to a technical glitch while aligning for takeoff," the statement said.

December is the busiest month

for Dabolim airport, outside state capital Panjim, as holidaymakers flock to Goa's palm fringed beaches and exotic tourist markets during the winter season.

Television images showed injured lying on stretchers in darkness on the service road, with fire engines parked near the stricken plane, which appeared to have lost its front undercarriage, and damaged a wing as it rested on its belly and engine casings.

Some passengers said they saw smoke in the cabin as the aircraft began taxiing on the runway. One of the injured described how the accident unfolded.

"I fractured my leg," said

Dinesh Kumar, a passenger on Times Now TV channel. "The moment the plane started running on the runway, it slipped into the nearby field and there was smoke inside the flight."

A Jet Airways spokeswoman said the carrier was looking into how the incident occurred.

"It needs time for proper investigation to go on and we are cooperating with the DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation)," she said.

The airline is India's second largest passenger carrier.

In a separate incident in New Delhi airport, a Spicejet airplane was preparing to take off at the same time as a flight run by Indigo had landed and was headed to the runway's taxiway, but the pilots avoided a collision and no-one was injured, the two companies said in separate statements.

Indigo and Spicejet said they were working with authorities investigating the incident.

Air travel is surging in India, one of the world's fastest growing economies. Passenger numbers on domestic flights jumped 21 percent in 2015 to more than 80 million. The government foresees that number growing to 300 million by 2022.



A passenger is stretchered after a Jet Airways aircraft skidded off the runway before takeoff at an airport in Goa, India on December 27, 2016.



A Jet Airways aircraft is seen after it skidded off the runway before takeoff at an airport in Goa, India on December 27, 2016.

## Pakistani authorities seize heroin worth \$1.6 million from plane

KARACHI - Pakistani authorities have seized heroin worth an estimated \$1.6 million hidden on board a Saudi Arabia-bound aircraft operated by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), a customs official said last Thursday.

The packets of heroin were found in a compartment normally used for stowing trolleys, said Zahid Khokhar, a senior

customs official based in Karachi where the seizure was made.

"To be exact the seized quantity is 16.7 kg (36.8 lb) estimated to worth around Rs170 million (\$1.62 million)," Khokhar said.

"So far no arrest has been made. Today we will examine the CCTV footage and interview the people accordingly."

The plane was due to fly to the city of Jeddah.



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# Pakistan releases Indian fishermen in bid to ease tensions with Delhi



Fishermen from India walk out from the prison gate with their belongings after they were released in Karachi, Pakistan on December 25, 2016.

dissent in Indian-controlled Kashmir began in July. In September militants killed 18 soldiers at an Indian army base, an attack New Delhi blamed on Pakistan.

“We appreciate Pakistan’s goodwill gesture of releasing Indian fishermen, but we expect a similar reciprocal move by India, 156 Pakistani fishermen

including 13 children are languishing in Indian jails,” Muhammad Ali Shah, president of Pakistan Fisher Folk, a fishermen’s rights body, told Reuters.

The U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea states that fishermen who cross territorial waters can be warned and fined but not arrested, and Shah called on both

countries to respect that.

One of the fishermen being released, who goes by the single name Naresh, told Reuters: “I am very happy, looking forward to meet my family back in Gujarat. We were treated nicely here, I will request the Indian government release the detained Pakistani fishermen as well.”

## Indian police arrest four men on charges of raping American tourist

NEW DELHI - Indian police arrested four men, including a bell boy of a five-star hotel in the national capital, on Monday for allegedly raping an American tourist in April, police said, highlighting the dangers faced by women in the country from violent sex attacks.

The 25-year-old tourist, who had made a complaint in October, returned to India recently to depose before a magistrate and identify the accused, the Times of India newspaper reported.

After receiving a complaint from a U.S.-based NGO on behalf of the victim, followed by her written complaint earlier this month, the Delhi police have arrested four men, Dependra

Pathak, joint commissioner of Delhi Police, told Reuters.

“We are interrogating four persons while the fifth accused still has to be identified and arrested,” he said, adding in the next day or two the police could parade the accused for identification by the victim, with the court’s permission.

According to Pathak, in her statement, the women said five persons drugged and sexually assaulted her inside her hotel room after she checked in. She said they offered her water laced with sedatives, and sexually assaulted her on two separate days, Pathak said.

She left India after the incident and said it was only towards the end of July that she started to remember what had happened to

her, he said.

Pathak said the NGO and a law firm complained initially about her harassment in October, but later the police found it was a case of a rape and forwarded the case to the local police in November.

“We ourselves approached her and requested her to mail her complaint,” he said while denying accusations by the Delhi Commission for Women, an independent body, of delay in the arrest of the accused.

Sex crimes are common in India. The National Crime Record Bureau says more than 34,000 rapes were reported across the country in 2015, including about 2,000 cases in the national capital New Delhi.

By Syed Raza Hassan

KARACHI - Pakistan released 220 Indian fishermen on Sunday as a goodwill gesture aimed at easing tensions with its neighbour, officials said.

The men were arrested more than a year ago, accused of entering Pakistani waters in an area of the Arabian Sea where the border is unclear.

India is also holding Pakistani fishermen for the same reason and Pakistan hopes its gesture - on the birthday of the nation’s father,

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which coincides with Christmas Day - will be reciprocated.

“We have total of 518 Indian fishermen out of which 220 are being released today as a goodwill gesture of the Pakistan government. In the next phase, 219 fishermen will be released on Jan. 5,” Shunail Husain Shah, a police assistant superintendent, told Reuters.

Relations between the nuclear-armed neighbours have been more fraught than usual since a crackdown by Indian forces on



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# Modi lays foundation of huge statue amid criticism



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks after laying the foundation for the memorial of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, in Mumbai, India on December 24, 2016.

NEW DELHI (AP) - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi last Saturday laid the foundation stone for a massive memorial of a medieval warrior king that's expected to cost billions of rupees and has come under criticism from environmental activists and others.

The memorial, which includes a proposed 192-meter (630-foot) - tall statue of Shivaji, a 16th century ruler from western

India, will be built off the coast of Mumbai on land reclaimed from the Arabian Sea.

The project is expected to be completed by 2019.

The government of Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital, is expected to spend about 36 billion rupees (\$530 million) on the statue.

By midday last Saturday, some 25,900 people had signed a Change.org petition asking

that the government spend the money on infrastructure and development instead.

"Apart from a waste of money, this statue is going to be terrible for the environment, for the traffic situation in South Bombay and a security nightmare," the petition says.

Once complete, the statue will be more than twice the height of the Statue of Liberty.

Last Saturday, Modi also performed a Hindu religious ritual called "Bhoomipujan," or worshipping the land. The

ritual is performed by devout Hindus before the start of any construction project.

This isn't the first time that a dizzying amount of taxpayer money has been set aside to build a massive statue or memorial to a popular leader in India.

In 2014, shortly after Modi became prime minister, the national budget set aside about 2 billion rupees (\$34 million) to build a massive structure to honor independence leader Vallabhai Patel. That project is underway in Modi's home state

of Gujarat and once complete is expected to cost about 10 times the amount set aside in the budget. The rest is expected to be filled by private and corporate donations.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party isn't alone in its love of statues.

Mayawati, a leader from the populous northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh who goes by one name, had dozens of statues erected honoring her and political mentors during her time as that state's leader.

## India asks tax dodgers to come clean by March 2017

NEW DELHI - The government said last Friday that tax-dodgers have until the end of March 2017 to come clean under a scheme announced by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley last month.

Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia told reporters that those who fail to declare their untaxed income under the scheme will have to pay a minimum 77 percent and up to 100 percent in tax and fines.

Another senior income tax department official later said the income of the political parties was exempted under the Income Tax Act, and they could deposit old currency notes in their bank accounts only if they had taken donations in cash up to 20,000 rupees from individuals with all details.

All political parties would have to maintain records properly about their income and voluntary donations, he said adding

they would have to submit their audited accounts.

"They can't take any more old currency notes," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi scrapped 500-rupee and 1,000-rupee banknotes on November 8 in a bid to flush out cash earned through illegal activities, or earned legally but never disclosed to the taxman.

People can deposit old currency notes in banks until the end of December.

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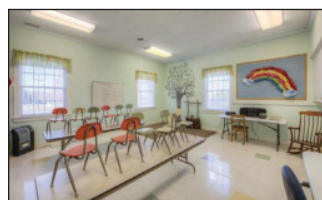
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# Rahul Gandhi accuses Modi of taking cash payments

By Rupam Jain

NEW DELHI - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party denied allegations by opposition politician Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday that Modi had accepted \$6 million in suspicious cash payments in the months before winning a 2014 general election.

Gandhi, heir apparent to the leadership of the Congress party that has governed India for most of its seven decades of independence, levelled the allegations at a rally in Modi's home state of Gujarat.

He has threatened for weeks to cause an "earthquake" by exposing what he called Modi's

personal corruption. The ensuing row paralysed parliament and caused its winter session to be one of the most acrimonious and unproductive on record.

Yet when Gandhi finally went public with the details it turned out that they were known, and were part of a case now before the Supreme Court that was filed by Prashant Bhushan, a lawyer known for pursuing corruption cases.

Bhushan's case rests on evidence recovered during income-tax raids on two business houses, Aditya Birla Group and Sahara that he alleges contains evidence of cash payments to Modi. Spokesmen for both companies could not be reached when called



FILE PHOTO: Rahul Gandhi, vice-president of India's main opposition Congress party, speaks with the media after appearing at a court hearing, according to local media reports in connection with a defamation case filed by Hindu nationalist organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in Guwahati, India on September 29, 2016.

the cash in circulation last month has caused disruption to the daily lives of people and businesses and could affect elections in key swing states next year.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demonetisation is not a surgical strike on black money, but against the poor and honest people of the this country," Gandhi said in Gujarat, one of the states that goes to the polls next year.

The tax authorities did not pursue investigations at the time because they concluded the entries related to a local company.

"We have proof to show that it is a clear case of personal corruption and the court must investigate the payments made by Sahara and Birla to Modi," Randeep Surjewala, a spokesman for Gandhi's opposition Congress party, told Reuters.

Surjewala, addressing a separate news conference, said Modi should come forward and "say whether he took money" from the two companies, and subject himself to an investigation if necessary.

Bhushan, the lawyer, confirmed to Reuters that Gandhi's allegations were based on the evidence he had provided to the Supreme Court.

## India indicts Pakistan-based militants over air base attack

NEW DELHI - India's top counter-terrorism agency this month charged Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and its top leader, with perpetrating a deadly attack on an Indian air force base in January.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) stated that all four gunmen who stormed the air base

on Jan. 2 were Pakistani nationals and that Maulana Masood Azhar, the top leader of JeM, was the mastermind behind the attack.

"All the terrorists are accused of waging war against India. This was a criminal conspiracy to attack our security infrastructure," said a senior official at the NIA in New Delhi.

on their mobile numbers after working hours on Wednesday.

One recipient of alleged payments in late 2013 and early 2014 totalling at least 400 million rupees (\$5.9 million) is listed in the records as "Gujarat CM". Bhushan alleges this refers to the chief minister of the western state who was Modi at the time.

Modi has not commented either on the Bhushan suit or Gandhi's allegations but his law minister, Ravi Shankar Prasad, denounced them on Wednesday.

"I condemn the irresponsible, baseless and shameless allegations of Rahul Gandhi," Prasad told a hastily convened news conference in New Delhi.

The heated and increasingly personal exchanges come as Modi faces growing public anger over a six-week-old crackdown on "black money" that seeks to purge the economy of the proceeds of crime, corruption and tax evasion.

Modi's cancellation of high-value banknotes worth 86 percent of



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## Pakistani cinemas quietly show Indian films again as tensions ease, losses mount

By Syed Raza Hassan

KARACHI - Pakistani movie theatres began screening Bollywood films again last Monday, ending an 11-week boycott in response to political and military tensions with India, theatre officials said.

Some theatre owners said the restoration was because tension was easing, but others said it was because audiences had dropped so sharply since the boycott that began on Sept. 30.

In Karachi, the Atrium Cinema started with a screening of the Indian sports romantic comedy "Freaky Ali". Still, the screenings were kept low key, with no publicity posters and scant attendance in theatres visited by Reuters.

Relations between the nuclear-armed neighbours and foes have been more fraught than usual since an crackdown by Indian security forces on dissent in Indian-controlled Kashmir began in July.

The tension worsened in

September after militants killed 18 soldiers in a raid on an Indian army base, an attack New Delhi blamed on Pakistan.

After exchanges of fire across the Line of Control in Kashmir - claimed by both countries and occupied in part by each - cinema owners announced the boycott.

Pakistan's state censor soon imposed a ban on Indian content and channels on cable television.

However, the boycott has cost Pakistani cinemas dearly.

"The absence of Bollywood



People stand outside a ticket counter at Atrium Mall & Cinemas in Karachi, Pakistan, December 19, 2016.

## India appoints new army, air force and intelligence chiefs

NEW DELHI - The Indian government has appointed new heads of its army and air force among a series of senior military and intelligence appointments, officials said, two weeks before its two most senior defence force chiefs are due to retire.

Vice Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Bipin Rawat was named as the new chief of the army to succeed General Dalbir Singh Suhaag.

Air Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, a fighter pilot, was chosen as the new chief of India's air force

to replace Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha. The appointments were announced on Twitter by a defence ministry spokesman this month.

The appointment of Rawat, a counterinsurgency specialist, raised eyebrows among opposition parties because he was given the job ahead of two more senior candidates.

"Why has seniority not been respected in appointment of Army Chief," Manish Tewari, a former government minister and leader of the opposition Congress party, said on Twitter.

The appointment was also questioned by Communist Party of India leader D. Raja, but a spokesman for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said it was not a matter for political debate.

"The government appoints people to the office based on what it considers to be the most appropriate choice," BJP spokesman G.V.L. Narasimha Rao said.

Indian media reported that it was the first time since 1983 that the most senior candidate had not been chosen to replace an outgoing army chief.

content from theatres resulted in losing over 80 percent of customers," estimated Khurram Gultasab, general manager at Super Cinemas, which runs 10 cinemas in cities across Pakistan's Punjab province.

Indian films are popular both at the cinema and on bootlegged DVDs in Pakistan.

"If Bollywood films are not resumed, cinemas will be forced to close down," Gultasab said.

Nadeem Mandviwalla, whose Mandviwalla Entertainment runs eight cinemas in Karachi and the capital, Islamabad, said the resumption of Bollywood films

was a step towards warming relations.

"Someone has to take a step towards bringing normalcy back so we have initiated the process to bring back peace and harmony," Mandviwalla said.

"As for losses, everyone knows that the suspension (of the boycott) is going to curtail huge losses on both sides."

Pakistan's domestic film industry has seen a revival in recent years, but is dwarfed by India's Bollywood. Pakistani actors have increasingly been appearing in big budget Bollywood films in the past few years.

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# Indian train derails injuring 61; latest crash to raise concern



Rescuers and railway officials stand next to derailed coaches of a passenger train near Kanpur in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India on December 28, 2016.

By Mayank Bhardwaj

NEW DELHI - A train derailed in India on Wednesday injuring 61 people, police and rail officials said, the third significant accident in recent months that have raised concern about the safety of the ageing rail network.

The train came off the tracks and crashed near the northern city of Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh state early in the morning.

"Our latest assessment is that 61 people got injured in the accident and two sustained grievous injuries," said Anil Kumar Saxena,

spokesman for Indian Railways.

The train had just pulled out of the station and its speed was "rather slow", he said.

Television footage from the scene showed mangled, toppled carriages. Two coaches had fallen off a bridge into a small canal while some passengers were seen picking up their luggage from near the tracks.

India's creaking railway system is the world's fourth largest. It runs 11,000 trains a day, including 7,000 passenger trains carrying more than 20 million people.

But it has a poor safety record,

with thousands of people dying every year in derailments, collisions and other accidents.

This was the third accident significant in recent months.

On Nov. 20, at least 146 people were killed when a train derailed near the same city.

A train rammed into a van

taking children to school at a level crossing in north India in July, killing eight of them.

Railways minister Suresh Prabhu has promised to replace old tracks and upgrade safety systems. The government spends more than 90 percent of the railways' revenues on operational

costs, leaving little for upgrades of the colonial-era system.

Some analysts estimate the railways need 20 trillion rupees (\$293.21 billion) of investment by 2020, and India is turning to partnerships with private companies and seeking loans from other countries to upgrade the network.

## Fugitive tycoon Vijay Mallya cries foul over Twitter hack

MUMBAI Fugitive Indian businessman Vijay Mallya said last Friday that his Twitter account had been penetrated by a hacking group called Legion, which posted links to what it alleged were details of Mallya's bank accounts, offshore investments and luxury cars.

Mallya, a flamboyant former billionaire who made his fortune from a liquor and beer empire, moved to Britain in March after being pursued in courts by banks that his now defunct Kingfisher airline owed around \$1.4 billion.

"Legion will find you, hack you, expose you," read one of several postings tweeted by the hackers on Mallya's official

Twitter account before they were erased at around 1215 IST (0645 GMT).

Mallya, who denies being an absconder, was not immediately available for a comment, and a spokesman for his UB Group also declined immediate comment on the hack.

But a response was tweeted on his verified Twitter account.

"Outfit called Legion has hacked my e-mail accounts and are blackmailing me !! What a joke."

Legion came to public attention earlier last month when it claimed to have hacked the Twitter accounts of the Congress party, and its vice chair Rahul Gandhi.

Mallya is wanted by law

enforcement agencies and is subject to a non-bailable warrant from a court.

The government has also revoked Mallya's diplomatic passport which he had received as a member of the Rajya Sabha. And the Indian authorities have sought ways to have Mallya deported by Britain.

The Enforcement Directorate, a government agency set up to fight financial crime, has accused Mallya's UB Group of using some of the funds lent to Kingfisher Airlines to buy property overseas.

Mallya has denied wrongdoing, calling the charges against him "preposterous". He had also offered a settlement to creditors, which they refused to consider.

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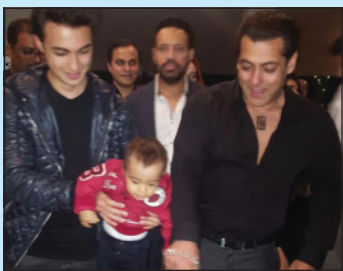
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## Bollywood Beat

### Salman celebrates 51st birthday at his Panvel farmhouse



Superstar actor Salman Khan ringed in his 51st birthday (Dec. 27, 2016) with family and close friends by his side at his Panvel farmhouse.

The actor, who was dressed in black shirt and grey trousers, cut a chocolate cake with 'Being Human' spelt in bold letters, with his little nephew Ahil, sister Arpita Khan Sharma's son, by his side.

Celebrities including Sushant Singh Rajput, Preity Zinta, Esha Gupta, Bipasha Basu, Karan Singh Grover, Bina Kak, Krushna Abhishek, Zareen Khan, Dino Morea, Himesh Reshammiya, Mouni Roy, Daisy Shah, Randeep Hooda, Neil Nitin Mukesh, Remo D'Souza, Shweta Rohira, Niketan Madhok and Pulkit Samrat among others attended the party.

The 'Sultan' star's rumoured girlfriend Iulia Vantur was also present. The Romanian star was dressed in a black ensemble and was busy clicking pictures of Salman while the actor cut the cake.

Earlier, it was reported Shah Rukh Khan, Priyanka Chopra, Ajay Devgn and Suniel Shetty had also been invited.

Salman even launched his app on the occasion.

"#BeingInTouchApp is Live on the Google Play Store! Go Download," he tweeted.

Salman gifted his family and friends who attended the party a designer gold chain from his jewelry line for Being Human. We hear the party went on till 6 am and the Khan brothers were the last ones standing.

## FORTHCOMING MOVIE

### OK Jaanu

Banner:  
Madras Talkies  
Fox Star Studios  
Dharma Productions

Producer:  
Mani Ratnam  
Karan Johar

Director:  
Shaad Ali

Starring:  
Aditya Roy Kapur  
Shraddha Kapoor

Music By:  
A.R. Rahman

Release Date:  
January 13, 2017

Aditya Roy Kapur and Shraddha Kapoor first paired together in the film 'Aashiqui 2' and fans were bowled over by their chemistry in the film. The duo gelled so well with each other and the film was an average hit. Now they are reuniting again for the film 'OK Jaanu'. This Shaad Ali directorial is a remake of Mani Ratnam's Tamil film 'Ok Kanmani'.

'OK Jaanu' narrates the story of a young couple in a live-in

relationship in a city that never sleeps – Mumbai.

Adi (Aditya Roy Kapur) is a young game designer from Lucknow who dreams of emigrating to the U.S. and living the American dream. He comes to Mumbai to work at a start-up game development firm.

Adi plans to stay at an elderly couple's home as a paying guest. Gopi (Naseeruddin Shah), an ex-High Court Judge, had previously worked with Adi's brother, Ravi. He is a straight-laced, somewhat strict, elderly man. His wife, Charu (Leela Samson), an erstwhile, Hindustani classical singer is a cheerful, witty and quirky lady whose memory is fast fading due to Alzheimer's. Adi gradually strikes a bond with them, integrating organically into their lives.

At a chance encounter during his friend's wedding, Adi meets Tara (Shraddha Kapoor), a recent Architecture school graduate working with an architecture firm, who dreams of going to Paris to pursue higher education. Cheerful banter soon gives way to a conversation through which both Adi and Tara realise they strongly feel that marriage isn't for them.



They are happy to find a kindred soul in each other.

The pair starts spending time together and soon senses a palpable attraction, but they consciously try to keep a distance as they feel the constant proximity can only lead to one thing. Inescapably finding themselves drawn to each other and unable to stay apart, their relationship transcends into a physical one, despite their conservative backgrounds.

Tired of clandestine meetings in Tara's hostel room, they decide to move in together until they go their respective ways to America and Paris. Adi brings Tara to meet Gopi, who dismisses the cohabitation proposal as absurd. As Tara strikes a chord with Charu over their shared love of music, the latter warms up to the young couple, which clears the way for Adi and Tara to live together in their house. Tara's mother and Adi's family eventually get to know they are living together and pressure mounts on them to get

married. However, Adi and Tara steadfastly refuse to do so.

Tara's admission to a university in Paris comes through, while Adi's game pitch gets approved. With only ten days left and parting imminent, Adi and Tara are forced to confront some matters of the heart. Living together was always meant to be a stop gap arrangement but an incident involving the elderly couple forces them to relook at their lives and futures.

Produced by Karan Johar and Mani Ratnam, the film also stars Naseeruddin Shah and Leela Samson in pivotal roles.

Academy, BAFTA, Grammy and Golden Globe award-winning musical genius, A.R. Rahman, has crafted another impeccable soundtrack, including a reworking of one of contemporary Indian cinema's most iconic anthems, Rahman's earlier "Hamma Hamma" ('Bombay'), redelivered in the form of "The Humma Song" that's already championing the airwaves.

### Top 3 Bollywood Films

- 1) **Dangal** - Directed by Nitesh Tiwari  
Starring: Aamir Khan, Sanya Malhotra, Fatima Sana Shaikh, Sakshi Tanwar, Suhani Bhatnagar, Zaira Wasim
- 2) **Kahaani 2** - Directed by Sujoy Ghosh  
Starring: Vidya Balan, Arjun Rampal, Tunisha Sharma, Manini Chadha, Jugal Hansraj and Amba Sanyal
- 3) **Befikre** - Directed by Aditya Chopra  
Starring: Ranveer Singh, Vaani Kapoor, Armaan Ralhan, Julie Ordon and Aysha Raza

### Top 10 Bollywood Film Songs

- 10) "O Janiya" - Force 2
- 9) "Wajah Tum Ho" - Wajah Tum Ho
- 8) "Kaabil Hoon" - Kaabil
- 7) "Ishq Mubarak" - Tum Bin 2
- 6) "Laila Main Laila" - Raees
- 5) "Love You Zindagi" - Dear Zindagi
- 4) "Mehram" - Kahaani 2
- 3) "The Humma Song" - OK Jaanu
- 2) "Nashe Si Chadh Gayi" - Befikre
- 1) "Dangal" - Dangal

### Bollywood Trivia

**Shraddha is a daughter of which famous actor?**

- 1) Anil Kapoor
- 2) Rishi Kapoor
- 3) Shakti Kapoor

**Which was Shraddha's debut Bollywood movie?**

- 1) Teen Patti
- 2) Luv Ka The End
- 3) Aashiqui 2

# BOLLYWOOD Insider™

## MOVIE REVIEW

### Dangal

**Banner:**  
Disney India Studio  
Aamir Khan Productions

**Producer:**  
Siddharth Roy Kapur  
Aamir Khan  
Kiran Rao

**Director:**  
Nitesh Tiwari

**Starring:**  
Aamir Khan  
Sanya Malhotra  
Fatima Sana Shaikh  
Sakshi Tanwar  
Suhani Bhatnagar

**Music By:**  
Pritam Chakraborty

Aamir Khan -- the name is synonymous with dedication, perfection and qualitative cinema. His films have set new benchmarks at the ticket windows.

Obviously, 'Dangal' carries colossal expectations on its shoulders. The last biggie of the year 2016 is also expected to bail out the industry, since 2016 hasn't been kind to Hindi cinema. The biz is at an all-time low, with most films sinking faster than Titanic.

There are many rousing moments in Nitesh Tiwari's 'Dangal' (Hindi slang for the wrestling arena), but perhaps the one that best exemplifies the film and its characters is the delightful track "Haanikarak Baapu" (dangerous father). In it, a father pushes his teenage daughters to train as wrestlers, waking them up at the crack of dawn, keeping them away from their favourite food and TV shows so that they can excel in a sport they have never played before.

It could have been a sombre moment in the film, but lyricist Amitabh Bhattacharya brilliantly turns it around by injecting wry, rustic humour that is sure to make the grumpiest audience chuckle. This thread of humour runs throughout the film and elevates

the viewing experience, making it more than just a chronicle of Mahavir Singh Phogat's obsession with producing champion wrestlers.

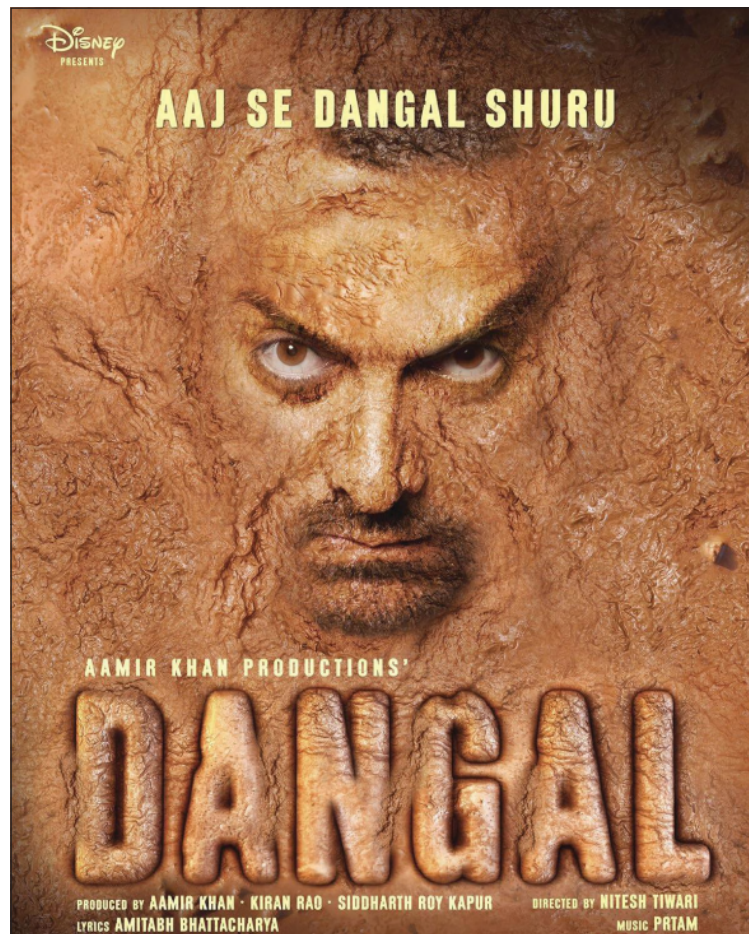
Phogat braves ridicule, gender biases and the complete lack of infrastructure in his village of Balali in Haryana to forge ahead and make his children achieve what he never managed to do -- win a gold medal for India at the international level.

His POA is simple and his modus operandi brutal. Geeta and Babita, until then carefree teenagers who love dressing up and sleeping in, cannot fathom what suddenly caused their otherwise placid father to turn into a despot, but are also not conditioned to question the man of the house. Their mother Daya (Sakshi Tanwar) mildly protests against her husband's improbable plan, raising her voice only when he suggests cooking chicken in their vegetarian household.

There are moments in the film when Mahavir does come across as a despot -- a man who doesn't even stop to consider what his children want. But Tiwari and his co-writers (Shreyas Jain, Piyush Gupta and Nikhil Mehrotra) redeem him immediately. In one powerful scene, Geeta and Babita are cribbing to a classmate who is about to get married. "When a girl is born here, the only thought is to teach her household work and get her married off at 14. At least your father is thinking about you," the girl tells them.

It is one of many pivotal moments in the film, after which Geeta and Babita change their perspective and start to willingly participate in the journey that will ultimately earn them sporting glory. It is also to the credit of Tiwari's perfectly cast ensemble that he manages to make the journey compelling. When the story focuses on the internal dynamics between Geeta, Babita and Mahavir, it is a delight to watch.

Up until the last 20 minutes of the film, Tiwari leaves little room



for mistakes. And then, like an expert driver who suddenly loses control of his car, Tiwari throws it all away in the climax. The characters bandy about big words, jingoism comes into the picture, and the film reaches its lowest point with a scene involving a caricature villain. Try as he might, Tiwari is unable to resist the temptation to inject that one bit of Bollywood-style drama. In doing so, he sullies what would have otherwise been a pristine effort at making a true-blue sports film.

If you can somehow mentally erase the climax, then 'Dangal' has so much to offer. The performances, especially by Zahira Wasim and Suhani Bhatnagar, who play the younger Geeta and Babita, are outstanding. They eclipse the actresses who play their grown-up versions. Ritwik Sahore deserves special mention for his role as the girls' cousin Omkar, not just for his deadpan acting but also because he gets the best lines.

Tiwari and cinematographer Sethu Sriram focus on every miniscule detail of wrestling. The sequences are wonderfully shot and choreographed, so much so that it is difficult to believe the actors aren't full-time wrestlers. And at the centre of it all is Aamir Khan. He plays Mahavir with practiced authority and impeccable timing. Just like every other film he has done of late, Aamir is the messiah here, the man who knows best and is here to tell lesser mortals which direction their life should take. When it comes to wrestling, or education, or religion, Aamir Khan knows best. After watching 'Dangal', it is difficult to argue with that.

On the whole, 'Dangal' is a terrific film that stays in your heart and remains etched in your memory much after the screening has concluded. A brilliant film that restores your faith in Hindi cinema.

**Rating:** ★★★★★

### Bollywood Beat

#### Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan have a baby boy



Kareena Kapoor Khan and Saif Ali Khan say they have been blessed with a baby boy.

The couple announced the birth of their son in a Mumbai hospital in a tweet on Tuesday.

While Taimur Ali Khan Pataudi is the first child of 36-year-old Kareena Kapoor Khan, 46-year-old Saif Ali Khan already has a son and a daughter from his former actress wife, Amrita Singh.

The couple were married in 2012 in Mumbai after a five-year courtship.

On Monday, Saif said in a press release: "To have a child now completes us. There is something about a baby that is kind of half mine and half of hers, so, it's a nice feeling."

#### Malaika Arora demands Rs 10 crore alimony from Arbaaz

Gossip mills have been abuzz about the troubles in the 17 year marriage of Malaika Arora and Arbaaz Khan. The couple, though remained silent for quite some time, announced their separation which was soon followed by divorce.

Reportedly, Malaika Arora Khan, who is currently staying with her son Arhaan, has demanded alimony of Rs. 10 crore as divorce settlement. Though neither of them nor their legal teams have divulged any details of the same, we hear that Arbaaz too has agreed to do so over a given period of time.

### Celebrity Birthdays

January 1st Nana Patekar (1951) Sonali Bendre (1975) Vidya Balan (1979)	January 7th Supriya Pathak (1961)	January 10th Kalki Koechlin (1984)
January 5th Deepika Padukone (1986)	January 9th Farhan Akhtar (1974) Farah Khan (1965)	January 12th Sakshi Tanwar (1973)
January 6th A. R. Rahman (1967)	January 10th Hrithik Roshan (1974)	
January 7th Bipasha Basu (1979)		

### Upcoming Films

<b>Rangoon</b> Saif Ali Khan Kangana Ranaut Shahid Kapoor	<b>Begum Jaan</b> Vidya Balan Gauhar Khan	<b>Jolly LLB 2</b> Akshay Kumar Huma Qureshi, Annu Kapoor
<b>Jagga Jasoos</b> Ranbir Kapoor Katrina Kaif	<b>Badrinath Ki Dulhania</b> Varun Dhawan Alia Bhatt	<b>Sarkar 3</b> Amitabh Bachchan, Manoj Bajpayee, Yami Gautam, Amit Sadh and Ronit Roy
<b>Raees</b> Shah Rukh Khan, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Mahira Khan	<b>Kaabil</b> Hrithik Roshan Yami Gautam	<b>Ok Jaanu</b> Aditya Roy Kapur Shraddha Kapoor

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## Apple in talks with India to manufacture locally



The Apple iPhone7 and AirPods are displayed during an Apple media event in San Francisco, California, U.S. on September 7, 2016.

MUMBAI - Apple Inc is in talks with India's government to explore making products locally, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday, as the U.S. firm aims to make deeper inroads in the world's second-largest mobile phone market by users.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is trying to boost technology manufacturing in the country through his 'Make in India' initiative. His government in June exempted foreign retailers for three years from a requirement to locally source 30 percent of goods sold in their stores.

The Journal said Apple, in a letter to the federal government in

November, outlined manufacturing plans and asked for financial incentives.

Government representatives were not available to comment while an Apple spokesman in India did not immediately respond to an email from Reuters seeking comment.

Local manufacturing would help Apple open retail stores in the country where its iPhones account for less than 2 percent of Indian smartphones sales.

Taiwan's Hon Hai Precision Industry Co Ltd (Foxconn), which makes Apple devices such as iPhones and iPads, has a manufacturing facility in southern India.

## BIZ BRIEFS

### Parliament committee to grill RBI Gov. Patel on cash crunch

NEW DELHI - Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Urjit Patel will not appear on Thursday before parliament's finance committee to brief it on the government's decision to scrap high-value bank notes, the panel's chairman said on Wednesday.

The panel will meet other experts to understand the impact of demonetisation before calling the RBI governor, Veerappa Moily told Reuters. He said Patel could be called to testify at its next meeting.

### Chinese top bidder for 40% stake in Pakistan Stock Exchange

KARACHI - A consortium led by three Chinese exchanges has offered 28 rupees (\$0.27) per share to buy a 40% stake in the Pakistan Stock Exchange. KSE, according to a statement and the bourse's top official.

The consortium is led by the China Financial Futures Exchange Company Limited, the Shanghai Stock Exchange and the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, according to a PSX statement.

Managing Director Nadeem Naqvi said 40% of the Karachi-based stock exchange represents 320 million shares. That would make the potential deal worth PKR 8.96 billion (\$85 million).

Pakistan's stock exchange has been one of Asia's best performing for several years and was recently approved to be restored to the MSCI Emerging Markets Index, giving it a wider range of potential investors than as a Frontier Market.

## Battle lines forming for Tata legal showdown

By Aditi Shah and Promit Mukherjee

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI - As India's biggest corporate showdown heads from the boardroom to the courtroom and brings in a Who's Who of the country's legal profession, ousted Tata Sons chairman Cyrus Mistry vows a multi-layered battle for governance reforms at the \$100 billion conglomerate, people close to him say.

Mistry, who was dismissed from his post in October and has since left boards at other Tata group companies, will step up his legal fight with patriarch Ratan Tata and others and make his case in any regulatory investigations into the Tata group, three people familiar with Mistry's strategy said.

Mistry has so far broadly laid out three sets of allegations: breaches of governance within the Tata group; misconduct at Tata ventures; and the illegality of his ouster.

"If all of those are put together, it paints a picture - of mis-governance and misappropriation," said one of those people. "I think there will be different elements, which

will all be looked at in different forums."

Tata Sons, the holding company with stakes in listed firms operating in a range of industries, denies Mistry's allegations and says it has followed the highest standards of corporate governance.

Two lawyers representing Tata said the group is ready to defend itself and will challenge the merits of any legal action Mistry takes.

In his first salvo, Mistry last week filed a petition at the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), a quasi-judicial body that deals with corporate grievances in India, alleging mismanagement and shareholder oppression by Tata Sons, and seeking the replacement of the group's board of directors.

On Tuesday, Tata hit back, filing a legal notice against Mistry, accusing him of breaching confidentiality rules, and alleging he shared "confidential data, business strategies, financial information" related to Tata Sons.

### BURDEN OF PROOF

Tata legal advisers say the burden of proof is on Mistry, who will need to prove his assertions that decisions taken by Tata Sons

were not in the interest of all shareholders, and it mismanaged group companies' affairs.

"He will first have to substantiate that something wrong happened and that there were actions intended to oppress him," Tata group counsel Mohan Parasaran said before the Tata filing.

Parasaran said Mistry would need to prove that certain decisions taken by Tata Sons - such as the \$12 billion purchase of steel-maker Corus' assets in Europe or the decision to continue making the loss-making Nano car - were oppressive to the interest of minority shareholders in Tata Steel and Tata Motors.

"Only proving that these were bad decisions does not amount to anything," Parasaran said. "Broadly, we have a strong legal case."

Responding to Mistry's petition, the NCLT stopped short of granting his request to prevent the Tata Group from issuing new securities that would dilute his stakeholding. It will hear the petition again on Jan. 31.

Lawyers not involved in the proceedings say the legal battle could stretch from the Bombay High Court to the Securities

Appellate Tribunal, and even to the Indian Supreme Court.

Corporate grievance cases in India can drag on. A dispute between the companies of billionaire brothers Mukesh and Anil Ambani over natural gas supplies lasted for two years and went all the way up to the Supreme Court.

Both the Tata and Mistry camps have hired some of India's top legal brains.

"The stage seems set for the next round where courts and regulators will be involved," said Vaneesa Agrawal, a securities lawyer at Suvan Law Advisors.

Mistry alleges misconduct in the way some Tata companies awarded contracts, and fraud at one of its aviation ventures.

He also alleges some trustees of Tata Trusts - charitable trusts that own two-thirds of Tata Sons - undermined the boards of Tata Sons and group companies by demanding a say in key internal matters - in breach of securities rules.

"The make or break will be whether Mistry can prove that the Trusts used their powers in the interest of their personal whims," said a Mumbai-based lawyer, who asked not to be named.



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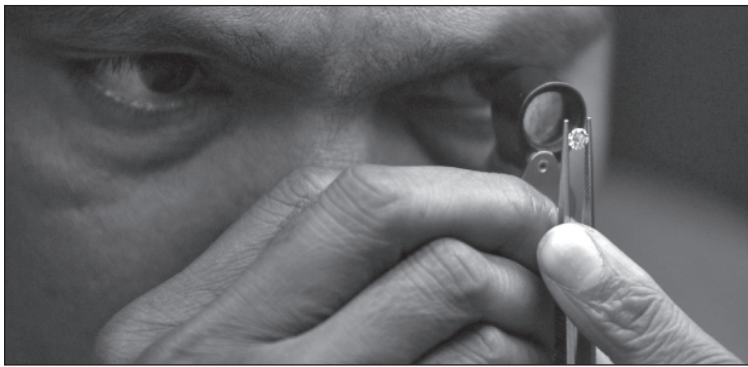
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## Global diamond business roiled as cash crunch hits Indian stone cutting



REUTERS/Amit Dave/File Photo

FILE PHOTO: A supervisor checks the shape of a polished diamond inside the diamond processing unit at Surat, in the western Indian state of Gujarat on January 5, 2013.

By Rajendra Jadhav  
and Susan Taylor

SURAT/TORONTO - The global diamond industry is facing disruption that could stretch through the first few months of next year, including Valentine's Day in February, as a result of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's radical move to abolish most of the nation's cash overnight.

In Surat, craftsmen usually spend 10-12 hours a day in small mills or grimy sheds cutting and polishing 80% of the world's diamonds but the business is based on cash and the demonetization of the high-value banknotes from Nov. 8 has prevented many from operating. Thousands of diamond

brokers in the area's narrow lanes are also doing little business.

The lack of cash is not the only problem for an industry that employs 1 million people in India, most of them in this city. Modi's shock treatment is intended to make it much more difficult for those laundering ill-gotten gains or evading taxes, and that means diamond buyers are demanding proof of tax payments that are often not available, the traders said.

Top diamond miners, such as Anglo American-owned De Beers and smaller Canadian producers such as Stornoway Diamond and Dominion Diamond are seeing weaker demand and prices for cheaper stones used in lower-priced jewellery.

The picture for retailers and consumers of diamonds is less clear. The cash crunch has also badly hurt consumer demand for diamond jewellery in India, the world's third-biggest market.

That means there are more of the cheaper finished stones to export, helping to create a temporary glut and lower prices at wholesaler and store level. However, that may not last if the cutters and polishers of India can't get back to work soon.

But the luxury buyer doesn't have to worry. Much of the higher-value jewellery business, with the highest grade one-carat stones usually costing more than \$14,500, is protected because cutting and polishing is also done in Israel, Belgium and by bigger Indian companies that rely on bank transactions.

"The knock-on effect of Indian demonetisation has meant a reduction in the prices of lower quality diamonds," said Tobias Kormind, managing director of 77 Diamonds, an online jewellery retailer based in London. "As a result, we've seen an increase in demand for those kinds of diamonds as our clients have snapped up these favourable deals."

In India, jewellery demand typically climbs in the winter months' wedding season. But this year sales

are plunging as nearly two-thirds of jewellery is usually purchased with cash, which is in short-supply.

Ishu Datwani, owner of Mumbai-based Anmol Jewellers, says his sales are down nearly 70% since the government scrapped the high-value notes.

The demand is unlikely to revive any time soon as India struggles to dispense enough new notes, industry officials say.

"During the cash crunch, diamonds are one of the last things people want to buy. At least for the next six months demand will remain weak," says Praveenshankar Pandya, head of India's Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC).

The crisis hit at a time when there were plenty of stones in the retail pipeline or being processed. India's rough diamond imports between April and November jumped 30.5%, while exports of cut and polished diamonds during the period rose 12.2%, GJEPC data shows.

Diamond processors bought rough diamonds aggressively, expecting a jump in exports and rising Indian demand, but now they are struggling, said trader Dharmesh Navadiya.

In trading hubs like Hong Kong,

many retailers are stuck holding diamonds they bought three years back at higher prices expecting robust demand from China that didn't materialise.

"There has been no supply crunch as the market is already flooded, especially the low carat diamond," said Jonathan Rotbart, a distributor of gems in Hong Kong.

"The market is frozen. We don't have cash to buy diamonds," said Kalpesh Savaliya, a trader for 25 years who was sitting cross-legged on a mattress behind a low wooden desk in Surat.

As small operators close, India's rough diamond imports could decline by up to 25% between December and March, said Mehul Choksi, chairman of Gitanjali Gems, India's biggest diamond jeweller.

Miners are already feeling the pain with some lower-quality stones being discounted by more than 25% from prices before demonetization, said Panmure Gordon analyst Kieron Hodgson, in a recent note to clients.

In its final 2016 tender, De Beers said sales were affected by a slowdown in lower-value rough stones, a trend Hodgson expects to see repeated for at least the next three months.

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**WEEKLY HOROSCOPE**

(January 8 - 14, 2017)

**Aries (March 21 - April 19)**

There is good cheer in the week. Offences are forgiven and apologies accepted. There may be more expenditure, but you are indulgent. Despite the excitement on the social front, you could be mulling over ways to grow professionally and financially.

**Taurus (April 20 - May 20)**

You are likely to be quite introspective. While there are social occasions, you are concerned about ways of overcoming present hurdles and making it big. You may already be considering a new approach for it. Health goals will need to be pursued with dedication.

**Gemini (May 21 - June 21)**

The time is perfect for decluttering your life. You may be in the mood for letting go of all the unproductive activities from your life. There is a desire to experience freedom at another level. You might take up spiritual activities. Good times are spent with loved ones.

**Cancer (June 22 - July 22)**

You are likely to be quiet and withdrawn. There could be several thoughts running parallel in your head that need sorting. There are emotional issues that conflict with everyday responsibility. This is, however, a good phase for a victory over your own tendency to get pulled under by an overwhelming issue.

**Leo (July 23 - August 22)**

You are relaxed and take life at an easy pace in the earlier part of the week. There could be marriage on cards for some. There is hectic activity around a new venture to begin in the second half of the week. You meet new people and may possibly sign a good deal. Heart health will need attention.

**Virgo (August 23 - September 22)**

You are likely to be busy. You are quite focused on your work. There is some leisure time, but you dedicate your energies towards capitalising on an interesting opportunity. There could be an honour or reward bestowed on you. A loved one returning home brings happiness.

**Libra (September 23 - October 22)**

This week is a time of slight inconvenience. You may have to adjust your schedule to meet the needs of others. There may be some irritability because of fatigue and you could avoid that by looking after your health. You may face pressure at work.

**Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)**

The week brings focus on your financial situation and creates a situation of concern at work. You will need to be careful if it is about managing conflicts. You may have to placate loved ones, who may accuse you of not giving them time or attention.

**Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)**

There may be social occasions where you participate but choose to remain in your shell. While you do not want to hurt anyone, it is about giving attention to the recent insights and building upon them. There could be alternating phases of sadness and calm.

**Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)**

It is likely to be an intense period. There could be a new relationship on the anvil. You enjoy the company of this individual and value the enormous learning and growth potential you see from this association. You make an effort to clear any deadwood accumulated in the past year.

**Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)**

You may take stock of your achievements and misses in the year gone by. You have learnt a lot and are proud of your accomplishments, despite the odds. There may be a few episodes that rake up regret. But knowing that you cannot do much, it would be better to clear your heart and move on.

**Pisces (February 19 - March 20)**

Too many opportunities and too many changes going on. You could be in an indulgent mood and will look at spending more on redoing your home or acquiring creature comforts. There could be lovely time spent with old friends.

**Verandah Retirement Community coming soon to Schaumburg area**

SCHAUMBURG - Verandah Retirement Community started construction in fall 2016 and is slated to complete its first phase by summer 2017. Dr. Anuja Gupta, President & General Partner was commemorated at a recent event in Hoffman Estates. The event was attended by leading members of the community including Dr. Bharat Barai, Sunil Shah, Dhitubhai Bhagwakar, Haribhai, Narsihnbhai, Jayanti Thakkar and many others.

Verandah is a senior living community currently under development in the Schaumburg area. The location is central and close to new Elgin-O'hare expressway. Chicago's O'hare airport is about 30 mins away and downtown Chicago is about 45 mins away. The area also has two excellent medical centers. The Schaumburg area is central to many other attractions important to the Indian community such as the BAPs temple & Jain temple in Bartlett, Swaminarayan temple in Carol Stream, Itasca temple, Radhey-Shyam temple. There are also 2 mosques located within a few minutes of the property. The Gurudwara's of Palatine and Wheaton are within 25-30 mins. There are many grocery stores close by like Patel Brothers, Surabhi, Annadata and Siri. The area also has many Indian restaurants like India House, Bombay Chopsticks, Jaihind Palace, Priya, Cool Mirchi and many more.

Verandah will offer townhomes & condominiums for sale with a huge clubhouse and medical facilities for use of the residents. The townhomes and condominiums are especially built for senior living and offer a convenient, low maintenance lifestyle. The clubhouse will be the main attraction of the community. It is planned as



a 10,000 square foot facility with a dining room, community room, gym, computer room, library, beauty shop, theater. The dining facility will serve vegetarian Indian & multicultural cuisine for lunch & dinner daily. The property will also offer extensive landscaped areas including a big pond, park, walking paths.

The medical services will include a doctor's office, physical therapy office, home-health service and an Assisted Living & Memory Care facility. "Our emphasis is on the socialization of the seniors. Loneliness is a big problem in the senior community. At Verandah we designed many amenities & facilities to bring

the seniors out of their homes and get them involved in group activities, making new friends and enjoying their life more" said Hema Shastri from the Verandah marketing team. "This kind of facility was much needed for our community" said Sunil Shah, president of Federation of Indian Association. "As our members get older it is important for us to give back and make sure they will be happy & secure in their golden age" said Dhitubhai Bhagwakar, vice-president of Federation of Indian Association, Chicago.

Further information can be obtained at [www.VerandahRetirementCommunity.com](http://www.VerandahRetirementCommunity.com). Verandah can be reached at 312-952-1802.



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## SPORTS

## ■ Cricket

## Kohli pleased by manner of India victories



India's captain Virat Kohli (C) celebrates with teammates after the dismissal of England's Keaton Jennings in Chennai, India on December 20, 2016.

CHENNAI - More than the series win it was the nature of the victories that pleased India captain Virat Kohli most after his side completed a 4-0 triumph over England with another comprehensive victory in the final match last Tuesday.

Left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja bowled India to an innings and 75-run victory at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, claiming seven of the 10 English wickets that tumbled in the final two sessions.

India, the world's top-ranked test side, have often been accused of bullying visiting opponents on pitches tailor-made for their

spinners.

But the surfaces during the series against England have been deemed fair by critics and Kohli lost four of the five tosses.

The touring side scored 400 and 477 in their first innings in Mumbai and Chennai respectively but lost on both occasions by over an innings.

"Toss was out of the equation, pitches were out of the equation," Kohli said at the presentation after his side won their fifth test series on the trot.

"We were up against big totals, we ended up winning by an innings both times we conceded 400 in the last two games.

"That doesn't happen too much in test cricket, especially with a side that's not that experienced. So it speaks volumes of the belief that we have in the change room."

India lost fast bowler Mohammed Shami and vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane to injuries during the series while a few other first-choice players were also ruled out with knocks at various points.

But the replacements proved more than capable with Karun

Nair scoring an unbeaten 303 to guide India to a record total of 759 for seven in the final test.

Kohli felt conceding a big lead after a solid first-innings total hurt the morale of the English batsmen. The touring side were 103 for no loss but lost all 10 of their wickets in the last two sessions.

"It's always a tricky position when you have scored 477 and then you concede a lead of 281. Mentally and psychologically it's

always a dent on the opposition," Kohli said.

"We understood that once we get a couple of wickets, it's gonna be a downslide pretty quick. Because they don't want to be in a position after getting so many runs that they can lose a test match.

"Especially on a wicket that wasn't offering much to the bowlers. And Jadeja came and did the job in both the innings ... The intensity was top class."

## ■ Cricket

## Captain Cook yet to decide on England future



India's captain Virat Kohli (L) is congratulated by England's captain Alastair Cook after India won the test series in Chennai, India on December 20, 2016.

CHENNAI - England captain Alastair Cook has not made any decision on whether to continue in the job, the 31-year-old said after his team's 4-0 series loss against India last Tuesday.

Cook landed in India with speculation about the position he has held since 2012 and the crushing defeat in India will only strengthen calls for him to hand over the test captaincy to Joe Root.

"This is not the place to be

asking me these questions," Cook told Sky Sports after his team lost the fifth and final test by an innings and 75 runs in Chennai.

"I have got to go away and do some thinking, get back home and do it without the emotive side of what's happened over the last nine weeks," he said after the defeat which pushed England down from second to fifth in the world rankings.

England's loss was all the more frustrating for Cook as the

tourists won the toss in four of the five tests and were not made to play on the spin-friendly pitches which India rolled out to South Africa last year.

"It's been a series of missed opportunities, in terms of catches that cost us," Cook said.

"Not being able to score enough runs and take enough wickets, it's a tough dressing-room to be in. We tried as hard as we can but it wasn't good enough."

England's sloppy fielding allowed Karun Nair to hit a marathon 303 not out which set the tone for India's comprehensive victory in the final test.

"It was a game of missed opportunities. We kept dropping vital chances and India kept punishing us.

"Credit to (India captain) Virat (Kohli), they've outplayed us. It's a hard thing to say as a professional because you always think you are better than the opposition but we haven't been so here."

## ■ Cricket

## Batting strength in depth a good problem for India

By Sudipto Ganguly

MUMBAI - The emergence of youngsters Lokesh Rahul and Karun Nair will increase the pressure on India's established batsmen to be more consistent as the world's top-ranked test side look to dominate next year.

Under captain Virat Kohli, India have been unbeaten in the last 18 tests, registering series wins in Sri Lanka and West Indies, and thumping South Africa, New Zealand and England at home.

Halfway through a bumper home series of 13 tests, with a lone match against Bangladesh and a four-game series against Australia remaining, Kohli's grand dream of creating one of cricket's all-time best teams is taking shape.

The 24-year-old Rahul cemented his position as India's first-choice opener alongside Murali Vijay with a 199 in Chennai, his fourth test hundred in 12 matches.

Doubts were raised after scores

of nought, 10 and 24 but the knock at the MA Chidambaram Stadium answered all his critics and ensured left-hander Shikhar Dhawan will be India's reserve opener when the hosts pick the squad for the next test.

It will also be a pleasant headache for the team management when regular middle-order batsmen Ajinkya Rahane and Rohit Sharma return from injury for the matches against Bangladesh and Australia in February and March.

Nair, 25, did not have a great start to his test career, scoring four and 13 in Mohali and Mumbai before compiling a stunning unbeaten 303 in Chennai.

"It's difficult to find guys like that, which have such character when they are batting and understand their game so well at such a young age," Kohli told reporters after his side completed a 4-0 drubbing of England in Chennai.

"It's important to back guys like Karun. We've always believed. He

was always our number one choice as a middle-order back-up."

Rohit scored three half-centuries, two unbeaten, against New Zealand in the three tests before his thigh injury while Rahane, India's vice-captain, broke his finger after scoring 63 in five innings against England.

Kohli has warned opponents that this is only the beginning for his young side.

"To be part of such a good year and such a good season, especially with the team in transition, is something we can be really proud of," Kohli said.

"But this is just the foundation that's been laid for us to carry on for many years. It's just the beginning.

"It's nothing (compared to what) we want to achieve. It's not even a tiny bit of that. We understand where we want to go, and hopefully the guys can keep putting this kind of effort and take the team where it belongs."

## ■ Cricket Ashwin bags brace of ICC annual awards

MUMBAI - India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin was named the International Cricket Council (ICC) Cricketer of the Year on Thursday for taking 48 wickets and scoring 336 runs in eight tests during the voting period.

The 30-year-old Ashwin, the world's top-ranked test bowler, became the third Indian to win the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy while also scooping the ICC Test Cricketer of the Year award for the period from Sept. 14, 2015 to Sept. 20, 2016.

"It's an absolute pleasure to be awarded with this great honour," said Ashwin, who won the man of the series awards in each of India's last four test series before the five-match rubber against England.

"It feels great to follow the likes of Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid in being named as the ICC Cricketer of the Year. To also win the ICC Test Cricketer of the Year makes it even better."

South Africa wicketkeeper-batsman Quinton de Kock was named ODI (one-day international) Player of the Year, while West Indies' Twenty20 captain Carlos Brathwaite won the T20

Performance of the Year award.

Brathwaite was honoured for belting four consecutive sixes in the final over off England's Ben Stokes to lead West Indies to victory in the World T20 final earlier this year.

Bangladesh medium pacer Mustafizur Rahman was adjudged Emerging Cricketer of the Year, while Afghanistan wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Shahzad was named the Associate and Affiliate Cricketer of the Year.

Four England players made the ICC test team of the year, captained by Alastair Cook, with their recent drawn series in Bangladesh and 4-0 loss in India falling outside the voting period.

India test captain Virat Kohli was named as captain of the ODI Team of the Year. Test team: David Warner (Australia), Alastair Cook (England, captain), Kane Williamson (New Zealand), Joe Root (England), Adam Voges (Australia), Jonny Bairstow (England, wicketkeeper), Ben Stokes (England), Ravichandran Ashwin (India), Rangana Herath (Sri Lanka), Mitchell Starc (Australia), Dale Steyn (S.Africa), Steve Smith (Australia).

# Indian police bust baby trafficking racket amid fears more children at risk

By Roli Srivastava

MUMBAI - Police in India's commercial capital Mumbai have arrested a gang of six people accused of stealing babies or convincing single women to sell their children in the latest bust in a series of baby trafficking rackets.

A police spokesman said the group, which included five women, sold the infants to childless couples in various states across India.

The arrests followed the rescue of five children - four boys and one girl - aged between four months and one year in the states of Goa, Gujarat and Karnataka, and came less than a month after a similar trafficking racket was busted in West Bengal.

Officers are now investigating if the couples that purchased the babies, for between 200,000 to 400,000 rupees (\$3,000-6,000), were aware that the children had been kidnapped or bought from their biological parents.

"The gang was operating for the last two to three years. We are still investigating the number of children they may have kidnapped and sold," senior police inspector Naresh Kasale told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"We suspect more people are involved in the racket."

The police spokesman said one child has been reunited with its



FILE PHOTO: Reports of human trafficking in India increased by 25% in 2015 to about 6,877 compared to the previous year. More than 40% of cases involved children being bought, sold and exploited as slaves, according to government data.

biological parent but the others were at a rescue home.

Local media reported that police were looking into whether the group was linked to cases of kidnapping in hospitals.

## 'ALARMING TREND'

Kasale said police first uncovered the racket in early December while investigating the case of a missing child in Sathe Nagar slum in Mankhurd, eastern Mumbai.

They found a woman from that slum was also missing and tracked her by her mobile phone to Goa where she was detained.

She told police she had sold the child and gave them details of the racket.

"She had told the couple that it was her own child and that her husband was dead and she wanted to remarry. We rescued the child

and have reunited him with his parents," Kasale said.

Last month, 13 babies were rescued and the remains of two other infants discovered in a series of raids in the eastern state of West Bengal in what police suspect is an international child trafficking racket.

Eighteen people, including doctors, midwives and the owners of charities and clinics, were arrested, suspected of taking babies from



FILE PHOTO: Police in the southern Indian state of Karnataka have rescued a schoolgirl who called them for help after learning she was to be married to a much older man in a case highlighting the risk of child trafficking in the region.

women immediately after they had given birth and telling them their children were stillborn.

Adoption experts said that two gangs busted in quick succession is indicative that baby trafficking is becoming a widespread and organised crime in India.

"This is an alarming trend," said Sunil Arora, president of Federation of Adoptive Agencies.

Arora said there are laws in place for women to give up their

children if they are unable to keep them but single mothers are often unaware of these processes and, fearing social stigma, may hand over children to trafficking gangs.

Reports of human trafficking in India increased by 25 percent in 2015 to about 6,877 compared to the previous year. More than 40 percent of cases involved children being bought, sold and exploited as slaves, according to government data.

## Traffickers get life in prison in India for chopping off labourers' hands

BHUBANESWAR - Eight human traffickers found guilty of torturing and chopping off the hands of two labourers have received life prison sentences and hefty fines, a prosecutor said last Sunday, hoping the severity of the punishment would deter others.

Prosecutor Dharendra Nath Patra said the court in Bhubaneswar heard how the traffickers chopped off the hands of Nilambar Dhangdamajhi and Dayalu Nial in Odisha state on Dec. 15, 2013.

The two men were among of a group of 12 labourers who had taken money from labour agent

Parvesh Duni in exchange for working for him but quickly realised he had trapped them.

When the men found out they were being taken to Andhra Pradesh in southeastern India instead of Chhattisgarh state in central India as expected they tried to escape but were caught and locked up for hours before their hands were chopped off.

News of the torture and confinement triggered widespread outrage and made national headlines in India which is estimated to have the highest number of modern day slaves of any country.

Dhangdamajhi died on Sept. 21 this year after years of illness.

"Under the sentence Parvesh Duni and other traffickers will serve a life term in prison. They will also have to pay fines," the prosecutor told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "This is a lesson for all."

Amidst the publicity, in 2014 the Supreme Court intervened and asked the Odisha government to fast track charges against the traffickers and provide rehabilitation for the two men whose stories are typical of many trapped in debt bondage in India.

## Rise in baby trafficking in India cuts adoption numbers and fuels trade

MUMBAI - An increase in baby trafficking in India is reducing the number of children available for adoption and fuelling the lucrative trade as more couples wait to adopt, government officials said on Wednesday.

Government figures show currently 1,700 children are available for adoption in India, the world's second most populous country with 1.25 billion people, while some 12,400 families want to adopt. About 3,010 babies were adopted in 2015/16.

Government officials overseeing adoptions said an increasingly long wait to adopt was closely linked to a rise in human trafficking in the country, with two baby selling rackets busted in India over the past two months.

"There are more such rackets (of baby trafficking)," said Deepak Kumar, chief of the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), India's main body to monitor and regulate adoptions.

"In India, we expect the pool of children available for adoption should outnumber the number

of waitlisted parents, but there are touts and in some cases even agencies that sell children to childless couples."

Under Indian laws children who have been surrendered by their birth parents or brought in by the police are declared legally free for adoption after various legal processes are completed.

This includes giving birth parents up to 60 days to reconsider their decision.

To ensure transparency, the adoption process in India went online last year with waitlisted families and the children available for adoption featured on a website.

But Kumar said traffickers often tried to get hold of these babies before the parents - often unwed mothers - made it to the government department to surrender the child.

Last week, police in Mumbai arrested a gang that was convincing single mothers - who can face social stigma or ostracization in India - to part with their babies then selling them to childless couples in various states across the country.

## Would-be child bride calls Indian police to stop wedding as trafficking fears grow

CHENNAI - Police in the southern Indian state of Karnataka have rescued a schoolgirl who called them for help after learning she was to be married to a much older man, campaigners said last Tuesday, in a case highlighting the risk of child trafficking in the region.

In a rare occurrence, the 15-year-old called the police a day after pre-wedding ceremonies began in her village in Karnataka's Kalaburagi district.

Police officials said eight people, including the 26-year-old prospective groom from the western Indian state of Gujarat, have been arrested in connection with the case.

In India, the legal age for marriage is 18 for girls and 21 for boys. But considered a financial burden

on their families, many girls are married off by their parents before their 18th birthday.

Children's charities say there has been a growing trend of suitors from Gujarat seeking brides from Karnataka, paying a dowry of up to 100,000 rupees (\$1,473) and covering the costs of the wedding.

"Since Gujarat has a skewed sex ratio, many older men come here to marry because they don't find girls back home," said Anand Raj of non-profit Margadarshi Society, which runs a helpline for children to report abuse.

"But they only want girls below 18 and that makes us suspect trafficking."

The Gujarati families come, strike a deal, marry and return to their homes in two days, officials

investigating the schoolgirl's case said.

"Our probe showed that in this case, the Gujarat family came and met two local residents and said they wanted a bride on December 16," district child protection officer C V Raman told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"Wedding celebrations were well underway by December 17 and would have ended last Sunday if the girl hadn't called."

Nagasimha G. Rao of non-profit Child Rights Trust said such cases were clear examples of "trafficking in the name of marriage".

"Northern Karnataka has become a hunting ground for virgin brides taken to other states. Even their families lose track of them after a point," Rao said.

# Over the counter painkillers linked to hearing loss

By Lisa Rapaport

LOS ANGELES - Regular use of pain relievers over many years may increase the risk of hearing loss, a recent study suggests.

Researchers analyzed long-term data on almost 56,000 U.S.

women and found using non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) like naproxen (Aleve) and ibuprofen (Motrin) as well as acetaminophen (Tylenol) for six years or more was tied to a greater risk of hearing problems than taking these drugs

for a year or less.

"Hearing loss is extremely common in the United States and can have a profound impact on quality of life," said senior study author Dr. Gary Curhan, a researcher at Harvard University and Brigham and Women's

## Top-rated health apps not always best for managing health

ANN ARBOR - Some of the top-rated health apps aimed at people with chronic medical problems don't do a very good job of actually helping to manage those conditions, a recent study suggests.

Doctors reviewed 137 of the most highly rated or commonly recommended apps available for Apple's iPhone and handsets running Google's Android software that target people with high health costs or substantial medical needs. Often, though, the doctors gave these popular apps poor marks.

"I think that the lack of correlation between consumer app store and doctors' ratings is likely due to competing priorities between the two groups," said lead study author Dr. Karandeep Singh of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

"Consumers may place a different value than physicians on the accuracy of medical information, availability of certain functionalities, and design considerations," Singh added by email.

"For example, an app that enables accurate entry of blood pressure with appropriate indications for high and low blood pressures may be viewed positively by a physician, and if that

app requires a login every time it is started, a consumer may feel it is too burdensome to use and rate it poorly," Singh said.

Approximately half of all Americans are living with at least one chronic medical problem such as heart disease, diabetes or asthma, researchers note in the journal *Health Affairs*, online December 5th.

For the current study, researchers evaluated apps targeted at people who live with asthma, arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, lung disease, liver disease, kidney disease, heart failure or addiction to drugs, alcohol or tobacco. They also looked at apps for people who have survived a stroke, battled cancer, been diagnosed with memory loss or dementia, are obese or are living with pain.

Many of the more than 165,000 health apps available aim to help people track their condition day-to-day, stay on track with medication or at-home testing, share information electronically with their care teams and get education and encouragement between doctor appointments.

Nearly all the apps in the study

let people enter information into their phone about their health that day, such as a daily blood sugar or blood pressure level or whether they were feeling suicidal.

But only 28 of these apps reacted appropriately when the reviewers entered a dangerous value — a blood pressure that was sky-high, a super-low blood sugar level or a suicidal mood, for instance.

Even though many apps offered tracking functions, education, reminders and alerts that could be useful in theory to people with chronic illnesses, few of the apps provided tailored guidance on specific actions users should take, the study found.

While apps have the potential to help with health, consumers should still be wary, said Sarah Blenner, a public health researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles, who wasn't involved in the study.

"It's concerning, though not surprising, that the study found that so few apps replied appropriately to problematic information entered into a health app," Blenner said by email. "Many applications lack sufficient and thorough testing for accuracy, exposing consumers to significant risks."

## Summer may be the most fattening time of year for kids

AUSTIN - Children are more likely to become overweight or obese during summer vacation than during the school year, a U.S. study suggests.

The national study of more than 18,000 school children found that from the autumn start of kindergarten to the spring semester of second grade, the prevalence of obesity increased from 8.9 to 11.5 percent. During that same period, the proportion of overweight kids climbed from 23.3 to 28.7 percent.

None of these gains in numbers of obese or overweight kids happened during the school year, however. All of the increases in body mass index (BMI) occurred during summer vacations.

"The structured nature of the school day, with its scheduled exercise periods and limited opportunities to eat, helps students maintain a healthy BMI," said study co-author Paul von Hippel, a health policy researcher at the

University of Texas, Austin.

"By contrast, we speculate that many non-school environments are relatively unstructured and unsupervised, allowing children to indulge in sedentary activities and excessive snacking," von Hippel added by email.

To assess the influence of school attendance on child obesity, the researchers examined data on kids' height and weight at the beginning and end of each academic year from the fall of 2010 until the spring of 2013.

At the start of kindergarten, 23 percent of the children were overweight and 9 percent were obese, they report in the journal *Obesity*.

During each of the two summers in the study, the proportion of overweight and obese kids increased by approximately one percentage point per month.

There were no meaningful increases in the numbers of overweight or obese kids during the

academic year.

This doesn't prove summer vacations cause obesity or that school attendance prevents it, but the findings do suggest major risk factors for putting on too much weight during childhood exist outside of schools, the researchers conclude.

During vacations, risk factors for weight gain include getting less sleep, watching more television and exercising less than during the school year, the researchers speculate.

"When comparing weekends to school days, studies have often reported that children sleep less and have more variable sleep, are less physically active, more sedentary, and consume unhealthier diets on weekends," said Dr. Paul Collings of the Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust in the U.K.

"If summer vacation can be considered a very long weekend, then this will take its toll," Collings, who wasn't involved in the study, added.



Regular use of pain relievers over many years may increase the risk of hearing loss, a recent study suggests.

Hospital in Boston.

Risks of the painkillers in the study go beyond hearing loss and patients should do their best to avoid long-term use, Curhan added by email.

"Even though these medications are sold without requiring a prescription, they do have potential side effects, one of which is a higher risk of hearing loss; they have also been shown to be associated with a higher risk of hypertension (high blood pressure) and other important medical conditions," Curhan said.

"They are generally safe when taken in usual doses for short periods of time," Curhan noted. "However, there should be strong justification for long-term use."

Women in the study who used NSAIDs at least twice a week for six years or more were 10 percent more likely to report hearing loss than participants who used these drugs for less than one year.

With acetaminophen, regular users for at least six years were 9 percent more likely to report defective hearing than short-term users, researchers report in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*.

Researchers didn't find a statistically meaningful association between hearing loss and the duration of aspirin use.

Aspirin has been linked to ringing in the ears in the past, and Vicodin, a painkiller that contains acetaminophen, has been tied to hearing loss with overuse, noted Dr. Jennifer Derebery of the House Ear Clinic and the University of California, Los Angeles.

Ibuprofen is less commonly recognized by the public as a potential cause of hearing damage, Derebery, who wasn't involved in the study, said by email.

Even though the magnitude of increased risk is small for other pain relievers in the study, hearing loss is so common in the population that a slight bump up in risk can translate into a widespread

public health problem, the authors note.

During the study, almost 19,000 women developed hearing loss.

The researchers estimate that about 5.5 percent of these hearing loss cases might be attributable to NSAID or acetaminophen use.

Previous research has found a similar link between painkillers and hearing loss in men, though studies to date have yet to explain how the drugs might impact hearing, said Dr. Wilko Grolman, a researcher at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands who wasn't involved in the study.

"I consider this a confirmation that we need to always be critical when deciding to use any medication including these painkillers," Grolman said by email. "Our hearing is extremely valuable and if possible we should preserve it."

However, the study is observational and doesn't prove these painkillers cause hearing impairment.

"The hearing loss was self-reported and not measured objectively with hearing tests," Dr. David Haynes, a researcher at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville who wasn't involved in the study, said by email.

It's also possible that some of the hearing loss associated with painkillers might be tied to the underlying medical problems people took pain relievers to treat, said Dr. Michael McKee, a researcher at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor who wasn't involved in the study.

For example, people with chronic pain or arthritis are more prone to heart disease and diabetes, both of which are linked to hearing problems, McKee said by email.

"Exercise and physical therapy may be effective ways to manage chronic pain," McKee said. "Protection from excessive noise still remains the best way to reduce your lifetime hearing loss risk."

# One in eight airline pilots may be clinically depressed

By Lisa Rapaport

BOSTON - Hundreds of commercial airline pilots worldwide may be flying with untreated depression because they fear being grounded or losing their jobs, a new survey suggests.

The anonymous survey of about 1,850 pilots from more than 50 countries found that 14 percent of pilots who had worked within the past week had symptoms of depression. Four percent of pilots reported having suicidal thoughts within the past two weeks.

The survey offers one of the first snapshots of mental health among commercial pilots, who often don't disclose this type of illness to airline officials or aviation regulators because they fear negative career repercussions, said senior study author Joseph Allen, a public health researcher at Harvard University in Boston.

"It's understandable that pilots are reluctant to fully disclose mental health issues because of the potential that they will be grounded or declared not fit for duty," Allen told Reuters Health by email.

With roughly 140,000 active pilots flying more than 3 billion

people worldwide each year, the survey results should put the airline industry on notice that many pilots need better access to mental health screening and treatment, Allen added.

The new findings come a year and a half after a Germanwings co-pilot who suffered from depression deliberately crashed a plane into the French Alps, killing 150 people.

Globally, roughly 350 million people suffer from depression. Effective treatments exist, but many people don't get them - often due to stigma.

To get a better picture of mental health among airline pilots, researchers conducted an anonymous online survey between April and December of 2015. Questions touched on a range of topics related to work and health in addition to depression.

Most respondents came from the U.S., Canada and Australia.

Out of nearly 3,500 pilots who participated in the survey, 1,848 completed the questions about mental health. Within this group, 233 (12.6 percent) met the criteria for likely depression and 75 (4.1 percent) reported having suicidal thoughts within the previous two weeks.

Among 1,430 participants who reported working as an airline pilot in the previous seven days at the time of the survey, 193 (13.5 percent) met the criteria for depression.

A greater proportion of male pilots than female pilots reported that "nearly every day" they had experiences of loss of interest, feeling like a failure, trouble concentrating, and thinking they would be "better off dead."

Women were more likely than men to have at least one day of poor mental health during the previous month, and were more likely to have been diagnosed with depression.

The study also found that depression was more likely when pilots took lots of sleep medication and when they experienced sexual or verbal harassment.

Limitations of the study include the lack of medical records or exams to assess mental health symptoms pilots reported in the survey, the authors note.

"The study likely underestimates the amount of depression that exists among pilots, however, it cannot address the severity of the symptoms and the extent of individual impairment," Dr. Joseph Baskin, a psychiatrist at



Hundreds of commercial airline pilots worldwide may be flying with untreated depression because they fear being grounded or losing their jobs, a new survey suggests.

Cleveland Clinic in Ohio who wasn't involved in the study, said by email.

Pilots may not tell their own doctors about feeling depressed because both having this diagnosis and taking antidepressants come with stigma and a fear of being grounded, said Dr. Blake Lollis, an aerospace medicine specialist at Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital in Washington who wasn't involved in the study.

Still, this diagnosis isn't as career-ending as it used to be, Lollis added by email. They may

cleared to fly, for example, while on antidepressants, even if they would be grounded for severe depression accompanied by any psychotic symptoms.

"It is clear that depression is undertreated among pilots," said Dr. Alpo Vuorio, an aviation medicine researcher at the University of Helsinki in Finland who wasn't involved in the study.

"I hope that current discussions after the Germanwings accident has helped pilots to seek help more openly," Vuorio said by email.



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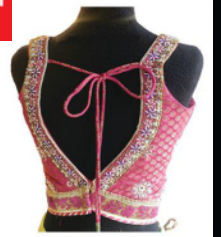
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# Wear a mouthguard, spare a tooth



The best way to avoid athletic dental injuries is to wear a properly fitted mouthguard, according to the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA).

By Will Boggs, MD

The best way to avoid athletic dental injuries is to wear a properly fitted mouthguard, according to the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA).

"While there are several good commercially available mouthguard products, all of them require self-adjustment by the athlete and certain amount of practice to achieve good fit," Dr. Trenton E. Gould from The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg told Reuters Health by email.

"Custom fabricated mouthguards, properly fitted by a dentist, can often help optimize fit and comfort, both of which contribute to enhanced compliant usage," he added.

The National Federation of State High School Associations requires mouthguards in only five sports, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association mandates them in only four sports – but oral and dental injuries account for up to 38 percent of all sport-specific injuries, according to NATA.

In a new position statement, the organization makes 31 recommendations for preventing and managing sport-related dental and oral injuries. While most of advice applies to athletic trainers and

other healthcare professionals, several of the recommendations are relevant for coaches, athletes and parents, too.

The most important have to do with the wear and care of mouthguards, which as Gould said should be properly fitted and worn consistently.

Athletes should examine their mouthguards daily for fit and for any damage, and the mouthguard should be replaced if it is loose or damaged. Especially for younger athletes, the mouthguard should be routinely inspected for fit and retention to accommodate new teeth and growth.

In addition, said Gould, who is one of the authors of the position statement, "Clinicians, athletic trainers, coaches, and parents should have a plan for how to deal with dental trauma." At minimum, he added, an appropriate oral health care specialist should be identified in advance for emergencies.

"Most of the dental injury classifications (including tooth and root fractures) covered in the position statement do not represent a dental emergency," Gould said. "As such, the athlete can be allowed to return to play immediately as pain permits, often with a mouthguard in place to prevent further injury. No additional time loss is

warranted, but the athlete should be referred to a trauma-ready dentist within 24 hours."

In contrast, significant displacement of teeth and tooth loss require immediate removal from participation and referral to a trauma-ready dentist or emergency facility.

While the athletic trainer should know how to handle tooth loss, it's useful for athletes and parents to know what to do with those teeth. Since the single most important factor for optimal healing is putting the tooth back where it came

from, this should be the first objective. The tooth might need to be rinsed gently in cold water, milk, or IV salt solution. After it is replanted, the athlete should bite down on a sterile gauze pad to keep the tooth in place until the dentist can take care of it.

If the tooth can't be replanted immediately, it should be submerged in a special salt solution – or, if that's not available, in cold low-fat milk – for transport. It should not be wrapped in dry gauze or a dry paper towel.

Especially for these more serious

injuries, it's up to the dentist to determine when it's safe for the athlete to return to participation.

"It is critical to have the right sports medicine team including athletic trainers in place to address dental injuries should they occur," Gould said. "Proper prevention and treatment can ensure the right sports safety protocols are in place so that the athlete can return to activity safely and effectively."

The complete set of recommendations and the evidence supporting them appear in the Journal of Athletic Training.

## Lots of teen screen time tied to obesity

By Lisa Rapaport

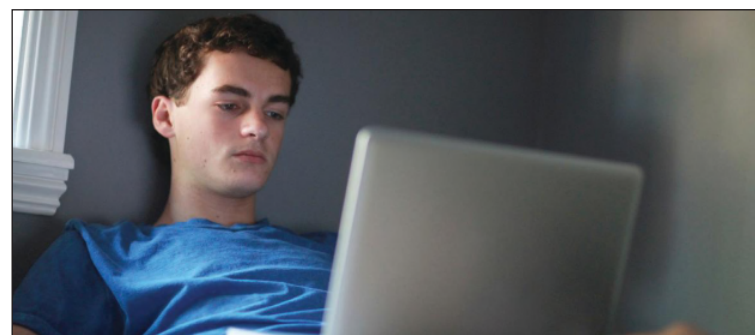
BOSTON - Too much television time has long been linked to childhood obesity, but a U.S. study suggests that the connection holds true for smaller screens too, such as computers, gaming consoles, tablets and smartphones.

With TV, a minimum five-hour-a-day habit increased the odds of obesity by 78% compared with teens who didn't have TV time, the study found. Such heavy use of other screens was tied to a 43% greater risk of obesity, researchers report in the Journal of Pediatrics.

"The landscape has changed so quickly with regards to how much we all use mobile screen devices and computers," said lead study author Dr. Erica Kenney, a public health researcher at Harvard.

"We have known for years now that spending too much time watching television contributes to a higher risk of developing obesity among kids, mostly because watching too much TV can lead to an unhealthy diet," Kenney added by email. "We see similar associations between other screen device use and diet, physical activity, and obesity risk as we've seen in the past for TV."

To assess how screens large and small influence the risk of obesity,



Too much television time has long been linked to childhood obesity, but a U.S. study suggests that the connection holds true for smaller screens too, such as computers, gaming consoles, tablets and smartphones.

researchers looked at nationally representative survey data collected in 2013 and 2015 on 24,800 adolescents in grades 9 to 12.

Nearly 17% of youth said they watched no TV on weekdays, while 7.8% said they watched five hours or more daily.

Nearly one in five teens in the study spent at least five hours a day using smaller screens during the week.

The survey also asked how many sugary drinks teens consumed and inquired about teens' height and weight.

More than 25% of boys and about 20% of girls reported consuming at least one soda or other sugar-sweetened beverage a day.

Approximately two-thirds of boys and three-quarters of girls said they didn't get daily exercise.

Overall, 14% of the teens in the study were obese.

After adjusting for age, sex, race and ethnicity and other time with tiny screens, TV viewing was associated with significantly higher odds of consuming one or more sugary drinks and an increased risk of obesity.

More time with other screens was independently linked to higher odds of insufficient sleep, drinking more sugary beverages and inactivity.

The study can't prove that television or time on smaller screens causes obesity, however.

It's also possible that excessive screen time was caused by obesity, inactivity or fatigue rather than these things being caused by too much time with TVs, smartphones or tablets, the authors note.

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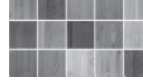
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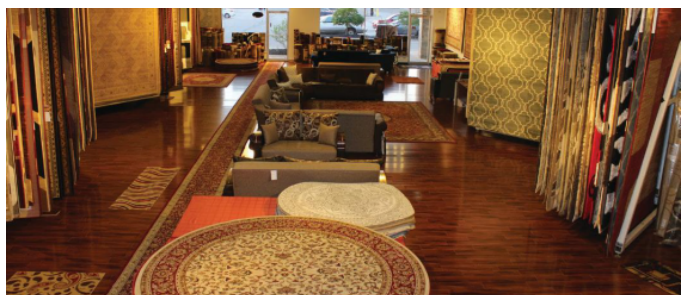


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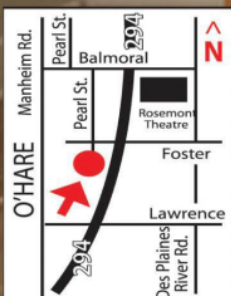
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