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Person Matters


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The finest has gone

RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND HIGH COURT'S EX-CHIEF **JUSTICE SACHAR** IS NO MORE 06

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From Editor's Desk

In the death of Sachar, India has lost a sane voice

EVERY INDIVIDUAL is unique and contributing accordingly to the world. There are few who play major role in making and shaking the world. Many of them are regularly and heavily reported in the media. Others don't get enough limelight. This monthly magazine — Person Matters — is an effort to focus on all such people.

Renowned human rights activist and former Delhi High Court Chief Justice Rajinder Singh Sachar, who passed away on April 20, was a beacon, part of a generation older than independent India which is hard to find. Justice Sachar's principles stood firm and were his guiding light till his last days. He worked tirelessly for movements across the country and became a voice of justice for India's minorities and oppressed.

Justice Sachar delivered a momentous report in 2006 on the status of Muslims in contemporary India. The report — commissioned by the Congress government to ascertain the social, economic and political status of the country's approximately 180 million Muslims — shattered many myths about the Muslim minority. It pointed out that the community fared worse than other groups, as per the social, economic and political development indicators.

It recommended greater allocation of resources and legal protection to them as equal citizens of a democratic state. The report deflated the Congress assertion that it was the protector of the minorities while exposing as false the BJP rhetoric of Muslim appeasement at the expense of Hindus. The report also raised awareness among educated Muslims, igniting a debate and paving the way for community advocacy for equity in the democratic system. His Lordship would be missed.

Self-styled godman Asaram Bapu — who had been in the headlines for the wrong reasons for years now, both before and after his arrest in September 2013 — has also been mentioned in this issue of the magazine. He has finally been awarded life imprisonment till death by the Jodhpur Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Court in a rape case after almost five years.

The scrutiny of documents seized by the police from his ashram in Motera had earlier revealed that the 77-year-old godman has amassed wealth of around Rs10,000 crores, which excluded the market value of vast track of lands that he holds. Such "worldly" godmen and religious personalities not only hurt the religious sentiments of their followers but also tarnish the image of the country.

ICICI Bank CEO and MD Chanda Kochhar, yet another personality, seems to be caught in fresh troubles as news reports are coming up that a firm promoted by her husband Deepak Kochhar received crores of rupees from a Mauritius-based company at a time when it got multi-million dollar loan from a consortium of Indian banks led by ICICI Bank.

All is not gloomy and sad in the country and the world. Telangana's Durishetty Anudeep has topped the UPSC civil services exam 2017. TV presenter-turned-actress Sri Reddy's protest against the exploitation of women in the Tollywood has finally paid off. The Telangana government has decided to form a special cell to look into complaints of sexual abuse.

Hope you will like the present issue and give your feedback too. This will help us in bringing out a better edition for you.

EDITOR@PERSONMATTERS.COM

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Noted rights activist
Rajinder Sachar
passes away at 94



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Social
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Noted rights activist **Rajinder Sachar** passes away at 94



Renowned human rights activist and former Delhi High Court Chief Justice Rajinder Singh Sachar passed away on April 20, 2018, in the capital at the age of 94. "He was undergoing treatment for ailments related to old age," the family friend said about the former judge, who was admitted to Fortis hospital in the capital.

Sachar, who was Chief Justice from August 6, 1985, to December 22, 1985, had since his retirement been associated with the People's Union for Civil Liberties, a rights group. He was the chairperson of a committee set up by the previous UPA government to look at the social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India.

Born on December 22, 1923, Rajinder Sachar was a member of United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. He has served as a counsel for the People's Union for Civil Liberties. He chaired the Sachar Committee, constituted by the Government of India, which submitted a report on the social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India. On 16 August 2011 Sachar was arrested in New Delhi during protests over the detention of Anna Hazare and his supporters.

Rajinder Sachar's father was Bhim Sen Sachar. His grandfather was a well-known criminal lawyer in Lahore. He attended the D.A.V. High School in Lahore, then went on to Government College Lahore and Law College, Lahore.

On 22 April 1952 Sachar enrolled as an advocate at Simla. On 8 December 1960 he became an advocate in the Supreme Court of India, engaging in a wide variety of cases concerning civil, criminal and revenue issues. In 1963 a breakaway group of legislators left the Congress party and formed the independent "Prajantra Party". Sachar helped this group prepare memoranda levelling charges of corruption and mal-administration against Pratap Singh Kairon, Chief Minister of the Indian state of Punjab. Justice Sudhi Ranjan Das was appointed to look into the charges, and in June 1964 found Kairon guilty on eight counts.

On 12 February 1970, Sachar was appointed Additional Judge of the Delhi High Court for a two-year term, and on 12 February 1972 he was reappointed for another two years. On 5 July 1972, he was appointed a permanent Judge of the High Court. He was acting chief justice of the Sikkim High court from 16 May 1975 until 10 May 1976, when he was made a judge in the Rajasthan High Court. The transfer from Sikkim to Rajasthan was made without Sachar's consent during the Emergency (June 1975 – March 1977) when elections and civil liberties were suspended. Sachar was one of the judges that refused to



Rajinder Sachar's father was Bhim Sen Sachar. His grandfather was a well-known criminal lawyer in Lahore. He attended the DAV High School in Lahore, then went on to Government College Lahore and Law College, Lahore

follow the bidding of the Emergency establishment, and who were transferred as a form of punishment. After the restoral of democracy, on 9 July 1977 he was transferred back to the Delhi High Court.

In June 1977 Justice Sachar was appointed by the government to chair a committee that reviewed the Companies Act and the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, submitting an encyclopaedic

report on the subject in August 1978. Sachar's committee recommended a major overhaul of the corporate reporting system, and particularly of the approach to reporting on social impacts. In May 1984 Sachar reviewed the Industrial Disputes Act, including the backlog of cases. His report was scathing. He said "A more horrendous and despairing situation can hardly be imagined... the load at present in the various Labour Courts and Industrial Tribunals is so disproportionate to what can conceivably be borne... that the arrears can only go on increasing if the present state of affairs is not improved... It is harsh and unjust to both the employers and employees if the cases continue to remain undecided for years".

In November 1984, Justice Sachar issued notice to the police on a writ petition filed by Public Union for Democratic Rights on the basis of evidence collected from 1984 Sikh riot victims, asking FIRs to be registered against leaders named in affidavits of victims. However, in the next hearing the case was removed from the Court of Mr. Sachar and brought before two other Judges, who impressed petitioners to withdraw their petition

Social activist



in the national interest, which they declined, then dismissed the petition. Justice Sachar declared much later that his memory is still haunted by the reminiscence of not being able to get FIR registered in these cases.

Sachar was one of the authors of a report issued on 22 April 1990 on behalf of the People's Union for Civil Liberties and others entitled "Report on Kashmir Situation". In January 1992 Sachar was one of the signatories to an appeal to all Punjabis asking them to ensure that the forthcoming elections were free and were seen to be free. They asked the people to ensure there was no violence, coercion or unfair practices that would prevent the people from electing the government of their choice. Sachar was appointed to a high-level Advisory Committee chaired by Chief Justice Aziz Mushabber Ahmadi to review the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 and determine whether structural changes

and amendments were needed. The committee prepared a draft amendment Bill incorporating its recommendations. These included changes to the membership of the National Human Rights Commission, changes to procedures to reduce delays in following up recommendations and a broadening of the commission's scope. The recommendations were submitted to the Home Affairs ministry on 7 March 2000.

In April 2003, as counsel for the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Sachar argued before the Supreme Court of India that the Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act (POTA) should be quashed since it violated fundamental rights. On 24 November 2002 the police arrested twenty six people in the Dharmapuri district of Tamil Nadu, and on 10 January 2003 they were placed under POTA by the government on the grounds that they were members of the Radical Youth League of the

Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). On 26 August 2004, still being held without trial, the detainees began a hunger strike. Sachar led a team of human rights activists who visited them in jail on 15 September 2004 and persuaded them to end the hunger strike. POTA was repealed on 10 November 2004. However, all the POTA provisions were incorporated in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. In October 2009 Sachar called for abolition of these laws. He said "Terrorism is there, I admit, but in the name of terror probe, many innocent people are taken into custody without registering a charge and are being detained for long period".

Sachar, who had formerly been a United Nations special rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, headed a mission that investigated housing rights in Kenya for the Housing and Land Rights Committee of the Habitat International Coalition.

Rajinder Sachar participated with

retired justices Hosbet Suresh and Siraj Mehruz Daud in an investigation by the Indian People's Human Rights Tribunal into a massive slum clearance drive in Mumbai, which had the ostensible purpose of preserving the Sanjay Gandhi National Park. The demolitions on 22-23 January 2000 had been undertaken despite a notification from the state government to stay demolitions until September. The people had not been allowed to take the remains of their homes, which had been burnt. Sachar described the scene as "Barbaric, savage. It's as if a bomb has fallen here". In August 2000 the judges, joined by former Supreme Court judge V. R. Krishna Iyer, held a two-day hearing into the clearances in which about 60,000 people had been evicted. The inquiry covered both legal aspects of the clearances and the human impact.

Sachar headed a People's Court in 2002 to deliberate on people affected by evictions required to widen the Beliaghata Circular Canal in Kolkata, needed for health and safety purposes. Most of the people were poor handcart pullers, maidservants, hawkers and so on. The court called for consultation with the affected people as part of the project's decision-making process. They should be treated humanely, without force or coercion, and should not be evicted during periods of bad weather.

In March 2005 Justice Rajinder Sachar was appointed to a committee to study the condition of the Muslim community in India and to prepare a comprehensive report on their social, economic and educational status. On 17 November 2006 he presented the report, entitled "Report on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India", to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The report showed the growing social and economic insecurity that had been imposed on Muslims since independence sixty years earlier. It found that the Muslim population, estimated at over 138 million in 2001, were under-represented in the civil service, police, military and in

politics. Muslims were more likely to be poor, illiterate, unhealthy and to have trouble with the law than other Indians. Muslims were accused of being against the Indian state, of being terrorists, and politicians who tried to help them risked being accused of "appeasing" them.

The Sachar Committee recommendations aimed to promote inclusion of the diverse communities in India and their equal treatment. It emphasised initiatives that were general rather than specific to any one community.

It was a landmark in the debate on the Muslim question in India. The speed of implementation would naturally depend on political factors including the extent of backlash from Hindutva groups. The Sachar Committee Report recommended setting up an institutional structure for an Equal Opportunity Commission.

An expert group was established that presented a report, including a draft bill to establish such a commission, in February 2008. There was opposition. Thus, a speaker at a seminar in April 2008 sponsored by a group called "Bharatiya Vichar Manch" described the report as unconstitu-

tional, saying "It should be rejected completely. It is on communal lines and will divide the country. It is a result of vote bank politics".

In 2003, as counsel for the Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL), Sachar and Prashant Bhushan challenged the government's plans to privatise Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum. CPIL said that the only way to disinvest in the companies would be to repeal or amend the Acts by which they were nationalised in the 1970s. In December 2009 it was reported that Sachar was being proposed as Governor of West Bengal to replace Gopalkrishna Gandhi, whose term had expired. In the event, Devanand Konwar was appointed acting governor.

At the age of eighty-seven Sachar was detained by Delhi Police on 16 August 2011 during the India Against Corruption protest.

The arrest was for unlawful assembly and for making speeches in a location where a magistrate had declared the Section 144 rules were in force. Sachar claimed that he knew the law and should not be arrested, but despite this he was taken into custody.



Chanda Kochhar banks on borrowed time at ICICI



“ My wife, Chanda Kochhar, managing director and chief executive of ICICI Bank, was not aware of his 50:50 tie-up in 2008 with Videocon group Chairman Venugopal Dhoot”

Deepak Kochhar

Promoter of NuPower Renewables



She was once the sterling example of women breaking the proverbial glass ceiling in corporate India, especially since her appointment as managing director and chief executive officer of ICICI Bank – India’s largest private-sector lender – in 2009.

Currently, however, Chanda Kochhar, her husband Deepak and other members of the family – including her brother-in-law Rajiv Kochhar – stand accused of “helping” the beleaguered Videocon group despite it being in dire financial straits.

Now, ICICI Bank has, since the allegations against the Kochhars and Videocon-owner Venugopal Dhoot surfaced, given Chanda a vote of confidence and labelled the accusations “malicious and unfounded rumours.”

However, several government agencies, including the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Income Tax (I-T) Department, are

The government agencies are currently investigating several allegations levelled against the Kochhar family members and Videocon’s Dhoot

hot on the heels of the Kochhars and Dhoot over what could turn out to be a fresh embarrassment for Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the Nirav Modi scandal involving the state-owned Punjab National Bank.

Allegations

An investigative report alleged in late March that Chanda Kochhar and members of her family may have gained from a Rs 3,250-crore

loan that ICICI Bank under Kochhar sanctioned to the Videocon group of companies in 2012. Videocon failed to pay back around Rs 2,810 crore from that loan, and this was declared a non-performing asset (NPA) in 2017.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) – the country’s central bank – defined an NPA in a 2015 Master Circular as “credit in respect of which interest and/or instalment of principal has remained ‘past due’ for a specific period of time.” That period of time has been two quarters – six months – since 1995.

The government agencies are currently investigating several allegations levelled against the Kochhar family members and Dhoot. Chanda Kochhar herself is accused of not disclosing conflict of interest when the Videocon group received the Rs 3,250-crore loan in 2012.

What has made matters even murkier is something that happened

Banking

a few years even before this hefty loan. Reports have said Deepak and Dhoot set up a company in 2008, and this company received a loan from a Videocon subsidiary. Dhoot resigned from the company within a month, transferring all his shares to Deepak.

ICICI Bank stands by Chanda Kochhar

ICICI Bank, however, has not exactly thrown Kochhar under the bus, despite repeated demands from many corners since the allegations surfaced urging the lender to make her step down.

The bank, in a March 28 statement, seemed to negate the allegations and absolve Kochhar of any wrongdoing. It said: "In 2012, a consortium of over 20 banks and financial institutions sanctioned facilities to the Videocon group (Videocon Industries Ltd and 12 of its subsidiaries/ associates as co-obligors) for a debt consolidation programme and for the group's oil and gas capital expenditure programme aggregating approximately Rs. 40,000 crore."

The bank then claimed: "ICICI Bank's current exposure to the Videocon group is part of this syndicated consortium arrangement. ICICI Bank was not the lead bank for this consortium and the Bank only sanctioned its share of facilities aggregating approximately Rs 3,250 crore which was less than 10 percent of the total consortium facility in April 2012."

The lender also said: "ICICI Bank's share of the banking sector's exposure to the Videocon group was less than 10 percent while around 90 percent of the loans were sanctioned by other banks and financial institutions."

It concluded, after listing out its findings in the statement, that "there is no question of any quid pro quo/ nepotism/conflict of interest" that the reports said was there. "The board has full confidence and reposes full faith in the bank's MD and CEO Chanda Kochhar," it concluded.

Under the scanner

Several government agencies are

currently probing the allegations that have surfaced, and are surging ahead despite ICICI Bank's vote of confidence in Kochhar. In fact, a lookout notice has also been issued against Dhoot and members of the Kochhar family whose names have come up in connection with the allegations, effectively preventing them from leaving the country.

And not without reason. After all,

the likes of scam-accused jeweler Nirav Modi and the former "King of Good Times" Vijay Mallya fled the country before they could be taken into custody and face the consequences of their actions.

The authorities' decision to issue the lookout notice after the CBI registered a preliminary inquiry against Dhoot and Deepak Kochhar seemed to have been with reason, because it

managed to net them Rajiv Kochhar on Thursday, April 5. He was apprehended from the Mumbai airport while trying to get on board a flight bound for a South East Asian country.

Rajiv was subsequently questioned by the CBI for five days. Dhoot and Deepak Kochhar are expected to be next, but the exact date is not known.

Who is Chanda Kochhar?

Born in Jodhpur and brought up in Jaipur, both in Rajasthan, Chanda Kochhar was educated at St Angela Sophia School in the Pink City before she moved to Mumbai for higher studies.

An archived page from the ICICI Bank official website said of her: "Kochhar joined Jai Hind College for a Bachelors Degree in Arts. After

graduating from Jai Hind College in 1982, Kochhar completed her MBA and Cost Accountancy."

It added: "She did her Masters in Management Studies from the Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai. She topped her batch and received the Wockhardt Gold Medal for Excellence in Management Studies. In Cost Accountancy she received the JN Bose Gold Medal for highest marks in that year."

The current page about her on the bank's official website says: "Kochhar began her career with the erstwhile ICICI Limited in 1984 and was elevated to the Board of Directors of ICICI Bank in 2001. She was instrumental in establishing ICICI Bank during the 1990s. She subsequently went on to head the infrastructure finance and corporate banking business at the Bank."

It adds: "In 2000, she took on the challenge of building the nascent retail business, focusing on technology, innovation, process re-engineering and scaling up of distribution and taking the bank to a leadership position in this business. During 2006-07, she led the bank's corporate and international banking businesses during a period of heightened activity and global expansion by Indian companies."

It also says: "From 2007 to 2009, she was the joint managing director & chief financial officer of the bank. This was a critical period which saw rapid change in the global financial landscape. She was elevated as the managing director & CEO of ICICI Bank in 2009 and since then has been responsible for the bank's diverse operations in India and overseas."

Kochhar is also part of the India-Japan Business Leaders Forum, the US-India CEO Forum and the Board of Trade. Kochhar, who was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2011, is also the deputy chairman of the Indian Banks Association (IBA), according to the ICICI Bank official website. However, an official document on the IBA official website lists her as a member of the Managing Committee of the association.



Asaram found guilty in rape case, gets life imprisonment



Asumal Sirumalani Harpalani — known as Asaram Bapu or just Bapuji by his followers — has received life in prison for raping a teenage girl in his ashram five years ago. Special judge Madhusudan Sharmas verdict was read out in the Jodhpur Central Jail where 77-year-old Asaram has been kept for over four years.

The self-styled godman will remain in jail till his natural death, the court pronounced, convicting him under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Juvenile Justice Act. It also imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh on him. The godman's lawyers said they would appeal against the verdict.

In his 453-page judgement, the judge lamented that by his heinous act the godman has "not merely shattered the faith of his devotees in him but has also harmed the reputation of saints among common people".

Born in Sindh province, now in Pakistan, Asaram's family migrated to Ahmedabad after Partition. Starting from a hut on the banks of the Sabarmati, Asaram created a Rs 10,000-crore empire with 400 ashrams in India and other parts of the world in four decades. During these years, he made friends with the powerful and has been seen with politicians from Bharatiya Janata Party as well as Congress, including Narendra Modi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Digvijay Singh.

Bhopal has two places named after Asaram — a road crossing and a bus stand — both located near the godman's ashram near the Raja Bhoj Airport on the city outskirts. The board carrying his name was removed from the bus station soon after the verdict.

Asaram has also courted controversy in recent years with his views on issues such as Valentine's Day and the rape and murder of Nirbhaya in Delhi. In 2013, he had told a gathering



in Rajasthan that Nirbhaya could have avoided being assaulted by the men in the bus she boarded with a friend. "She should have taken God's name and could have held the hand of one of the men and said, I consider you my brother and should have said to the other two, brother, I am helpless, you are my brother, my religious brother," the media had quoted him as saying.

The charge sheet against Asaram and the four other co-accused was filed by the police on November 6, 2013. The teenager had said in her complaint that Asaram had called her to his ashram in Manai area near Jodhpur and raped her on the night of August 15, 2013. He was arrested in Indore and brought to Jodhpur on September 1, 2013. He was under judicial custody since September 2, 2013.

Asaram is also facing a rape case in Surat in Gujarat. He unsuccessfully moved 12 bail applications, of which six were rejected by the trial court, three by the Rajasthan High Court and three by the Supreme Court.

Asaram was mentioned in a list of fake sadhus released by Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad, the apex organisation of Hindu Sants (saints) and Sadhus (ascetics) in India.

Asaram was born on 17 April 1941, in the Berani village of the Nawabshah District in British India (Present-day Berani Town is located in Jam Nawaz Ali Tehsil of District Sanghar Sindh Pakistan), to Menhgiba and Thaumal Sirumalani. His birthname was Asumal Thaumal Harpalani or Asumal Sirumalani.

Following the partition of India

Child abuse



in 1947, he and his family moved to Ahmedabad, then part of the former Bombay State in India, now Gujarat, leaving behind their immovable assets in Sindh. The family moved to Ahmedabad, where Asaram's father founded a coal and wood selling business. Asaram ran this business for a short time after his father's death.

According to Sant Asaram Bapuji ki Jeevan Jhanki, an auto-biography published by his ashram, Asaram received his formal education at Jai Hind High School, up-till class III, when his father died. He had a series of escapades to ashrams which started with running away to an ashram in Bharuch at the age of 15, eight days before his scheduled wedding

to Laxmi Devi, which though finally happened. The book also mentions Lilashah as the spiritual guru, who accepted him as her disciple and named him Asaram on 7 October 1964, in one of his escapades.

Sources have described him to be involved in a variety of professions ranging from selling liquors and tea to repairing cycles, prior to his establishment as a religious leader.

Asaram and Laxmi Devi have two children, son Narayan Sai and daughter Bharti Devi. Their son Narayan Sai works with Asaram and is also mentioned in the Akhada's List of fake religious leaders. Sai is also imprisoned in the same prison awaiting trial.

According to Sant Asaram Bapuji

ki Jeevan Jhanki, Asaram returned to Ahmedabad on 8 July 1971. On 29 January 1972, he built a hut at Motera, then a village on the banks of the Sabarmati. Although his official biography doesn't mention it, Asaram also lived in Motera's Sadashiv Ashram for two years, before setting up his own hut adjacent to it.

He converted his hutment into an ashram in 1973, starting with 5–10 followers. In 1981 and 1992, the Indian National Congress-led state government allotted the ashram 14,515 m² land. In 1997 and 1999, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government allotted it 25,000 m² for expansion. Asaram had few followers in the beginning, but the numbers increased as local

At A **GLANCE**

- ◆ In 1960s, Asumal Harpalani became Asaram Bapu after a guru gave him this name. Soon, Asaram began preaching spiritualism.
- ◆ Almost a decade later, in 1972, Asaram built his first ashram on the banks of Sabarmati river in Gujarat's Motera town.
- ◆ Asaram married Laxmi Devi at the age of 15. The couple has three children including Narain Sai, who is also a rape accused.
- ◆ He had four crore followers worldwide. Except the Northeast, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, Asaram has followers in every Indian state.
- ◆ Asaram has assets worth Rs 2,300 crore. His magazines – Rishiprasad and Lok Kalyan Setu – have over 14 lakh subscriptions.
- ◆ The rape convict was politically well-connected



he began propagating his own brand of Hinduism only after Leelashahji threw him out of his ashram.

He built his first ashram, with about five to ten followers in 1972, in a town called Motera in Gujarat. Eventually, he found more followers in the tribals when he went to Surat. He subsequently went on to open ashrams throughout the state and the country, ran as many as 40 gurukuls (schools), a printing press, and opened businesses for products such as soap, shampoo, medicines, etc. By 2008, his empire was worth Rs 5,000 crore, a chargesheet filed by the police had claimed. Large droves of followers attracted politicians, and the Congress, as well as BJP governments, granted him land for his projects.

Asaram's brand of Hinduism is an amalgamation between a simplified reading of Hindu scriptures along with Tantric practices, which appears

to have included some elements of black magic as well. Reportedly, Asaram's spiritual projected was cut out to suit the needs of the disempowered sections of the Indian population. His popularity was particularly strong among the tribals and the Hindi-speaking population of north India.

The rape cases are not the first time Asaram had gotten into trouble with the law. In 2008, mutilated bodies of two children were recovered from the banks of the Sabarmati river, close to his ashram in Motera. It was found that some vital organs from the bodies were missing. The Gujarat police had booked seven of his followers in 2009 for the murders of the two children. In August 2013, a case was registered by the Delhi Police stating that Asaram had allegedly raped a 16-year-old girl at his ashram in Jodhpur. He was taken into custody on August 31, 2013.

Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswathi dies at 82



Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswathi, the 69th pontiff of the Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt, passed away on February 28 at a private hospital in Kanchipuram. He was 82.

"The 69th Acharya of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam Jagadguru Pujyashri Jayendra Saraswathi Shankaracharya Swamigal attained Siddhi at 9.00 am today (February 28)," said an official release from the Kanchi mutt.

The last rites of Kanchi Shanka-

racharya Jayendra Saraswathi had its share of tense moments when the authorities blocked the view of the proceedings by drawing a curtain, making the crowd restive, the reports said.

Those trying to force their way in were allegedly pushed out by some of the volunteers manning the burial ceremony, they added.

A devotee, K Santhanam, reportedly claimed he was pushed away by

“With his demise we have lost a great saint of present times, who has been a guiding force for the millions. My prayers for the liberated soul”

Arun Jaitley

Finance Minister

some who stood close to the main entrance of the burial site — Brindhavanam annexe — which is a small enclosure.

Soon after the body was brought into the annexe, a curtain was dropped in front of that building cutting the visibility for the devotees waiting outside.

LED screens in and around the venue which till then beamed live visuals of the ceremony like Abhishekam, halted the screening when the rituals shifted to the annexe, leading to resentment among some devotees.

As several followers tried to gradually move forward to get a glimpse through the various entrances to the annexe, it led to a near stampede-like situation. All the three entrances to the annexe were closed by Mutt officials during the final stage of the ceremony.

The 69th head of the Kanchi mutt was the successor of Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi Swamigal. The junior pontiff, Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi will now become the 70th head of the mutt, reports pointed out.

"Deeply anguished by the passing away of Acharya of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam Jagadguru Pujyashri Jayendra Saraswathi Shankaracharya. He will live on in the hearts and minds of lakhs of devotees due to his exemplary service and noblest thoughts. Om Shanti to the departed soul," said Prime Minister Narendra



Modi in a tweet.

"With his demise we have lost a great saint of present times, who has been a guiding force for the millions. My prayers for the liberated soul," tweeted finance minister Arun Jaitley.

Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, deputy CM O. Panneerselvam, opposition leader M.K. Stalin and other senior political leaders condoled the demise of the senior pontiff.

Born as Subramaniam Mahadeva Iyer on 18 July 1935, Jayendra Saraswathi was head of the Kanchi Mutt, a Hindu monastery established by Adi Shankaracharya in the 8th century.

The senior pontiff was arrested in 2004 in connection with the murder

of Sankararaman, a manager at the temple who had levelled several accusations against the Kanchi seers and the mutt. In 2013, he and 22 others were acquitted of the charges.

Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswathi was admitted to a hospital after he complained of breathing problems.

Born Sri Subramaniam on July 18, 1935, Jayendra Saraswathi was head of the Kanchi Mutt or Hindu monastery established by Adi Shankaracharya in the 8th century and had a huge following in South India.

The Mutt runs several schools, eye clinics and hospitals. The junior pontiff Vijayendra Saraswathi will succeed Jayendra Saraswathi.



Harjit Masih escapes death, but 39 others weren't lucky

India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on March 20 confirmed that all the 39 Indians abducted by Islamic State in Iraq's Mosul in 2014 were dead. The total number of Indian captives was, in fact, 40.

Harjit Masih — a native of a village near Punjab's Batala — was able to return alive from the site where incident took place. Giving details of the incident, he said that Indians were working at a factory in Iraq in 2014. "But we were kidnapped by militants and kept hostage for some days," a PTI report quoted him as saying.

On the fateful day, they were made to sit on their knees and the militants then opened fire upon them. "I was fortunate to have survived though a bullet hit my thigh and I fell unconscious," he reportedly said. He, however, managed to return to India after giving a slip to the ISIS militants.

Upon his return, Masih claimed that all the Indians were killed. "I had been saying for the last three years that all 39 Indians had been killed (by ISIS terrorists)," Masih said.

"I had spoken the truth," asserted Masih, resident of village Kala Afghana in Gurdaspur district of Punjab.

His statement came after Swaraj informed the Parliament that all the 39 Indian workers, abducted by ISIS in Iraq nearly three years ago, were killed and their bodies have been recovered.

The senior BJP leader also said that all allegations of government harassing Masih is completely baseless. "It is baseless that Harjit Masih was harassed, he was kept in protective



custody. I had said this in Parliament earlier," said Swaraj.

Masih said they were killed in front of my eyes and I had been saying all these years, wondering why the government was not accepting what he had said earlier.

Among as many as 39 Indians, who had gone to Iraq to earn their livelihood, several were from Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala and Jalandhar in Punjab. Others were from Bihar and Himachal. The

workers were trying to leave Mosul in 2014 when they were intercepted and taken hostage by the ISIS fighters.

In an interview, Masih claimed that four days after the kidnapping incident, all the 40 Indians were asked to kneel down by the terrorists near a railway track. Later, he heard the firing sound of assault rifles and one by one men dropped dead.

Masih claimed he was shot in the leg and pretended to be dead till the terrorists left. He, somehow, managed



to reach an Iraqi Army checkpoint in Erbil, from where he was picked up by the Indian embassy.

Masih further said, was he sent back to India days later, and remained in the custody of security agencies for three months.

Masih told a news channel: "I had never lied, the government was lying." He was quoted saying by Hindustan Times in 2017: "Everything was fine till May of 2014. We enjoyed our work at a factory, though some incidents of firing by IS militants happened in the outer parts of Mosul. But, a month later, they entered the factory and kidnapped all of us."

He said they were shifted to a place he couldn't identify. Stating he somehow survived after receiving a shot in his right leg. He said: "They forced us to sit on our knees, in a row, and opened fire. I received a shot in my right leg and was covered with bodies. I fell unconscious. Next day, when I regained consciousness, I found all my fellow workers dead. After a few days of walking, I managed to reach

a Bangladeshi relief camp and was rushed to hospital. A week later, I returned to India." Masih's statement had been dismissed by the Centre when he had said that his co-workers were all murdered.

He had said: "Why the government is not accepting the reality and giving proper information about the 39 Indians to their kin? If the government says all Indians are safe, why has it not produced any of them in all these three years! Moreover, what will I get by not telling truth."

Masih's story of escape, and then being jailed by Indian authorities on the charges of human trafficking is one compelling tale itself. A native of a village near Punjab's Batala, Masih claimed he had been abducted with the rest of 39 people by ISIS. He further claimed that he saw all of them being shot dead by the abductors, and that he was able to escape unhurt.

In March 2017, Masih was arrested for offenses including human trafficking and cheating. The arrest of Masih,

and one of his relative, Rajbir Masih, came on the directions of Ministry of External Affairs, media reports said.

Masih's sudden arrest came after families of nine of the missing men filed a complaint. The families alleged they had paid Masih and Rajbir sums ranging from Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 2 lakh for visas and jobs abroad. However, Dubai-based Rajbir, who was declared an absconder in the case, told The Indian Express over the phone that the government was making them scapegoats in the matter.

The families questioned how only Masih could have escaped unscathed and alleged that Masih duo had "sold" the men to IS. Reports said Masih was kept under house arrest at a location in Delhi-NCR area. As per a relative, he was given a VIP accommodation by the government in Noida.

In a statement, Swaraj had said in Parliament that Masih was kept in "protective care" of the government because of threat to his life "in view of his escape" from the IS, media reports said.

Sasikala back in jail after attending husband's funeral



VK Sasikala, who is serving a sentence in the assets case, was back in the Bengaluru Parapana Agrahara prison after 10 days of parole. She had been granted on March 20 the emergency parole to attend the funeral of her husband Natarajan M, who died at a private hospital in Chennai.

The parole was sanctioned after her advocates filed an application following her husband's demise. The 15-day parole includes two days of travelling to and from Thanjavur, where the final rites of Natarajan took place, media reports quoted a senior jail official as saying.

Sasikala was instructed not to take part in any political activity or interact with her supporters or the media. She had also been instructed not to travel anywhere outside Arulananda Nagar in Thanjavur and return back to the prison by April 3.

Background

Sasikala, a Tamil Nadu-based politician and a business person, was the general secretary of All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. She was a close aide of J. Jayalalithaa, the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, who headed AIADMK from 1989 until her death in 2016. After Jayalalithaa's death, the party's general council unanimously appointed her as the interim secretary general of AIADMK. She is the aunt of TTV Dhinakaran.

She was arrested along with Jayalalithaa on 7 December 1996 and was remanded to judicial custody for 30 days in connection with the Colour TV scam. During Jayalalithaa's three tenures as Chief Minister, Sasikala was alleged to have laundered huge amounts of wealth amassed by Jayalalitha. On 14 February 2017, a two-bench Supreme Court jury pronounced her guilty and ordered her immediate arrest in a disproportionate-assets case, effectively ending her Chief Ministerial ambitions.

Sasikala was born in a Kallar family from



Thiruthuraiipoondi who later moved to Mannargudi. Her marriage to M. Natarajan was presided over by DMK leader M. Karunanidhi. Her husband, who was a public relations officer in the Government of Tamil Nadu, worked closely with the District Collector of Cuddalore, V. S. Chandralekha, who in turn was very close to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran.

In the early 1980s, M. Natarajan requested V. S. Chandralekha, who was then the District Collector of South Arcot, to introduce his wife Sasikala to Jayalalithaa, who was then the Propaganda Secretary of the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, for recording video of party functions. Sasikala and Jayalalithaa gradually became very close.

On 19 December 2011, Jayalalithaa expelled Sasikala Natarajan and 13 others including Sasikala's husband M. Natarajan, T. T. V. Dhinakaran, their relatives, and Jayalalithaa's disowned foster son V. N. Sudhakaran from the AIADMK.

Jayalalithaa alleged that Sasikala and her family were working against her. The matter was resolved by 31 March 2012, when Sasikala Natarajan was reinstated as a party member after issuing a written apology.

In a meeting held on 29 December 2016 – the first after Jayalalithaa's death on 5 December 2016 – the AIADMK general council unanimously appointed Sasikala as the party's general secretary.

On 5 February 2017, Sasikala was unanimously elected as the AIADMK Legislature Party Leader by a meeting of all the MLAs in the party. Tamil Nadu Governor Ch. Vidyasagar Rao accepted the resignation of Chief Minister O Panneerselvam on 6 February 2017, and instructed him to continue to function as acting Chief Minister "until alternate arrangements are made".

On 14 February 2017, the Supreme Court of India found Sasikala and her co-accused — Ilavarasi (her sister-in-law) and V. N. Sudhakaran (her nephew) — guilty of conspiring, laun-

dering and amassing illicit wealth worth about ₹66.44 crore (equivalent to ₹259 crore or US\$40 million in 2017) in the 1990s in a criminal conspiracy with Jayalalithaa.

The three were sentenced to a four-year jail term. This restored in toto her earlier conviction in the case delivered on 27 September 2014, awarding a four-year jail term to her and her relatives, in addition to imposing a fine of 10 crore (US\$1.5 million) each.

The judgment stipulated that she and her accomplices would serve an additional 12 months in prison if they failed to pay the fine.

The Supreme Court refused her plea to surrender after a fortnight and to be allowed to have food from home, so Sasikala and Ilavarasi, but not Sudhakaran, presented themselves for imprisonment on 15 February 2017.

Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma has announced that he is planning a film covering Sasikala's early life and the things she did to gain entry into Tamil Nadu politics.



Meet **Aishwarya Rai** who will marry **Lalu's son Tej Pratap**

A lot of people did a double take when news emerged that Aishwarya Rai was going to marry Lalu Prasad's eldest son Tej Pratap Yadav. Some even asked: Was the beauty queen-turned-actress leaving Abhishek Bachchan and turning cougar? And then it came to light that this was an entirely different Aishwarya Rai, a namesake who had a completely different claim to fame.

Here's everything you need to know about this Aishwarya Rai:

- ◆ Aishwarya Rai is 25 years old and the daughter of former Bihar chief minister Daroga Prasad Rai, who ruled the state in the 1970s.
- ◆ Her father Chandrika Prasad Rai, who was elected to the Bihar Assembly six times, also served a Cabinet-rank minister at the state level.
- ◆ Her nickname is Jhipsi, which is also a local term for a light name or drizzle. She was apparently given the name

- because it drizzled on the day she was born.
- ◆ She is the eldest of three siblings. She has a sister named Ayushi and a brother named Apurva.
- ◆ Aishwarya, who hails from Chhapra, did her schooling from the Notre Dame Academy in Patna.
- ◆ She obtained a degree in History from the prestigious Miranda House college under Delhi University.
- ◆ Aishwarya then earned an MBA degree from Amity University. This has been one point where haters seem to be needling Tej Pratap Yadav, who reportedly dropped out of school to pursue a career in active and electoral politics.
- ◆ Aishwarya and Tej Pratap's match was reportedly fixed by his mother Rabri Devi – herself a former chief minister of Bihar.
- ◆ Their engagement is taking place on April 12, while the wedding ceremony is sched-



- uled for May 12. Both will have been organised in Patna.
- ◆ Although Aishwarya comes from a political family, her entry into politics – a la Dimple Yadav, wife of Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, in Uttar Pradesh – has been ruled out.



Good luck charm?

Aishwarya may be viewed by Lalu and clan as bringing good luck and cheer. After all, they have been haunted by a number of allegations, convictions and political setbacks in recent times. For example, Lalu himself was – between December 23, 2017, and March 24, 2018 – convicted in three different cases pertaining to the fodder scam. This was in addition to the 2013 conviction in a case pertaining to the same scam. This has effectively

rendered him unable to contest elections, but he continues to be chief of the Rashtriya Janata Dal. Meanwhile, Lalu's daughter Misa Bharti – along with husband Shailesh Kumar and mother Rabri Devi – is under the scanner of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money-laundering case. She and Kumar are currently out on bail.

Tej Pratap himself suffered a setback last year when the Janata Dal-United (JD-U), led by current Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, decided to end its coalition with the RJD and the Congress and seek support for its alliance government from the BJP. The move meant Tej Pratap would no more be the state health minister – a portfolio he held at the time when this change in guards happened – and his brother Tejashwi Yadav would lose the post of deputy chief minister.



Ruby Sahota

helps ease spouse reunion in CANADA

Ruby Sahota, Member of Parliament for Canada's Brampton North, recently said that the process of spouse sponsorship by the Government of Canada had significantly improved over the past year, helping Canadians and permanent residents to reunite faster with their spouses.

"When I opened my office in Brampton North, I had constituents waiting over two years to be reunited with their spouse. I am proud to have been able to raise this concern in Ottawa and work with the Minister and the Government to improve the process and reunite spouses faster under a more efficient and easier to navigate process," Ruby was quoted as saying by India Blooms.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) had announced in Dec 2016 that the backlog of spousal applicants would be reduced by 80 percent and shorten processing times to 12 months.

IRCC also announced that sponsorship application process would reportedly become more efficient and easier to navigate.

More than 80 percent of applications in the global spousal sponsorship backlog on Dec. 2016 have now received final decisions for their



applications. IRCC has also reportedly been successful in reducing the spousal inventory from 75,000 applications to 15,000 as of Dec 31, 2017, reports said.

Ruby Sahota, a senior member of a delegation led by Canadian PM Justin Trudeau, had earlier said the main aim of the ensuing visit was to strengthen bonds among people of the two countries, besides promoting cultural exchange.

"We are glad that our Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had fixed top priority for strengthening ties among citizens of both countries having multiracial population," she was quoted as saying by The Tribune.

Ruby has cautioned that Punjabi youths should not fall prey to sinister designs of fraudulent travel agents. She also warned against organising marriages in haste in expectation of greener pastures abroad.

Narrating incidents from her own life, Ruby Sahota maintained that persistent and intensive labour was the only key to success at levels in Canada and other western countries.

About Ruby Sahota

She is a Canadian Liberal politician who was elected as a Member of Parliament in the House of Commons of Canada to represent the federal riding Brampton North during the 2015 Canadian federal election.

Ruby was born in Toronto after her parents arrived in Canada in the late 1970s, and was raised in Brampton. Her father previously was the Chairman of the Ontario Sikhs and Gurdwara Council.

She attended the Brampton's Central Peel Secondary School (1993-8), and then graduated with an Honours bachelor's degree in Political Science and Peace Studies at McMaster University (1998-2003) before attending Western Michigan University Cooley Law School.

Ruby practiced law for five years

prior to her election to the House of Commons. Sahota sought the Liberal nomination for the newly created riding of Brampton North, winning it on March 1, 2015.

The general election campaign involved some controversy, as Ruby's campaign criticized leaflets circulated by her opponent, Conservative incumbent Parm Gill, which it was alleged were deliberately aimed at confusing Sahota with previous Liberal Party MP Ruby Dhalla. She defeated Gill to win the election.

Once elected, Ruby Sahota was appointed to both the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. She was subsequently named to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. On February 1, 2017, she was elected Chair of the Federal Liberal Ontario Caucus by her peers. As Caucus Chair, she presides over meetings, lead discussion and act as an important link between Ontario Liberal MPs and the Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet.

She is married to Dr. Tejinder Sahota, and has a son named Nihal.



Ruby Sahota with Tehelka's printer and publisher Swinder Bajwa



NLP coach **Yashica** on a mission to empower people through her programs

Yashica Jalhotra, who lives in New Delhi has helped people around the world transform their health, relationships and financial status through her columns, videos, workshops, live events, personal coaching and Whatsapp programs.



Yashica Jalhotra — a renowned NLP practitioner, a motivational speaker, a personal happiness coach, columnist and founder of Quantum of happiness — strongly believes in the power of human mind and women empowerment.

The woman, always full of opportunities, fun and enthusiasm has set her own niche as an NLP trainer and Law of Attraction coach in India. Her determination to excel in whatever she does has made her what she has become today in this male-dominated industry.

Being a journalist for past 15 years, the coach believes that every human being has a purpose in life. Some people realise the purpose early, some realize it in last years of their lives and some never realize it at all.

While she has reached the masses in India and abroad to help them get rid of diseases, fears, stress and negative over thinking loops, Yashica also wants to equip each one of them with super powerful and highly useful tools of human excellence- NLP, Law of Attraction and Meditation, which she believes are the shortcut to success, money and confidence.

Being a woman of substance, she believes “What you thinketh you become” The personal coach, famous for creating a whole new mindset towards life has helped thousands of people manifest their desires.

Also called as ‘life savior’ – the name given by some of her clients

since she made a shift in their lives and helped them cut thoughts of suicidal attempts.

Through her programs, Yashica keeps on adding people in the Unstoppable League.

She has an amazing ability to overcome all hurdles and challenges. Hardships of her life had made her even stronger and when the tough time comes, she keeps on moving on her track with just two things — The Unshakable Belief in her Capabilities and Trust in the Universe.

Being an NLP coach, she helps people tap their own subconscious mind to achieve highest levels of health and success in their lives. She help people get rid of any fear/phobia, painful memories, addictions like smoking, nail-biting, mobile etc; psychosomatic diseases like BP, diabetes, migraine



and stress so that they live the life they deserve- a happy, confident and content life.

She is a ray of hope to trust and to endure as she can erase subconscious patterns of failure, depression and anxiety and re-imprint patterns of wellness, confidence, happiness and positivity in you. She will help you feel your worries, sorrow, and pain leaving you and flowing in the air.

Her program has benefited many students, job seekers, businessmen, housewives and individuals.

“I got rid of chronic back pain in just one subconscious re-imprinting

session of Yashica. Now I can easily bend and move around with ease. I am so thankful to her,” said Sarabjit Singh (one of her client)

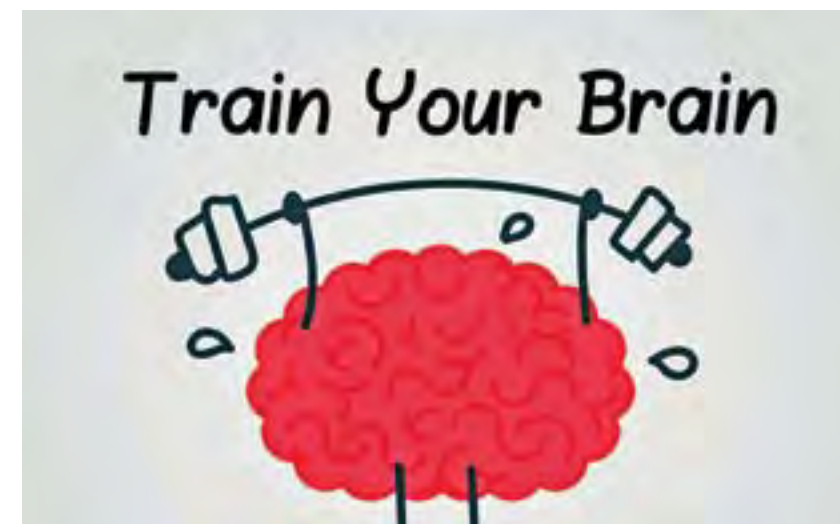
Yashica is healing people with Neuro-Linguistic Programming that can direct the human mind towards growth, prosperity, money, happiness and desired relationships.

Being a Law of Attraction expert she has helped many people manifest their desired life. Her workshops and sessions combine very deep and relaxed meditations, scientific tools & techniques and many other proven processes and applications. Her participants have manifested dreams homes, career and jobs of their choices.

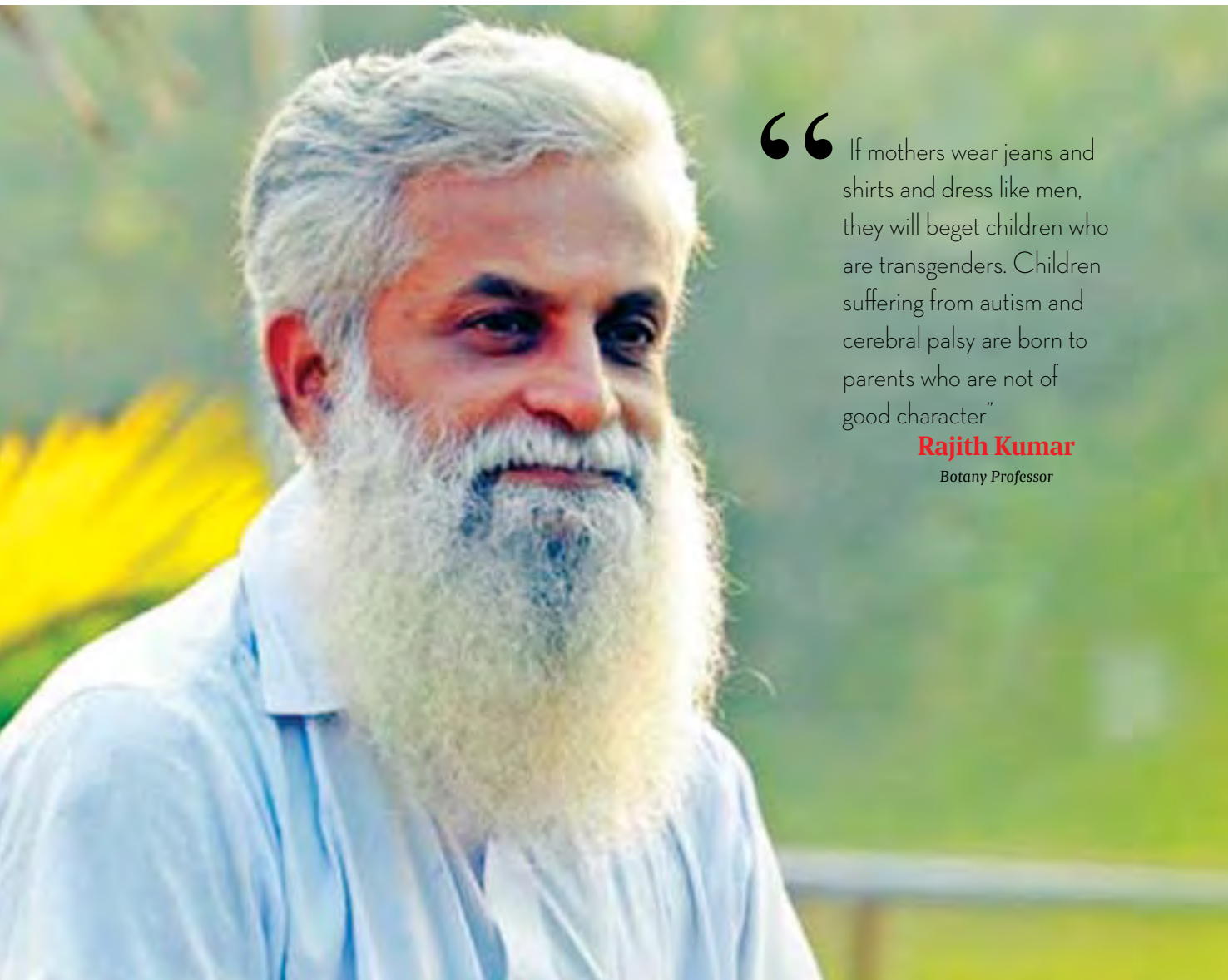
“Time had never been a problem with me,” says the multitasker Yashica.

“We all have 24 hours. If Bill Gates and Tony Robbins can excel within this time frame why can’t we,” she adds.

“Time never limits me or stops me to do what I want to do. I have programmed myself in such a way that I easily spare quality time for my family, coachings, mentoring people, networking, workshops, writings and for myself. I love my work and that keeps me motivated to do more and more,” replies Yashica when asked how she performs so many roles in a day.



Botany professor ridicules jeans-wearing women



“If mothers wear jeans and shirts and dress like men, they will beget children who are transgenders. Children suffering from autism and cerebral palsy are born to parents who are not of good character”

Rajith Kumar
Botany Professor

Rajith Kumar, a Botany professor at the a Botany professor at Sree Sankara Sanskrit University in Kalady district of South Indian state of Kerala, has raked up a fresh controversy with his remarks that women who dress like men end up “giving birth to transgenders.”

“Women who wear jeans and shirts and dress like men, give birth to children called transgender. There are over six lakh transgenders in Kerala,” he said during an awareness class for students in Kerala’s Kasaragod.

He also added that only those couples give birth to “good children” who “live their lives as men and women.” He also said that children of parents who are not of good character turn out to be “autistic and suffer from cerebral palsy.”

The Kerala government said it planned to initiate legal action against the professor, Rajit Kumar, and bar him from government-sponsored awareness classes in schools and colleges.

“Rajith Kumar has not withdrawn his controversial statements so far. The government is mulling initiating legal action against him,” Health Minister K K Shylaja said in a statement.

Media reports suggest that this is not the first time that the professor’s remarks have created an outrage. Earlier, he had made disparaging remarks against girl students while addressing them at a women’s college in the state capital Thiruvananthapuram, following which a student had booed him and walked out in protest.

Earlier, he had made disparaging remarks against girl students while addressing them at a women’s college in the state capital, following which a student had booed him and walked out in protest.

“If mothers wear jeans and shirts and dress like men, they will beget children who are transgenders. Children suffering from autism and cerebral palsy are born to parents who are not of good character,” Kumar had said.



Background

Dr. Rajith Kumar — a controversial Indian teacher and activist — He was born in Attingal, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, South India. He is a writer in Malayalam who had repeatedly caused controversies with his pseudoscience beliefs. Recently Kerala government has banned him from all the social awareness programmes. He is also controversial for his misogynistic views on women.

The government of Kerala denounced Rajith Kumar for his “misogynist and gender insensitive” messages to society. Minister

for Health and Social Welfare K.K. Shylaja said the State would initiate legal action against him and keep him away from government programmes.

Rajith Kumar had cast himself in the centre of a controversy last week after having allegedly opined on live television that women sporting ‘men’s wear’ risked giving birth to transgender children.

He also allegedly linked autism and cerebral palsy in children to parents who were rebellious and nonconformist in dress code and social conduct.

Renowned physicist, cosmologist Stephen Hawking passes away



World-renowned theoretical physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking, best known for his work on black holes, died on March 14 after complications due to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a progressive neurodegenerative disease. He was 76.

Hawking was born on 8th January 1942 — exactly 300 years after the death of Galileo — in Oxford, England. His parents' house was in north London but during the second world war Oxford was considered a safer place to have babies. When he was eight his family moved to St. Albans, a town about 20 miles north of London. At the age of eleven, Stephen went to St. Albans School and then on to University College, Oxford (1952); his father's

old college.

Stephen wanted to study mathematics although his father would have preferred medicine. Mathematics was not available at University College, so he pursued physics instead. After three years and not very much work, he was awarded a first class honours degree in natural science.

In October 1962, Stephen arrived at the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics (DAMTP) at the University of Cambridge to do research in cosmology, there being no-one working in that area in Oxford at the time. His supervisor was Dennis Sciama, although he had hoped to get Fred Hoyle who was working in Cambridge. After gaining his PhD (1965) with his thesis titled 'Properties of Expanding Universes', he became, first, a research fellow (1965) then Fellow for Distinction in Science (1969) at Gonville & Caius college. In 1966 he won the Adams Prize for his essay 'Singularities and the Geometry of Space-time'. Stephen moved to the Institute of Astronomy (1968), later moving back to DAMTP (1973), employed as a research assistant, and published his first academic book, *The Large Scale Structure of Space-Time*, with George Ellis. During the next few years, Stephen was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (1974) and Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Scholar at the California Institute of Technology (1974). He became a Reader in Gravitational Physics at DAMTP (1975), progressing to Professor of Gravitational Physics (1977). He then held the position of Lucasian Professor of Mathematics (1979-2009). The chair was founded in 1663 with money left in the will of the Reverend Henry Lucas who had been the Member of Parliament for the University. It was first held by Isaac Barrow and then in 1669 by Isaac Newton. Stephen is currently the Dennis Stanton Avery and Sally Tsui Wong-Avery Director of Research at DAMTP.

Professor Stephen Hawking has worked on the basic laws which govern the universe. With Roger Penrose he showed that Einstein's general theory of relativity implied space and time would have a beginning in the Big Bang and an end in black holes (1970).

These results indicated that it was necessary to unify general relativity with quantum theory, the other great scientific development of the first half of the 20th century. One consequence of such a unification that he discovered was that black holes should not be completely black, but rather should emit 'Hawking' radiation and eventually evaporate and disappear (1974). Another conjecture is that the universe has no edge or boundary in imaginary time. This would imply that the way the universe began was completely determined by the laws of science. Recently Stephen has been working with colleagues on a possible resolution to the black hole information paradox, where debate centres around the conservation of information.

His many publications include *The Large Scale Structure of Spacetime* with G F R Ellis, *General Relativity: An Einstein Centenary Survey*, with W Israel, and *300 Years of Gravitation*, with W Israel. Among the popular books Stephen Hawking has published are his best seller *A Brief History of Time*, *Black Holes and Baby Universes and Other Essays*, *The Universe in a Nutshell*, *The Grand Design* and *My Brief History*.

Professor Stephen Hawking has thirteen honorary degrees. He was awarded CBE (1982), Companion of Honour (1989) and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2009). He is the recipient of many awards, medals and prizes, most notably the Fundamental Physics prize (2013), Copley Medal (2006) and the Wolf Foundation prize (1988). He is a Fellow of the Royal Society and a member of the US National Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

In 1963 Stephen was diagnosed with ALS, a form of Motor Neurone Disease, shortly after his 21st birthday. In spite of being wheelchair-bound and dependent on a computerised voice system for communication Stephen continues to combine family life (he has three children and three grandchildren) with his research into theoretical physics, in addition to an extensive programme of travel and public lectures. He still hopes to make it into space one day.

Bollywood's female superstar Sridevi laid to rest



Bollywood's first female superstar Sridevi — who mesmerised the Indian audience with films like Chandni, Lamhe, Chaalbaaz, Mr.India and Sadma among others — was laid to rest with full state honours in Mumbai.

The funeral and last rites of Sridevi, who passed away in Dubai on February 24, were held at Vile Parle Seva Samaj Crematorium and Hindu Cemetery, Next to Pawan Hans, SV Road, Vile Parle West.

A day after her death, Dubai Police had said Sridevi died of accidental drowning in her hotel

bathtub after losing consciousness. Later the case was transferred to the Dubai Public Prosecution. On February 27, Vipul, the Consul General of India, confirmed that Dubai Police has closed Sridevi's case after a thorough investigation. The mortal remains of the actor were brought back to India late on Tuesday night on a chartered flight.

Sridevi Kapoor — born on 13 August 1963, was daughter of Ayyapan Naidu[8] and Rajeswari was an Indian actress and film producer who starred in Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Malayalam, and Kannada films. Regarded as Hindi cinema's first "female superstar", she was the recipient of two Filmfare Awards and three Filmfare Awards South. Sridevi ranked among the highest-paid actors in the 1980s and 1990s and is considered to be one of the most popular actresses of Indian cinema.

Sridevi made her debut as child artiste with the 1967 Tamil film Kandan Karunai at the age of 4, and started her acting career in lead role as a child with M. A. Thirumugam's 1969 devotional Tamil film Thunaivan and continued to act as a child artist in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada films. She made her Bollywood debut as a child artist in Rani Mera Naam (1972) and played her first adult

role at age 13 with the Tamil film Moondru Mudichu (1976). Sridevi established herself as one of the leading actresses of Tamil and Telugu cinema, with leading roles in 16 Vayathinile (1977), Sigappu Rojakkal (1978), Varumayin Niram Sivappu (1980), Meendum Kokila (1981), Premabhishekam (1981), Moondram Pirai (1982), Aakhari Poratam (1988), Jagadeka Veerudu Atiloka Sundari (1990) and Kshana Kshanam (1991).

ridevi's first starring role in Hindi



cinema came with the 1979 drama film Solva Sawan, and gained wide attention with the 1983 production

Himmatwala. She went on appear in a series of commercially successful films, including Mawaali (1983),

Tohfa (1984), Naya Kadam (1984), Maqсад (1984), Masterji (1985), Nazrana (1987), Mr. India (1987), Waqt Ki Awaz (1988) and Chandni (1989). She also received praise for such films as Sadma (1983), Nagina (1986), Chaal-Baaz (1989), Lamhe (1991), Khuda Gawah (1992), Gumrah (1993), Laadla (1994) and Judaai (1997). Following the role of the titular protagonist in the television sitcom Malini Iyer (2004–2005), Sridevi returned to film acting in 2012 with the successful comedy-drama English Vinglish. She then starred in her 300th film role in the 2017 thriller Mom. She earned critical acclaim for her performances in both films.

In 2013, the Government of India awarded Sridevi the Padma Shri, the country's fourth highest civilian accolade for her contributions to the entertainment industry. Honorary awards were also conferred on her by the state governments of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Sridevi was also voted 'India's Greatest Actress in 100 Years' in a CNN-IBN national poll conducted in 2013 on the occasion of the centenary of Indian cinema. She was married to the film producer Boney Kapoor, with whom she had two children. Sridevi died on 24 February 2018 in Dubai.



Irrfan Khan starts treatment of neuroendocrine tumour



"Life is under no obligation to give us what we expect". - Margaret Mitchell

The unexpected makes us grow, which is what the past few days have been about. Learning that I have been diagnosed with NeuroEndocrine Tumour as of now has admittedly been difficult, but the love and strength of those around me and that I found within me has brought me to a place of hope. The journey of this is taking me out of the country, and I request everyone to continue sending their wishes. As for the rumours that were floated NEURO is not always about the brain and googling is the easiest way to do research :-). To those who waited for my words, I hope to be back with more stories to tell.

-Irrfan

The rare illness affects the cells that release hormones into the bloodstream. Khan did not give any further details of his condition. He had tweeted on March 6 that he was suffering from a "rare disease" but did not say what it was.

Khan, 51, has acted in more than 100 films including Bollywood hits Piku, Maqbool, Haasil and Paan Singh Tomar. His English language films include Life Of Pi, Jurassic World, Slumdog Millionaire and The Amazing Spider-Man.

Film critics, contemporaries and other experts consider Sahabzade Irfan Ali Khan — who was born on January 7, 1967 — to be one of the finest actors in Indian cinema for his versatile and natural acting. Marked his screen debut in 1988 with the Academy Award nominated Salaam Bombay!, Khan received the Padma Shri (2011), India's fourth highest civilian honour for his contribution to the field of arts.

Khan has garnered the National Film Award for Best Actor in the 60th National Film Awards 2012 and a Filmfare Critics Award for Best Actor for his performance in Paan Singh Tomar.

The actor has won the 2014 Asian Film Award for Best Actor, three International Indian Film Academy



Awards, three Filmfare Awards, an Independent Spirit Award nomination, and various international honours. He also hosted a television show and commercials.

Khan is featured in more than fifty Indian films, and other international works such as The Namesake, The Darjeeling Limited, the Academy Award winner Slumdog Millionaire, Life of Pi, New York, I Love You, The Amazing Spider-Man, Jurassic World, and Inferno.

In September 2015, he was appointed as the brand ambassador for "Resurgent Rajasthan", a campaign by the state government of Rajasthan. In

the year 2017, his solo lead film Hindi Medium became a super hit at the box office, garnered significant praise from critics, and earned Khan the 2017 Filmfare Award for Best Actor for the role.

Khan was born in Jaipur, Rajasthan, to a Muslim Pathan family. His mother Begum Khan was from the Tonk Hakim family, and his father, the late Jagirdar Khan, was from the Khajuriya village near the Tonk district, and ran a tire business. Khan was studying for his MA degree when he earned a scholarship to study at National School of Drama (NSD) in New Delhi in 1984.

Gilu's breastfeeding photo invites row, lawsuit

“Because we get so easily ashamed of our bodies, rape victims are continued to be shamed more than the perpetrators themselves. People would probably have no problems seeing graphic images of people getting killed in newspapers and television, but cannot bear to see a woman bond with her child by feeding it.”



It was supposed to be something meant to change society's mindset around breastfeeding. Instead, Gilu Joseph and her photo on the cover of Malayalam magazine Grihalakshmi are at the centre of not only a controversy but also a lawsuit that accuses her and the publication of promoting “indecent” in an effort to drive up magazine sales.

And that is just one aspect of the entire row that has erupted as a result of the campaign. One of the biggest aspects of the entire controversy is Gilu being depicted as a Hindu mother on the magazine cover when she is neither.

What is the controversy?

It all started when Grihalakshmi – a magazine that functions under the aegis of noted Malayalam-language newspaper Mathrubhumi – published its March 1 issue with Gilu Joseph on its cover. The cover picture shows Joseph breastfeeding an infant.

It wrote on its Twitter handle: “Grihalakshmi March 1st Issue is out, which speaks about the importance of breastfeeding, and the taboos revolving around it. [sic]”

Joseph herself said about the cover and the message behind it: “Because we get so easily ashamed of our bodies, rape victims are continued to be shamed more than the perpetrators themselves. People would probably have no problems seeing graphic images of people getting killed in newspapers and television, but cannot bear to see a woman bond with her child by feeding it.”

The cover and the story surrounding it received quite a bit of praise, with even the official Twitter handle of Unicef India tweeting it out. Even common Twitter users seemed to be showing their support, as they talked about how women should not be stared at or otherwise made uncomfortable when they are breastfeeding their babies.

However, controversy erupted when people started objecting to the cover because Gilu was neither married nor a mother, and therefore – they felt – the cover was a misrepresentation of sorts. Some even

pointed out the vermilion and the mangal sutra – which Gilu Joseph is seen sporting on the cover – seem to present her as a Hindu woman, when in real life she is actually a Christian.

Things took an even uglier turn when an advocate sued Gilu and the magazine claiming that they were promoting indecency with the cover, and that it was all in an effort to increase the sales of the periodical publication.

Who is Gilu Joseph?

Born in the Idukki district of Kerala in 1990, she is one among the three daughters of Joseph SJ and Annakutty Joseph. She moved to Dubai at the age of 18 and currently lives there.

While her move to Dubai was so that she could work in airline hospitality with Fly Dubai, she has since taken to many other professions in a more glamorous way. For example, she is not only a model but also an actress who has so far been seen in small roles in a handful of Malayalam films including the critically and commercially successful Jacobinte Swargarajyam.

She is also an award-winning poet, and has used that talent to write the lyrics for a few Malayalam films, including the aforementioned Jacobinte Swargarajyam and the Jayaram-starrer 2017 film Sathya.

Having been publicly trolled and slut-shamed,

she had this to say to her haters and those who claimed that the entire thing was a publicity stunt: “I have not earned a single penny out of it and I have been mostly receiving abuses from people. Till yesterday, they were referring to me as a poet and now they are calling me a slut, prostitute. How is this publicity at all?”

As for those expressing outrage at she being portrayed as a Hindu married woman on the cover, she said: “I like wearing a bindi and sindoor. Tomorrow, if I were to get married, despite belonging to a Christian religious household, I will probably wear sindoor again, because I would choose to do so.”



Why did **Sri Reddy** stage topless protest?



They are calling it the #MeToo movement of India. And it has been started by a Telugu actress called Sri Reddy who began by first protesting against the inclusion of what she thought was too many North Indian actresses in the Telugu-language film industry – popularly called Tollywood – and then on Saturday, April 7, sat topless outside the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce in Hyderabad in protest against the casting couch.

For those wondering, casting couch is the alleged practice in film industries where filmmakers and actors are said to exploit aspiring and even established actresses – often sexually – for favours such as giving them starring roles.

While almost all actors and filmmakers – directors and producers – categorically deny the existence of anything called casting couch, Reddy has made some explosive revelations, claiming that not only did one filmmaker proposition her and send her lewd messages over the phone, but a filmmaker's son even forced her to have sex multiple times!

The allegations and the protest

The entire brouhaha started in early March when Rakul Preet Singh, who has been one of the most prominent faces of Tollywood, said at a meeting of the Movie Artists Association (MAA) that neither had she faced any discrimination within the industry, nor did the casting couch exist in Tollywood.

Sri Reddy was one of the two

actresses who condemned Rakul Preet's remarks, saying the latter should have spoken the Truth. Sri also said she could make public the names of directors allegedly forcing actresses onto the casting couch. She even said 90 percent of the actresses in Tollywood had been subjected to the casting couch. She also hinted at some big-ticket filmmakers who she claimed were into this practice.

This led a Tollywood director named Sekhar Kammula to threaten legal action against her, because she seemed to be hinting at him. After his threat, she actually came out and accused him of sexual exploitation.

As the storm swirled, Sri took things a step further by staging a protest outside the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce in Hyderabad on Friday. She arrived at the location in a salwar kameez, but shed them and her inhibitions in front of the camera to sit down wearing just a pair of shorts and her hands covering her modesty.

Who is Sri Reddy?

Sri Reddy is an aspiring actress in Tollywood, the Telugu language film industry that gave the world the two Baahubali films.

Born in 1983, she has been seen a few films, and is best known for her performance in the 2013 horror film Aravind 2.

She has claimed that filmmakers in Tollywood have a penchant for casting actresses from North India. "For the last 10-15 years, we are only watching North Indian girls as the heroine. Why not Telugu girls? A lot of people are saying that these North Indian girls who are coming from the other states, they will give them sexual favours and all. That's the reason people are showing interest towards these North or other state women. That is the only reason they are getting roles; because they are flexible to everything, and Telugu women are not," she said in an interview with India Today.

Interestingly, actresses like Rakul Preet Singh, Charmy Kaur, Kaajal Aggarwal, Shriya Saran, Hansika Mot-

wani and Baahubali-star Tamannaah Bhatia are all of North-Indian origin, but have made a name for themselves in South Indian cinema, and mostly through Telugu films.

Sri has also claimed that a producer's son sexually exploited her on several occasions. "He used to take me to the studio and he used to f**k me. He is the son of a top producer who is ruling the Telugu film industry. He used to force sex (on me). He would ask me to come to the studio and I said I will go only to talk, not for any sexual act. But after going there, he used to force (me to have) sex," she was quoted as saying by India Today in the aforementioned interview.

She added: "Studios are the safest place to use for sex. Big directors, producers and heroes use studios as brothels. It's like a red-light area. And it is the safest place because no one will come inside; police also will not check, and the government is not taking this as a big issue."

She also said: "I have faced a lot of problems with directors and producers. They have called me directly for nude video chats and nude photos. They asked me directly and I have sent, I have proofs also. But still, they are not giving us Telugu people chance."



Meet the man who wrote Priya Varrier's viral Malayalam song



The Thrissur native, 62, also claimed that he has not charged any fee to the makers of Malayalam romantic comedy Oru Adyaar Love in exchange for the rights to re-mix of his composition either.

"I will never agree to sell my art for money. I have been the biggest fan of music and I scribble songs that come to my head in between selling things to my customers. I can never put a price to my songs," said Jabbar, who has lived as a grocer in Qatar and

Saudi Arabia for the last thirty years. In his downtime, he also teaches Arabic to children, but shirks from asking money in return.

"Even if they extend money, I turn it down because I don't feel comfortable demanding money to sell knowledge or art. I can never treat music as a means to earn a livelihood."

Since his composition's release in the teen romance, the song featuring the winking beauty has nabbed more than 3 million views. While it

"I will never agree to sell my art for money. I have been the biggest fan of music and I scribble songs that come to my head in between selling things to my customers. I can never put a price to my songs"



catapulted the actress Varrier into an overnight social media star, Jabbar is relatively untouched by the frenzy surrounding his song.

"I loved the picturisation and I don't understand the reasoning behind anyone objecting to the picturisation. This song just has a few cheeky teenagers having a bit of fun... If you think like that, then it's easy to see this song in an innocent light," said Jabbar responding to the complaints levelled against the song.

The pragmatic grocer and musician, who is known to jot down song inspirations as he attends to his customers, doesn't believe in making a big deal about his skills as a composer.

"During my time, music was never considered a viable option to earn a livelihood. At that time, harbouring ambitions to be a musician meant that you may be out of work for a long time. We lived in another era. Now with the internet, everything has changed dramatically," said Jabbar. While life came in between him and his dreams, his two children and wife have always supported him.

"While I knew that I could never pursue music as a career, I never gave up making songs. Even now, I write songs when I get some free time. I scribble notes that strike me and I jot them down when I reach home," said Jabbar.

But things have been looking up for this Kerala native ever

since the release of his re-mixed composition, which was written on a whim at the request of his singer-relative Thalassery Rafeeq.

"I just wrote song for Rafeeq who sang it on stage shows and on TV. It became a hit locally and people began including it in the weddings near my home. Now it has become a huge hit and I can't believe it."

Jabbar has become something of a local hero among his friends in Riyadh now.

"Everyone is happy for me. It fills me with such happiness to know that my music is being heard and enjoyed by millions... I don't know what the future holds for me but I will still continue to work in this grocery store. But I will never give up making music. That's my passion." — Gulf News





Assamese Opera singer Pran Saikia wows with first single

It is not everyday that a young fan gets to fulfil his life-long dream of singing his favourite artist's line in his first ever song. Assamese Opera singer Pran Saikia has released his first single *Ek Tu*, a romantic song which is also a clever dedication to his favourite song, *I was born to make you happy* by Britney Spears. The single was launched at Fork You, in Delhi's Hauz Khas Village on April 7.

"I love Britney and have been following her since childhood. So, when I decided to make my first single, it, of course, had to be dedicated to her!" says the singer, who is famous in the A Cappella scene in Delhi and even boasts his own group *Imfresnate*. For those who are uninitiated, A Cappella involves making music without

using any instrument. Yes, talk about improvisation!

But it was not all hunky-dory for Pran. When things got tough, the singer had to rely on crowd-funding to produce *Ek Tu*. In fact, almost the entire video was shot through public funding. "I was passionate about this project and wanted to make it happen anyhow. I am so grateful to all my well-wishers who contributed to this video," Pran says. And in the social media age, having a large number of followers on Instagram did help. As soon as his followers heard of *Ek Tu*, help poured in from all sides.

In an age of remixes, *Ek Tu* is a refreshing take on romance and tells a beautiful love story. Pran is not only the singer, he also features on it. The song has been directed by Nishant Joshi of GoBro Studios. While Mohit Joshi is the Cinematographer, Mandeep Singh is the music director, Yamini Joshi is the stylist. Bobby Genesis, Soumik Hazarika, and Brin Desai are the Sound Engineers and



mastering was handled by Blake Lagrange.

The musical journey

Pran had a very interesting journey towards being a musician. "I was not supported by my family to pursue music as a career. Although I received encouragement from my parents and provided me formal training in Hindustani Vocal but following the traditional norms in terms of career perspectives was what they actually believed in."

However, all that changed when he moved to Delhi to pursue his undergraduate studies. Being exposed to a new and competitive Delhi University environment gave him the opportunity to broaden his perspectives and take control over his life decisions. So, while he was asked to take coaching for civil service, he actually took training for Opera and western classical music from the Neemrana Music foundation and the Delhi School of Music. This helped him a lot in understanding and enhancing his musical capabilities.

"The vocal training helped me to participate in many of the shows such as India Africa Summit 2015, where

I got to sing in front of PM Modi, President and 74 African presidents." The hard work paid off and his parents took cognisance of his love for music. "When I told my Dad about my performances, he felt proud of me and changed his mindset toward my choice of career."

Soon, he was performing at major events like European Union day, EU Film Festival, human rights day at Australian High Commission, etc. That is when he seriously contemplated a career in music and started writing his own songs and compositions. "I took my time in giving my songs with the best music. So started searching Delhi NCR renowned musicians and coming into contact with them helped me widening my knowledge in music as a musician," says Pran.

In future, Pran would like to use his natural skills and talent in service of children suffering from cancer and would like to raise fund for their treatment. Singing is only one of the talents in Pran's long list. The 25-year old is also a part-time model and dancer by profession and is trained in Western as well as Hindustani classical music. Pran has also dabbled in Belly dancing and Ballet.



Young changemaker Kakande highlights inequality at TED Talk



Yasin Kakande, the author of two comprehensive and apparently controversial books on the plight of migrant workers in the Gulf Arab region, is one of the young changemakers that will be delivering a TED Talk on April 10 in Vancouver.

A native of Uganda, he has been a Middle East journalist for more than a decade, working for the Abu Dhabi-based The National newspaper as the correspondent for the northern Emirates and chronicling in books the injustices and inequalities of migrant workers from Africa and Asian countries in the rich Gulf Arab Countries.

Kakande's books have angered the Arab rulers that fear that the revelations will awaken the complacent and collective conscience of individuals who wonder how the benefits and costs of globalization can be reconciled to the mutual good of all.

He was expelled from Dubai after his first book *The Ambitious Struggle: An African Journalist's Journey of Hope and Identity in a Land of Migrants* (Florida Academic Press, 2013) was published, which received considerable international attention from groups such as Reporters Without Borders, Radio France International, and international migrant rights organizations.

He returned to Qatar to work as a journalist shortly afterward where he worked on his second book "Slave States: The practice of Kafala in the Gulf Arab Countries". He left Qatar voluntarily and returned to Uganda without incident after he completed the manuscript for *Slave States*.

Kakande says the impetus for his second book became more urgent after Qatar won The Fédération Internationale de Football Association bid to host the 2022 World Cup and Dubai earned the honors to host the global Expo 2020. Even among journalists who are expected to be fair and balanced in their work, it is considered politically risky and professionally insensitive to criticize the underpinnings by which Qatar and Dubai had



I knew and feared the consequences of bringing this to public light but I also knew that telling these stories were worth all of the consequences that might be involved."

come to their good fortune, he recalls.

"I knew and feared the consequences of bringing this to public light but I also knew that telling these stories were worth all of the consequences that might be involved," he said.

If you live or work in or visit any of the rich emirates in the Gulf region, you likely will see the mistreatment and abuses of migrant workers at some point. You will see images from the center of Qatar where workers who are building the World Cup 2022



facilities were taking their breaks still outside in scorching heat where temperatures rise regularly above 40 degrees Celsius.

Kakande now a new immigrant in America is currently working on a third book on "Why African migrants are fleeing to Europe, Middle East and America?" He argues in the new book that the West was guilty for the over-

flow of African migrants in their cities through policies that have impoverished the continent starting from the colonization and exploitation of African resources to holding the whole continent Economic hostages and also plopping up African dictators who suppress all dissenting voices.

"Being selected as a TED fellow is a privilege and also a responsibility on my side. TED is a wonderful global platform that ideas like mine of universality of human rights would spread easily."

There has been a global conspiracy to cover up atrocities committed by the Middle East dictators largely because oil corrupts. The gulf petrodollar has strengthened, emboldening the acquiescence of the American and European politicians, media and think tanks. Most western universities and policy institutes receive impressively generous funding from the Gulf monarchies and, in exchange, the tone of academic discourse constrains the focus on human rights abuses.

"My books that sought to expose this corruption suffered from this politics as well. I think my speech at TED will help the world wake up to the realities other less fortunate people have had to go through to earn a living in the Gulf Arab region," he said.



PV Sindhu

seeks to be world's number one

Ace shuttler Pusarla Venkata (PV) Sindhu, dreaming to become World No.1, is trying to reach the numero uno spot. Sindhu, who had achieved a career-best ranking of World No 2 few months ago, said when she started playing at the age of eight her first dream was to represent India.

“When I started playing at the age of eight my dream was to play for India and that was the first dream. When I started playing for India that is when I thought someday I have to be (on) top of the world. I am trying to be World No.1...Now my dream is to become World No. 1 and definitely it's in progress. I would want to see myself there,” media reports quoted the Rio Olympics silver medallist as saying.

At the 2016 Summer Olympics, she became the first Indian woman to win an Olympic silver medal. She is one of the two Indian badminton players to ever win an Olympic medal – other being Saina Nehwal. Born on 5 July 1995, she was also a silver medalist at the 2017 BWF World Championships and, in 2017, became first Indian ever to win Korea Open Super Series.

Sindhu came to international attention when she broke into the top 20 of the BWF World Ranking in September 2012 at the age of 17. In 2013, she became the first ever Indian women's singles player to win a medal at the Badminton World Championships. In March 2015, she is the recipient of India's fourth highest civilian honor, the Padma Shri. Her silver medal win in the women's singles event of the 2016 Summer Olympics made her the first Indian shuttler to reach the final of an Olympics badminton event and the youngest Indian to make a podium finish in an individual event at the Olympics. She is one among the top five shuttlers in women's singles category.

Participating in an interaction with students and teachers during a promotional event organised at her alma mater Auxilium High School here, Sindhu said her mother has been her inspiration. “She has always been there saying that ‘do your best’ and ‘give your best’ in whatever you do. Be brave and stay strong and all women should do that and believe in

ourselves,” Sindhu said on her mother.

Asked on the challenges she faced to attain success, Sindhu said she faced many challenges. “But I don't feel it's a burden kind of thing because I wanted to achieve my dream and I just followed that. There was a certain time where I thought what's going on wrong because at sometimes you might not give your best. Sometimes you might just play brilliantly but when you tend to lose, you think that what's happening or what's going on wrong. I think learning from your mistakes and coming back much more stronger is important thing that is what I feel and that's how I learnt and came up in my life,” Sindhu said.

Sindhu said, “You have to always be grounded, that is most important thing. Even though you win a lot more or be at the top position you always have to be grounded. You have to give respect and also discipline is very much important and those are the values I have learned from this school.”

On her parents, Sindhu said, “My parents support was always there and they motivated me. My parents played a very important role and I am lucky to have parents like them because they were sports-persons.”

“Everybody will face challenges in their lives. If you want to achieve something in your life you have to believe in yourself even though there are ups and downs. You have to go through it and hard work is the key for success. For me I have come so far and I just feel it is starting for me even though I faced so many challenges,” she added.

Hijab-clad **Majiziya** wins bodybuilding tilt in Kerala



Speaking to the Times of India, Majiziya said, "My fiancée encouraged me to attend the event. I had never before taken part in a bodybuilding competition. So, I sought the help of my weightlifting coach, who sent photos of poses to be displayed on WhatsApp."

Wearing her favorite black body-hugging sports suit and a headscarf, Bhanu displayed her unique physique through the mandatory four postures and landed herself a gold medal by impressing the judges in no time.

"I was quite confident of winning the championship as I found the other women contestants to be chubby," added the wannabe dentist.

Background

Majiziya, as a child, was into athletics and other sports and had maintained a strong physique. She took an interest in boxing in 2016, but soon dropped out as she was not allowed to enter the boxing ring wearing braces.

She then turned her attention to powerlifting and was declared the 'Strong Woman of Kerala' thrice by the Kerala Powerlifting Association. She got silver medal in the Asian Powerlifting Championship in 2017, reports said.

The idea of bodybuilding popped up recently. "I was apprehensive about taking part as it involved much skin show," Majiziya reportedly said. "But then I came across some videos of Egyptian women bodybuilders and decided to adopt the costumes they used."

She did not know how to pose, and being too nervous, couldn't even smile while on stage. But thanks to fellow

male bodybuilders from Kozhikode who encouraged her and officials who tipped her on the importance of smile, she gained confidence by the time she reached the finals.

"The clothes were never a problem as the judges were experienced enough to assess a clothed person's build," The Hindu quoted Majiziya as saying.

She praised her parents for constantly giving her the freedom to pursue her dreams. Majiziya also hails her fiancée for constantly pushing her to apply for the competition. The weightlifter also credits her coach Jayadas for bringing her to the stage she currently stands on.

Majiziya now seeks to participate in the World Powerlifting Championships and hopes to see powerlifting as part of the National Games in the near future.



Despite participating for the first time, the 23-year-old Majiziya Bhanu recently won Mr Kerala Bodybuilding championship in Kochi. A final-year BDS student at Mahe Institute of Dental Sciences, Bhanu, hailing from Orkkatteri in Kozhikode is a professional weightlifter but had never taken part in a bodybuilding competition before.

Hijab-clad Majiziya had entered the bodybuilding circuit, which is mostly a male bastion, and managed to reconstruct the familiar image of the woman bodybuilder.

"I did not intend to participate in this at all. I am a powerlifter and had never thought of participating in a bodybuilding competition. One reason was that I will be required to expose my body. So when I came across a Facebook post on the event, I was still sceptical. But my fiancée sent me photos of Muslim women from other countries who participated in body-building competitions wearing a hijab. That's how I decided to participate; it was just an attempt. I did not expect to win the title!" TNN quoted Majiziya as saying.



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