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Court releases CJP leaders after undertakings not to call protests at Jantar Mantar; walk out of Tihar



A Special Executive Magistrate (SEM) court in Delhi on Wednesday ordered the release of CJP leaders Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka from judicial custody after they furnished written undertakings not to breach the peace or call for protests at Jantar Mantar as long as the site remains de-notified as a protest venue, LiveLaw reported.Das and Ranka were released from Tihar Jail late Wednesday night.Special Executive Magistrate Ritu Raj passed the order while hearing a Delhi Police application seeking a further three-day extension of their judicial custody in preventive proceedings initiated under Sections 126 and 170 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), according to LiveLaw.According to the report, in their written undertakings, Das and Ranka assured the court that they would not commit any breach of peace and would not call for protests at Jantar Mantar while it remains de-notified. They also undertook to conduct any protest within the framework of the Constitution of India.The police had argued that the apprehension of a breach of peace and disturbance of law and order persisted in view of the activists' statements and subsequent conduct. The police also referred to a media byte given by another member of their group while being taken to Tihar Jail, which it claimed undermined the authority of the court.In response, counsel for Das and Ranka tendered an unconditional verbal apology and assured the court that such conduct would not be repeated, according to LiveLaw.After considering the submissions and the written undertakings, the magistrate held that the immediate preventive measures contemplated under Section 135(3) of the BNSS could be secured by requiring the activists to execute bonds to keep the peace. The court observed that further judicial custody did not appear necessary at this stage in view of the undertakings furnished.The court directed Das and Ranka to furnish personal bonds and surety bonds of Rs 50,000 each until the conclusion of the inquiry. After accepting the sureties, the magistrate ordered their release and issued a release warrant to the Superintendent of Central Jail.The inquiry will continue, and the two leaders have been directed to appear before the court on every date of hearing and maintain peace and public tranquillity in accordance with the terms of their bonds and undertakings. The matter has been listed for further proceedings on October 23 at 3 pm.Das and Ranka were detained on October 13 after allegedly climbing the gates of the barricaded Jantar Mantar protest site and raising slogans against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.They were remanded to five days of judicial custody on October 14. On October 19, the SEM court extended their custody by two days after expressing concerns about their conduct and the possibility of a breach of peace. The court had also rejected the sureties furnished by the two activists and directed them to provide fresh ones.Das and Ranka subsequently challenged the October 19 order before the Delhi High Court but withdrew their petition after Justice Subramonium Prasad indicated that a revision plea would be a more appropriate remedy if they did not obtain relief from the SEM court.Advocates Abhik Chimni and Pranjal Abrol appeared for Das and Ranka.The CJP welcomed the order saying the decision should have come earlier."We welcome the decision. I think this decision should have been taken long ago, but it is not too late," the outfit's legal head Ratna Singh told reporters.She said the police had sought a five-day extension of their custody citing an imminent threat, but the defence argued that there was no imminent threat and no call for a protest."You cannot take that as an assumption and extend the judicial custody. The SEM has taken that on record," she said.Asked about the Delhi High Court's observations earlier in the day, Singh said the judge was entitled to express an opinion, but the CJP did not necessarily agree with it."They have given their opinion. It is an observation, an oral observation. There was no discussion on the merits in the court. We were here today for the release of Saurav and Ashutosh, for which we had been trying for the past week. Finally, that has happened," she said.Singh said the team was emotional and eager to meet the two leaders."The team is also very emotional right now. They also want to meet them because everyone has not met them for a long time," she said.She expressed hope that nobody's liberty would be curtailed in the future over issues related to sureties or technical reasons, adding that the release order had been sent and the team hoped to see Das and Ranka soon.

'Are you above Constitution?': Kharge demands repeal of EC immunity law, CEC Gyanesh's removal



AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday demanded the repeal of the 2023 law granting immunity to election commissioners, accusing the Narendra Modi government of undermining the EC's independence and seeking the removal of CEC Gyanesh Kumar and a return to ballot papers.Speaking to reporters in Kalaburagi, Kharge asked, "Are you above the Constitution?" and alleged that the government was shielding election commissioners from accountability."Repeal the law you brought in to grant them immunity," he said, referring to the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, which provides protection against civil and criminal proceedings for acts done or words spoken by election commissioners in the discharge of their official duties, subject to the provisions of the Act.Kharge alleged that software-driven instructions from a central location were being used to direct Booth Level Officers (BLOs) to alter electoral rolls."If elections are conducted impartially and fairly, let anyone win. The Constitution does not say that only the Congress must win or that any particular party must win," he said.He asserted that the Opposition was fighting to protect democracy and safeguard the integrity of institutions, rather than for any individual or party.Kharge accused PM Modi of not responding directly to letters from Opposition leaders and instead getting others to reply.Referring to Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju's response to his letter to Modi, Kharge said such replies would not resolve the issues raised unless the prime minister and Union Home Minister Amit Shah took decisions on them."If you have made up your mind to act arbitrarily, the people of this country will not remain silent. They will remove you from power," he said.Kharge warned that the government would face public backlash if it failed to correct what he described as its mistakes.On women's reservation, Kharge said the government could implement the 33 per cent quota using the existing strength of the House and the current constitutional framework. He accused Modi of misleading people by portraying the Opposition as being against women's reservation."If we were opposed to it, would we have passed the law in the first place?" he asked, describing the government's approach as an attempt to malign the Opposition.

MIB cautions TV channels on AI use, asks them to use authentic India maps



NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MI&B) on Wednesday advised private satellite television channels to exercise due caution while using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its tools in the telecast of programmes.Urging them to adhere to the Programme Code prescribed under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, and the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994, the ministry said that the use of AI tools might be limited to an assistive capacity without compromising the accuracy, authenticity, or sensitivity of the news content.In an advisory issued by the ministry, broadcasters have further been advised to strengthen their editorial and content review mechanisms to ensure that all personnel involved in news gathering, editing, production, transmission and telecast of programmes are adequately sensitised to the provisions of the Programme Code.The ministry also encouraged broadcasters to conduct workshops, training programmes and sensitisation sessions for their editorial and production teams at regular intervals to ensure continued compliance with the Programme Code."It is reiterated that adherence to the statutory obligations is essential. Any violation of the Programme Code may invite action under the provisions of the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, and the rules framed thereunder," read the advisory.In the advisory, the ministry said that the Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC), constituted under the Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021, observed that the telecasts on various TV channels were not in conformity with the spirit of the Programme Code.Hence, the IDC recommended that all private satellite television channels be advised to strictly adhere to the statutory provisions governing content broadcast on television."Instances of similar news/visuals broadcast on multiple channels on similar topics were observed during the meeting of the IDC. The committee also emphasised that inappropriate behaviour or language should not be normalised in telecasts," the ministry warned.Citing advisories on various subjects issued on different occasions, the ministry asked channels to strictly comply with the provisions of the Programme Code in letter and spirit, particularly with regard to the coverage and live telecast of situations such as anti-terrorist operations, violence, and natural calamities or disasters."To uphold the integrity of the Nation as mandated in Rule 6(1)(h), private satellite TV channels are advised to use only authentic maps of India, as published by the Survey of India, in all their telecasts, graphics and digital representations," the advisory stated.TV channels have also been advised to ensure that programmes, including live debates and panel discussions, do not promote or encourage communal or anti-national attitudes."Adequate editorial control (including, but not limited to, careful selection and pre-sensitisation of the panellists/participants) should be exercised. Wherever necessary, immediate remedial measures such as muting, disclaimers, interruption or discontinuation of the feed should be implemented in order to prevent the airing of derogatory, abusive or inflammatory content," it said.On the protection of the identities of victims of sexual offences, the ministry said that channels should strictly adhere to the repeated directions of the Supreme Court and applicable legal provisions regarding the non-disclosure of the identities of victims of sexual offences."This includes refraining from the disclosure of any direct or indirect particulars, remote facts, photographs, family details, locality or other such information that may lead to the identification of the victim," the advisory said.

AIKS threatens 'militant resistance' as Rubio pushes to finalise India-US trade deal

The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) on Wednesday warned of "militant resistance" from farmers if the Narendra Modi government proceeds with the proposed India-US trade deal, alleging that concessions to Washington would threaten agriculture in the country and lead to greater corporate consolidation in the sector.In a statement, the farmers' organisation urged the government to reject the proposed agreement, arguing that farmers in the country would be unable to compete with "heavily subsidised" American agricultural producers.Notably, US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said that India and the US are "pretty close" to reaching a trade deal, which will be much different than the earlier pacts.Describing the proposed agreement as a surrender to US interests, AIKS warned the Modi government that it will "face militant resistance from the peasantry if it goes ahead with the anti-national trade deal." The farmers' body also called on its units to prepare for a prolonged struggle against it."The ongoing visit of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and the negotiations he reportedly led with Indian authorities to 'finalise' a trade deal between the US and India, demonstrate that the RSS-BJP-led Union government will go to any extent to please their imperial masters," the AIKS said.The organisation said Parliament had been kept in the dark about the details of the proposed agreement, even as negotiations appeared to be nearing completion.Rubio has publicly stated that the deal is "very close", with the US demand to sell milk products in India emerging as the last hurdle, the AIKS said, adding that Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal had also said the agreement was in the final stage of legal drafting.The AIKS warned that concessions in the soybean sector could severely affect farmers in major producing states, including Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Karnataka."Indian soybean farmers cannot compete with heavily subsidised industrial farmers in the US," it said.Opening India's dairy market without limits would also threaten the livelihoods of domestic dairy farmers, the organisation said, arguing that subsidised foreign production could undercut local procurement prices and squeeze household incomes.The proposed deal could also put maize and sorghum growers supplying cattle feed, cotton farmers, and almond, walnut and apple producers at risk, it said."To put it simply, concessions to the US would result in a dangerous level of corporate consolidation in Indian agriculture," the AIKS said.The organisation also criticised the government's decision in September to reduce the basic import duty on crude soybean oil and palm oil from 10 per cent to 5 per cent, along with cuts in duties on refined oils. It said the move came just as farmers were beginning to harvest kharif soybeans.The organisation also appealed to farmers to participate in large numbers in the Samyukt Kisan Morcha's October 23 march in Delhi against what it described as the manipulation of elections.

Meddlesome and more

U.S. President Donald Trump has been entangled in a quagmire of his own making when, in a joint press conference in Helsinki, Finland, last week with Russian President Vladimir Putin, he refused to accuse Russia of meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election (despite allegations by all intelligence agencies in the U.S.). Widespread condemnation of his refusal to endorse the findings of U.S. intelligence agencies has compelled him to walk back his statements at Helsinki. Yet, critics of the President conveniently forget that it was only 15 years ago that these same intelligence agencies fraudulently claimed that Iraq's Saddam Hussain had weapons of mass destruction.

Two further points are lost in the firestorm of protests over the press conference. First, there is no instance that I can recall when journalists have accused one president especially a President of a state as large and powerful as Russia of interfering in the elections of another country in a joint press conference between the two Presidents. In joint press conferences, one head of government is not typically called on to label the other head of government a liar. Rather than discussing global issues, ranging from nuclear disarmament to conflicts in Syria and the Ukraine, journalists were focussed on a domestic issue in the U.S.

Of course, whether Mr. Trump should have gone to Helsinki to meet Mr. Putin at all amidst these allegations is another issue. Perhaps the closest parallel was the 1960 Paris summit between the leaders of France, the U.K., the U.S. and the USSR after the U.S. had lied that its spy plane that had been shot down over the USSR had been a weather plane. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's outburst there against U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower led to a collapse of the summit. Second, and more importantly, setting aside Mr. Trump's remarks at Helsinki, the moral outrage that Russia had subomed the democratic process in the 2016 election breathtakingly ignores the very many times the U.S. has interfered in the elections of other countries and even ousted democratically-elected governments.

In Russia itself when there was a fear that the Communist Party candidate, Gennady Zyuganov (who had received 32% of the vote in the first round of voting in 1996 to Boris Yeltsin's 35%), would win the presidency. U.S. President Bill Clinton pushed the International Monetary Fund to loan $10.2 billion some months before the election and sent a team of political consultants to help the Russian incumbent. Yeltsin's popularity had plummeted as he had implemented the 'shock therapy' advocated by the U.S. and other western advisers and this had led to the evaporation of social protections as deindustrialisation swept across that vast land and the life expectancy of men and women fell from 64 and 74 years to 58 and 71 years between 1991 and 1994.

In an interview with Megyn Kelly earlier this year, Mr. Putin said that U.S. officials did not even deny that they meddled in Russian elections because they said that they were "entitled" to do so as they were "spreading democracy" while the Russians were not. Indeed, Don Levin of Carnegie Mellon University had found that beginning with the Italian elections of 1948, the U.S. interfered in elections in other countries 81 times between then and 2000. In Italy, Mark Wyatt, a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operative admitted that they "threw everything including the kitchen sink" to help the Christian Democrats come to power and prevent a Communist Party victory. This included consultants to run political campaigns, subsiding "pork" projects, and threatening to end U.S. aid if the Communists were to come to power. And that was not the only instance of U.S. meddling in Italian elections.

Similarly, earlier this year, The New York Times quoted Loch Johnson, another CIA agent, saying that the U.S has been interfering in elections ever since the creation of the intelligence agency: "We've used posters, pamphlets, mailers, banners…We've planted false information in foreign newspapers. We've used what the British call 'King George's cavalry': suitcases of cash."

Some of the other more notable instances of U.S. meddling in foreign elections to say nothing of the overthrow of democratically elected governments like that of Mohammad Mosaddegh in Iran, Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala or Salvador Allende in Chile have been in the Chilean elections of 1964, the failed 1986 attempt to defeat Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti, in the Nicaraguan and Czechoslovak elections of 1990, the 2000 elections in Serbia, and the Afghan elections of 2009. Election meddling is nothing new. Mr. Levine's study also shows that the USSR/ Russia intervened at least 36 times in overseas elections between 1946 and 2000.

Indeed, the U.S. government today sponsors several agencies such as the National Endowment for Democracy to influence foreign elections. It granted $23,000 in 2006 to a political adversary of Mr. Putin and two years ago $6.8 million to anti-Putin organisations in Russia. Rather than allowing foreign populations to freely exercise their will, these interventions were designed to advance the foreign policy objectives of the U.S.

The current moral outrage in the U.S. of Russian meddling in elections stems also because since the end of the Cold War, mainstream broadcast media have largely balked at airing the viewpoints of foreign adversaries. Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s, Russians, Palestinians, even Iraqi officials in the run-up to the first Gulf War were regulars on U.S. television networks and news shows, now what passes for 'opposition' views is someone from the party not in the White House.

If such foreign voices had been given airtime, the alleged election interference by the Russians would have been placed in a broader context.

Recognising the long history of states meddling in elections does not of course mean that it should be accepted much less condoned. But it is not the meddling in elections that states have long practised that is at issue here. The indignation over Mr. Trump's refusal to accept the assessments of U.S. intelligence agencies stems primarily because he is undermining a foreign policy consensus in Washington to muscle into the power vacuum in Central and West Asia created by the demise of the Soviet Union.

In early 2014, transcripts of a phone call between then Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland and the U.S. Ambassador to the Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt in which they discuss the makeup of the Ukrainian government after the impending ouster of President Viktor Yanukovych were released on YouTube, presumably by Russian intelligence. That Mr. Obama's Assistant Secretary had previously served as U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney's chief foreign policy adviser and U.S. President George W. Bush's ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation underlines a consensus between Republicans and Democrats on foreign policy and it is this consensus that Mr. Trump is now disrupting.

Mr. Trump's focus is on a trade war with China, the European Union, and with Canada and Mexico. This is what plays to his base supporters even though his argument that these states take away jobs from the U.S. is spurious. Nevertheless, the strategic counterpart of this policy is a détente with Russia. It is this fundamental policy difference that is being occluded by the outrage over Mr. Trump's apparent acceptance of Russian claims of innocence in Helsinki.

Looking for a new clarity

The Supreme Court, this past month, provided us with a useful reminder about its worth to our constitutional democracy. Its intervention in the imbroglio over government formation in Karnataka was flawless. The hearings conducted in the early hours of the morning may have been theatrical, but the court's ultimate decision certainly helped avert a subversion of the Constitution. Yet, much as its decision here deserves appreciation, we must be careful not to allow any ascription of credit to veil the deeper wounds that afflict it, for a litany of problems continues to strike at the court's independence.

Three of these are especially salient. The first involves the rejection by the government of the collegium's recommendation of K.M. Joseph, currently Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court, for elevation to the Supreme Court. The second concerns the need for a systemic mechanism to deal with allegations of corruption in the higher judiciary. The third area of worry concerns the embroiled state of Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, his position as the master of the roster, and the critical question of whether such powers ought to be vested in the hands of one individual.

At first glance, these issues might strike us as unique to the times that we live in, as examples of crises that will eventually pass. But, on closer examination, it becomes clearer that these are, in fact, recurring problems left unaddressed for decades. In trying to resolve the issues, therefore, we must ask ourselves how we got here. As A.G. Noorani recently wrote in Frontline magazine ("Crisis in Judiciary," May 11, 2018): "We have not reached the nadir all of a sudden. The decline was long in process."

In his seminal book, America's Unwritten Constitution: The Precedents and Principles We Live By, Akhil Reed Amar points to how the written constitution often invites us to heed what's unwritten, which in turn, he writes, "refers us back in various ways to its written counterpart. Like the Chinese symbols yin and yang, America's written Constitution and America's unwritten Constitution form two halves of one whole, with each half gesturing toward the other."

India's Constitution is possibly the longest written constitution in the world, but it too leaves much unsaid. Take, for example, Article 124. It states that judges of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President, after consultation with certain authorities, including the CJI. But it does not tell us how these consultations are to be made, or what criteria ought to be applied in deciding who becomes a judge.

Filling these voids, therefore, requires the building of conventions that nonetheless maintain a fidelity to the written word. In 1977, in Union of India v. Sankalchand Sheth, the Supreme Court sought to do precisely this, when it ruled that the word "consultation" can never mean "concurrence". But yet it held in the same case that the President can depart from the CJI's opinion, in making a transfer or an appointment, as the case may be, only in exceptional circumstances. And when the government does so, it must, wrote Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, in his concurring opinion, be prepared to establish in court that it possessed "cogent and convincing reasons" for rejecting the CJI's advice. As a result, in a bid to secure judicial independence, the court, as H.M. Seervai wrote, had read into the Constitution "a requirement which is not there, but which is implicit in the whole object of providing for consultation with the Chief Justice of India."

Unfortunately, though, the court has in a series of cases rendered the verdict in Sheth nugatory. The informed wisdom of Justice Krishna Iyer has been replaced by the undemocratic excesses of the "collegium system". This method grants primacy to the judiciary (specifically to the CJI and his four most senior colleagues) in choosing its own members but allows government the power to reject recommendations on any ground whatsoever, with only one caveat: if the collegium were to re-recommend the same name, the government is obligated to accept the proposition.

Now, in the present environment, for the immediate purposes, there is no doubt that the collegium must re-recommend Justice Joseph's name, to protect at least a veneer of the court's independence. But this still begs the question, what happens if the government vacillates in conforming Justice Joseph's elevation even after such a re-recommendation?

In all of this, therefore, one thing has become abundantly clear: the collegium system is simply unworkable. Its ills are plain to see. It's not only opaque and inequitable, containing not a single constitutionally provided check or balance, but it has done nothing to either improve the judiciary's independence or provide a seamless system of elevating well-qualified persons to the bench.

Efforts to introduce a judicial appointments commission have already been scuttled, after the court struck down the 99th constitutional amendment. But the trend across liberal, constitutional democracies is towards such a commission. Hence, what we need now is a renewed debate on how to reshape the composition of a potential judicial appointments panel, which will preserve, in some regards, the judiciary's primacy (which the Supreme Court now enjoins us to do), while also divorcing its membership completely from the executive.

Simultaneously, as we make an endeavour to be rid of the collegium system, we must also work towards putting in place an independent mechanism to deal with allegations of corruption in the judiciary. The quandary on how to guard the autonomy of the court while ensuring judges remain accountable is age-old. The Roman satirist Juvenal famously asked, Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? (Who will guard the guardians themselves?) Impeachment, as Ronald Dworkin wrote in the context of American Presidents, is a "constitutional nuclear weapon". It ought to be restricted only to the grimmest of emergencies. But, in India, absent any other apparatus to inquire into a charge of judicial corruption, it becomes the only viable option. We must, therefore, strive to find a device that will straddle our concerns for the judiciary's autonomy with a necessity for greater fairness and transparency. Any claim made against a judge of dishonesty, howsoever trivial, must be investigated by a properly constituted panel, which ought to be granted a status separate from all three established wings of government.

Finally, the CJI's position as the "master of the roster" requires serious rethinking.

Slimming surgery puts women at risk of life-threatening condition

Ladies, you may want to rethink going under the knife as according to a recent study, liposuction puts you at the risk of developing a rare genetic condition that can lead to fat globules entering their lungs. Liposuction is a technique in cosmetic surgery for removing excess fat from under the skin by suction. According to researchers, the condition, known as fat embolism syndrome (FES), is a rare but very serious complication, in which fat travels through the body and blocks blood vessels, but it is notoriously difficult to recognise and diagnose.

The team found that a 45-year-old woman developed a serious life threatening condition after having liposuction. The authors stressed that liposuction is generally a safe procedure, but it is important for doctors to consider diagnosis of FES, especially in patients with underlying risk factors, such as high body mass index (BMI) and fluid retention (lymphoedema). Shortly after the procedure, the woman became drowsy and confused and had a high heart rate. Her condition worsened as she was transferred to intensive care where the doctors suspected that she had dangerously low oxygen levels in her body (acute respiratory distress syndrome).

After further tests, the doctors realised that her symptoms pointed to FES. The woman remained in hospital and was given oxygen and drugs to help with her heart rate and her breathing. "FES is a difficult condition to initially diagnose," the authors noted. "What makes it even harder is the lack of a standardised set of diagnostic criteria to assist the clinician in making the diagnosis," they explained. The research appears in the British Medical Journal Case Reports

Detecting prostate cancer through urine sample

Researchers at the University of Texas at San Antonio are working towards developing a non-invasive method to detect prostate cancer through urine sample. Since cells from the prostate are shed into urine naturally, the new method, which aims to make use of a novel microscope based on a photonic crystal bio-sensor, could offer a more accurate diagnosis. "The system we are developing utilises a sensitive bio-sensor, which allows us to distinguish cancer cells from normal cells based on a unique feature of the cells," said Jing Yong Ye, Professor of Biomedical Engineering at University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA).

"If you can detect a cancer cell, you're starting from a more precise place and you can give a more accurate diagnosis," he added in a statement released by UTSA. To support the development of this non-invasive method of detecting prostate cancer, the US National Institutes of Health's National Cancer Institute has offered Ye a two-year grant of $354,617. The new method could significantly improve accuracy compared to the approach used in current clinical practice. Prostate cancer is the second most prevalent type of cancer, and the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths, in men. Early detection is key to survival, which is why doctors are required to screen all men over the age of 50 for the disease.

To screen patients for prostate cancer, medical professionals take a blood sample and look for prostate-specific antigen (PSA). If a high level of PSA is found, the patient is suspected to have prostate cancer and required to have a prostate biopsy. Unfortunately, PSA tests are far from providing satisfactory diagnoses and result in a large number of unnecessary prostate biopsies due to a high false-positive rate. This is because PSA elevation may also occur in men with infection and chronic inflammation or benign prostatic hyperplasia.

"False positive diagnoses are very common in prostate cancer tests," Ye said. "As a result, a patient may undergo a biopsy he doesn't need, which is painful and could cause an infection. Also, because prostate cancer is highly heterogeneous and even multi-core prostate biopsy only samples a few local areas, it can easily be missed by clinicians," he added. Since about 70 percent of men who go through the biopsy process are found to be cancer-free, Ye wanted to look for a better way. "We need to use every weapon in our arsenal to attack this disease," Ye said. "It's important to think outside the box and use innovation to address these critical issues," he added.

Eating dark chocolates may prevent diabetes

Love to gorge on dark chocolates? According to a study, compounds found in cocoa – the main ingredient of chocolate – can actually help prevent as well as treat diabetes. The findings showed that cocoa compound named epicatechin monomers helps the body release more insulin and responds to increased blood glucose better. When a person has diabetes, their body either does not produce enough insulin or does not process blood sugar properly, because of the failure of beta cells, which produce insulin. However, the study found that the increased presence of epicatechin monomers helped beta cells to remain stronger as well as enhanced their ability to secrete insulin.

"What happens is epicatechin monomers is protecting the cells, increasing their ability to deal with oxidative stress," said lead author Jeffery Tessem, assistant professor at Brigham Young University (BYU), US. "The epicatechin monomers are making the mitochondria in the beta cells stronger, which produces more ATP (a cell's energy source), which then results in more insulin being released," Tessem added.

For the study, published in the Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry, the team first fed the cocoa compound to animals on a high-fat diet. The results showed that by adding it to the high-fat diet, the compound would decrease the level of obesity in the animals and would increase their ability to deal with increased blood glucose levels. "These results will help us get closer to using these compounds more effectively in foods or supplements to maintain normal blood glucose control and potentially even delay or prevent the onset of Type-2 diabetes," said study co-author Andrew Neilson, assistant professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Australia launches 'thunderstorm asthma' warning system

A year after a freak "thunderstorm asthma" outbreak killed nine and led to thousands being hospitalised in the southern Australian city of Melbourne, the Victorian state government on Sunday launched a world-first alert system to prevent a similar disaster in the future. On November 21 last year, a freak event occurred where heavy rain affected pollens in the air, killing nine asthmatics and affecting thousands more, forcing the government to spend more than Australian $15 million ($12 million) in developing a warning system.

On Sunday, Victorian Health Minister Jill Hennessy said the new system would keep authorities ahead of the threat, Xinhua news agency reported. "The great challenge with thunderstorm asthma and epidemic thunderstorm asthma was its scale, its severity, and the fact that we did not have a prediction system in place which would enable us to understand what was coming," she said . Meanwhile, Paul Holman, spokesperson for Ambulance Victoria, said that last year caught both asthma sufferers and authorities off-guard, and the new warning system - which takes data from five new monitoring locations - takes into account pollen levels across the city and weather conditions.

"We never envisaged being overwhelmed (last year), we never envisaged not having ambulances to send to emergencies, we never envisaged not being able to answer (emergency) calls," Holman told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) on Sunday. "We didn't have a process to tell people that we couldn't come and we couldn't attend and give them the right advice." "What we had in effect was a major hazardous material, a HazMat, a gas laden with toxic material hitting a whole range of people." The warning system will be active on a website and through a phone app, and will alert users to potentially devastating weather events before they occur.

A failure of governance

The publication of Mr. Gupta's allegations in a newspaper in March this year raised a storm. On March 28, the Chairman of ICICI Bank's Board, M.K. Sharma, issued a statement expressing the board's full confidence in Ms. Kochhar. In April, media reports said that Mr. Sharma had carried out an internal inquiry in 2016 itself and had found no evidence of wrongdoing on Ms. Kochhar's part. End of story, or so the ICICI Bank board would have liked. However, the controversy would not die down. Investors and media analysts have been relentlessly pressing the board for a better response. Following charges made by a whistle-blower, the board has now authorised the chairman of the Audit Committee to select an appropriate person to head an independent probe. Three questions arise. First, after having stood steadfastly by its CEO for over two months, why has the board opted for a probe now? Second, is a probe by an outsider required at all? Third, should Ms. Kochhar continue in office during the period of the inquiry?

Finally, finally, the board of ICICI Bank has ordered a probe into allegations levelled against its CEO, Chanda Kochhar. Does this call for a celebration? No, it doesn't. The probe comes rather late in the day. And the board is having to refer the matter to an outsider only because of its own inadequate response to the initial set of charges made nearly two years ago. These constitute lapses in governance at a bank that has been characterised as "systemically important" by the regulator.

On May 30, the board of directors of ICICI Bank announced that it had ordered an inquiry by an outsider into allegations made by a whistle-blower. These allegations are not to be confused with the ones made by an investor, Arvind Gupta, in 2016. Mr. Gupta had then written to the Prime Minister, with copies to the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India and the Chairperson of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), among others.

The publication of Mr. Gupta's allegations in a newspaper in March this year raised a storm. On March 28, the Chairman of ICICI Bank's Board, M.K. Sharma, issued a statement expressing the board's full confidence in Ms. Kochhar. In April, media reports said that Mr. Sharma had carried out an internal inquiry in 2016 itself and had found no evidence of wrongdoing on Ms. Kochhar's part. End of story, or so the ICICI Bank board would have liked.

However, the controversy would not die down. Investors and media analysts have been relentlessly pressing the board for a better response. Following charges made by a whistle-blower, the board has now authorised the chairman of the Audit Committee to select an appropriate person to head an independent probe. Three questions arise. First, after having stood steadfastly by its CEO for over two months, why has the board opted for a probe now? Second, is a probe by an outsider required at all? Third, should Ms. Kochhar continue in office during the period of the inquiry?

The decision to go in for a probe is clearly prompted by widespread dissatisfaction with the clean chit given by the Chairman last March. It is also possible that the board has been rattled by show-cause notices issued by SEBI on May 24. According to media reports, the notices relate to alleged violation of disclosure requirements on the part of both Ms. Kochhar and ICICI Bank. If the violations are established, the bank could be subject to monetary penalties and the associated reputational damage.

However, the key question, as one veteran banker pointed out to me, is whether an inquiry conducted by an outsider is at all necessary in such a case. Let us recount the salient facts in brief. In April 2012, ICICI Bank made a loan of ?3,250 crore to the Videocon group. Ms. Kochhar was the bank's CEO at the time. Mr. Gupta's letter to the PM had said that Ms. Kochhar's husband had had a business partnership with the Videocon group prior to the sanction of the ICICI loan. There would thus be a clear conflict of interest in Ms. Kochhar being party to the sanction of a loan to Videocon.

The issue at the heart of the controversy is simple enough: did Ms. Kochhar disclose the conflict of interest to the board and recuse herself from all matters concerning Videocon? If she did not do so, it is sufficient ground for the board to ask Ms. Kochhar to step down as CEO. It is not necessary to establish a quid pro quo in the relationship for the board to decide whether Ms. Kochhar should step down. That is a separate matter to be pursued by the law enforcement authorities. Non-disclosure of conflict of interest and non-recusal are grave enough lapses. The line that various people, including government officials, have been putting out "let us await the outcome of investigations" is sheer evasion.

No deep probe, no forensic analysis, no great legal expertise is required to answer the elementary question posed above. The board of directors is perfectly competent to answer it by having the relevant documents placed before it.

That is what the board should have done in March when the controversy erupted. The drama that has unfolded since is uncalled for and could have been avoided if only the board had done the right thing earlier.

Some of the other arguments made in defence of the CEO amount to a red herring drawn by interested parties. For instance, Mr. Sharma has defended Ms. Kochhar on the ground that ICICI Bank had assumed a share of only 10% of the total loan given by a consortium of banks and the loan itself had been made in accordance with the bank's norms. This does not wash. It is not that a conflict of interest arises only when a loan is made in violation of norms; the conflict does not go away even when the loan decision is in conformity with norms.

The conflict of interest does not end with the sanction of a loan. It extends to post-loan monitoring and the readiness of the lender to exit a relationship where problems are brewing. It applies also to recognition of a loan as a non-performing asset and steps taken to effect recovery. It was incumbent on Ms. Kochhar to have distanced herself from all matters related to Videocon.

When a fresh set of allegations surfaced this month, the board must have been in a bind. Since it had solidly backed its CEO thus far, any probe it chose to conduct by itself would have lacked credibility.

Perhaps, that is why the board has opted to entrust the probe to an outsider. It may well be that the whistle-blower has raised issues other than the loan to Videocon. However, it's hard to believe that any issue of impropriety is beyond the competence of a board. The board can always seek the assistance of outside experts where required. The resort to an outsider is a situation of the board's own making.

Now that the board has decided to have a comprehensive probe, one that could stretch over several weeks or months, Ms. Kochhar's status during the period is an important issue.

The board has denied having asked Ms. Kochhar to go on leave. It has said that her current leave had been planned in the normal course. Does this mean that she will continue to helm the company on her return from leave? If yes, it is a highly unsatisfactory state of affairs. Just think of the plight of those reporting to Ms. Kochhar and the morale in the organisation in general when its CEO is the subject of an extended probe. The correct and proper course would be to ask Ms. Kochhar to step down as CEO until the probe is completed.

The board has also denied that it has set up a search committee to find a successor to Ms. Kochhar. It is free not to set up one. But the board is certainly bound by regulations to have a succession plan in place. The board must ensure that it has a choice of candidates it can turn to in the event that Ms. Kochhar is required to step down.

It is not merely the Chairman and independent directors of ICICI Bank who have been found wanting in the controversy. The nominee of the government and the LIC nominee on the board too have been coy about getting a straight answer to the question of conflict of interest involved in this case. They have chosen to stay away from meetings where they had a fiduciary obligation to attend and pose the hard questions. Such behaviour is strange, to say the least, and it completes the story of a breakdown in governance at the bank. As one distinguished banker put it to me, "Would the government have shown the same indulgence to the CEO of a public sector bank?"

Preventing the next health crisis

In March, the government announced that it would release an annual "state of nutrition" report, detailing India's level of stunting, malnutrition and feature best practices for States to scale up nutrition interventions.

It is clear that India has a lot to do to tackle nutrition challenges 26 million children suffer from wasting (a low weight-for-height ratio), more than in any other country.

Yet, the country has the second highest number of obese children in the world 15.3 million in China and 14.4 million in India. While tackling undernutrition through assurance of adequate nutrition (usually interpreted as dietary calories), we need to ensure that it is also about appropriate nutrition (the right balance of nutrients). Our policy response has to move from "food security" to "nutrition security".

India must step up its efforts to fight overweight and obesity just as it has been doing with wasting and stunting. Between 1980and 2015, obesity doubled for children and tripled for adults; an additional 2.6 million children will be obese in India by 2025, a trend that will not reverse without action.

Rising obesity is putting pressure on already fragile health systems in India by posing a high risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and some cancers (clubbed together as non-communicable diseases, or NCDs). Research shows that Indians have higher levels of body fat and lower levels of lean muscle when compared to many other populations. Therefore, the risk of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes operates even below global thresholds for defining overweight and obesity. Hence the urgency to take public health measures.

Apart from a high burden of premature mortality, these threats are something that India can ill-afford to ignore as it looks ambitiously toward a universal health coverage system where everyone can access quality health services that are free of financial burden.

The rise in obesity is deeply concerning because just as growing up underweight gives that person a lifetime of health problems so does a childhood of being overweight. The potent combination of Indian children eating more junk food while becoming increasingly sedentary puts them at an even greater risk. Research has shown that early warning signs for fatty liver disease can be found in children as young as eight if they had larger-than-advised waistlines when they were three.

Fortunately, this year is an ideal opportunity to tackle obesity as global health decision-makers are focussing on how to garner the political will to drive "best buys" such as sugar taxes and mass media campaigns on healthy diets (proven ways of bringing down obesity) while continuing to vigorously pursue efforts to prevent undernutrition. A high-level commission and a UN General Assembly meeting on NCDs are giving new life to existing evidence-based yet largely unimplemented plans of action.

Policy responses should include agricultural systems that promote crop diversity (to enable dietary diversity) as well as regulatory and fiscal measures (to decrease the availability, affordability and promotion of unhealthy foods, while making healthy foods more accessible). For example, taking the lead from a directive by the Delhi High Court, India should ban the sale of junk food in and around schools.

Legislators should also put into practice the results of a recent Lancet study on India. It showed that higher taxes on junk food can actually lead those on lower incomes to live healthier lives.

Even in clinical settings, counselling and care are needed. Instead of being downgraded as ways of managing "poor lifestyle choices", obesity management, prevention and treatment should be provided as essential health services targeted at a condition that undermines health in many ways. This would help reverse the stigma attached to obesity even by health professionals (which has also undermined the response to it).

Further, India should link obesity and undernutrition and treat them as twinned challenges to be jointly addressed under the universal health coverage umbrella. Universal health coverage is encapsulated in the idea that no one should have to suffer financial hardship in order to access essential health care. By tackling obesity through prevention and early care, financially debilitating NCDs can be avoided.

India will be in a better position to fulfil the promise of universal health coverage if it disrupts the cycle whereby poverty leads to NCDs and vice versa. There is compelling evidence that heart disease and diabetes impose high burdens of catastrophic health expenditure, result in a loss of livelihoods and crush people into poverty. With no insurance or personal savings, a heart disease diagnosis can compromise a person's wealth as well as health.

By making connections to both under- and over-nutrition, health advocates should make economic and social arguments to spur a 'whole-of-government' approach to these 'whole-of-society' problems. Tackling obesity benefits the economy and the environment, as healthy and sustainable diets are good for productivity levels and the planet. It is now time to get ahead of this unfolding health crisis and save lives and money in the process.

Sugary drinks with protein-rich meals may make you fat

Consuming a sugar-sweetened drink like fruit juices with a high-protein meal including lean meat, chicken, fish and dairy products may negatively affect energy balance, alter food preferences and cause the body to store more fat, according to a study. The findings showed that the inclusion of a sugar-sweetened drink decreased fat oxidation, which kick-starts the breakdown of fat molecules, after a meal by eight per cent. The combination will also increase the desire to eat more unhealthy junk food for hours after finishing breakfast.

"We were surprised by the impact that the sugar-sweetened drinks had on metabolism when they were paired with higher-protein meals. This combination also increased study subjects' desire to eat savoury and salty foods for four hours after eating," said lead author Shanon Casperson, from USDA-Agricultural Research Service Grand Forks Human Nutrition Research Centre in the US. If a sugar-sweetened drink was consumed with a 15 per cent protein meal, fat oxidation decreased by 7.2g on average, while with an intake of 30 per cent protein meal fat oxidation reduced by 12.6g on average. While having a sugar-sweetened drink increased the amount of energy used to metabolise the meal, the increased expenditure did not even out the consumption of additional calories from the drink, the researchers said, in the paper published in the journal BMC Nutrition.

New wearable e-skin sensor boosts health monitoring

Japanese scientists have developed a hypoallergenic electronic sensor that can be worn on the skin to monitor a person's health continuously over a long period. The wearable device, that can be worn for a week without discomfort, has elastic electrodes, made up of breathable nanoscale meshes, that lets the skin breathe, preventing inflammation. The electrodes contains a water-soluble polymer, polyvinyl alcohol (PVA), and a gold layer -- materials considered safe and biologically compatible with the body. "We learned that devices that can be worn for a week or longer for continuous monitoring were needed for practical use in medical and sports applications," said Takao Someya, Professor at the University of Tokyo.

The device can be applied by spraying a tiny amount of water, which dissolves the PVA nanofibers and allows it to stick easily to the skin. It gets conformed seamlessly to curvilinear surfaces of human skin, such as sweat pores and the ridges of an index finger's fingerprint pattern. In addition to nursing care and medical application the new device promises to enable continuous, precise monitoring of athletes' physiological signals and bodily motion without impeding their training or performance.

For the study, detailed in the journal Nature Nanotechnology, the team conducted a skin patch test on 20 subjects and detected no inflammation on the participant's skin after they had worn the device for a week.Furthermore, the device's mechanical durability was proved through the repeated bending and stretching, exceeding 10,000 times, of a conductor attached on the forefinger. Its readings of the electrical activity of muscles were comparable to those obtained through conventional gel electrodes, the researchers said. "It will become possible to monitor patients' vital signs without causing any stress or discomfort," Someya noted.

Ozone pollution tied to cardiovascular health: Study

Exposure to ozone, a powerful greenhouse gas and a widespread air pollutant in many major cities, may cause cardiovascular disease such as heart attack, high blood pressure and stroke, according to a new study of Chinese adults. Ozone is a pollutant formed through a chemical reaction that occurs when sunlight interacts with nitrogen oxides and other organic compounds that are generated by coal-burning, vehicle exhaust and some natural sources.It has long been associated with adverse health effects in children and adults, Xinhua reported on Monday.

"We know that ozone can damage the respiratory system, reduce lung function and cause asthma attacks," said study author Junfeng Zhang, from Duke and Duke Kunshan University. "Here, we wanted to learn whether ozone affects other aspects of human health, specifically the cardiovascular system."Zhang and colleagues studied 89 healthy adults living in Changsha City of China for one year.

They monitored indoor and outdoor ozone levels, along with other pollutants. At four intervals, the study team took participant blood and urine samples and used a breathing test called spirometry to examine a set of factors that could contribute to cardiovascular and respiratory disease.

The team examined inflammation and oxidative stress, arterial stiffness, blood pressure, clotting factors and lung function in participants. They noted blood platelet activation, which is a risk factor for clotting, and an increase in blood pressure, suggesting a possible mechanism by which ozone may affect cardiovascular health.

These effects were found with ozone exposure lower than that which affects respiratory health, and lower than current U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality standards. "This study shows that standards for safe ozone exposure should take into account its effect on cardiovascular disease risk," said Zhang.

These findings, by a team from Duke University, Tsinghua University, Duke Kunshan University and Peking University, were published Monday in the US journal JAMA Internal Medicine. "This study provides mechanistic support to previously observed associations between low-level ozone exposure and cardiovascular disease outcomes," the study concluded.

Tweaking brain circuits may alleviate depression

In a ray of hope for people suffering from social withdrawal and helplessness behaviour, scientists from the University of California San Diego have linked specific wiring in the brain to distinct behavioural symptoms of depression. The team found brain circuits tied to feelings of despair and helplessness and were able to alleviate and even reverse such symptoms in mice. "We took an approach of studying depression in the sense that different brain areas and circuits of the brain might mediate or contribute to very discrete aspects of depression," said study first-author Daniel Knowland, a UC San Diego graduate student.

"For example, brain area A might contribute to loss of appetite, brain area B to social withdrawal and so forth," he added in the study published in the journal Cell. According to Assistant Professor Byungkook Lim, the results require much more study and evaluation to be applied to humans with depression but new research in animal models provides solid grounding. "This is one of the first studies providing clear evidence showing that different brain circuitry is involved in different types of depressive behaviour with specific symptoms," said Lim.

Each area of the brain is different with distinct cell types and connectivity. "If we can confirm that one area of circuitry is more involved in a particular symptom than another, we may eventually be able to treat a depression patient more efficiently than treating everyone the same way," Lim noted. For the research, the scientists identified two populations of neurons in the brain's ventral pallidum region (part of the basal ganglia) as key to underlying depressive behaviour.



From left, Greg Butler, Guillaume Rocheron and Dominic Tuohy pose with their awards in Special Visual Effects for the film 1917, backstage at the Bafta Film Awards, in central London.

Alaya F: I don't have a set idea on what I want to do

One-film old Alaya F is already a busy bee. Pooja Bedi's daughter Alaya, who has impressed all with her brilliant debut act in the recent "Jawaani Jaaneman", is celebrating all the ovation coming her way in the best way possible -- by working. "I am back to work. It's the kind of celebration I like," Alaya told. The Nitin Kakkar directorial, presented by Pooja Entertainment in association with Black Knight Films and Northern Lights Films, released on January 31. It minted about Rs 20 crore in its first week in India.



She already has a three-film deal from Northern Lights Films. She has another film lined up with Pooja Entertainment, though she prefers to be tight-lipped about it for now. "I am just exploring my options. There's a lot of interest coming from a lot of people. I am very grateful. I just hope I make the right choices now," said Alaya. "I don't have a set idea on what I want to do or specifically not do. I want people to look at me in all sorts of ways. I don't want to be categorised as an actor who does a certain type of roles," she added.

She might be flooded with offers now but bagging her first film was "tough". "Intially, people would have reasons to say no. I would be very upset. I would wonder 'why not?' Then I realised that if people are making a film and investing crores in it, at the end of the day they have to make a decision that is right for their film," she said.

"Once I realised that, I focused on doing my best. Now when I see 'Jawaani Jaaneman', I feel the character is exactly like me. I remember looking at the character and saying, 'oh my god! I am perfect for the character'. I was lucky to fit into this role. I was lucky that Tia was like me and thankfully they also liked my acting. It worked out well," she added.

In "Jawaani Jaaneman", Alaya plays Saif Ali Khan and Tabu's daughter. The story, which is set in London, revolves around Tia, who is in search of her father and, after a DNA test, she discovers Saif's character, an unmarried Casanova, is her father. She has been getting encouraging words from people for her role. "The most valuable feedback that I have got is, 'just keep doing what you are doing'," said the young actor, who is all charged up to take on new roles.

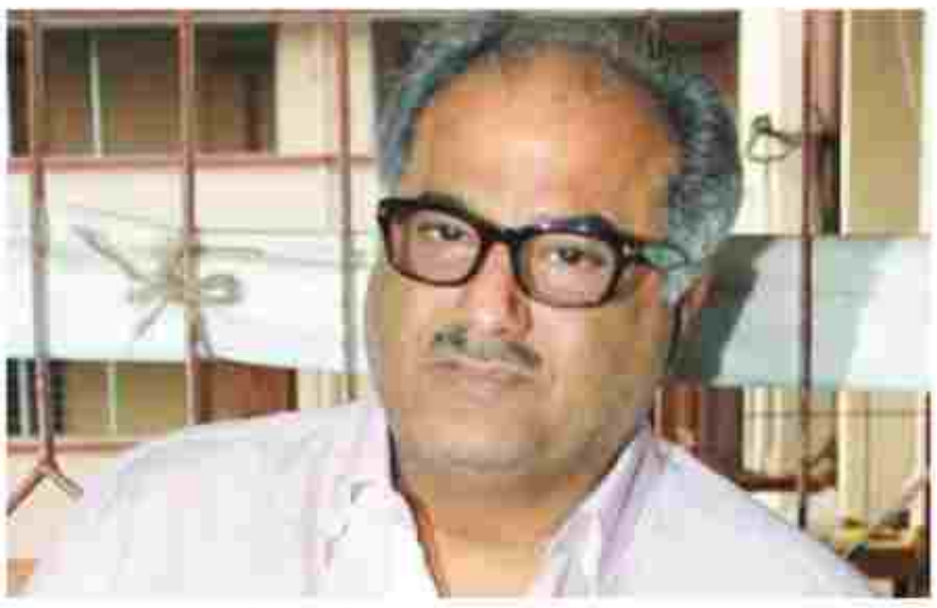
Had she ever thought of having a back-up plan? "Before I started this, I said 'I love doing this. No matter what, I will stick to this'," she pointed out. She believes that if you love doing something, put in time and energy. "Sooner or later, it will work out. I didn't keep a back-up plan," said the passionate actor. Although she is Pooja Bedi's daughter and the granddaughter of veteran actor Kabir Bedi, she insists her family has nothing to do with her love for acting.

"I think I ran away from acting for a long time. I had gone to study direction. I fell in love with acting only because of acting. I remember doing one (acting) class randomly. I remember loving being in front of the camera. I remember the high that I got from doing it," recalled the youngster. "I thought this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. It's just that feeling that triggered all that in me," she added.

She is not an impulsive person and believes in planning out things. "I literally plan everything. Even when I decided to act, that time I made a full five-year plan. I typed it out and printed it and gave it to my parents. My five-year plan is now coming towards an end. So far everything has gone on track," she said. "What else is in my five-year plan? I get to find out. I don't want to... we will see," she signed off.

Boney Kapoor: We Kapoors are 'Chemburites' at heart

Chembur, an eastern suburb of Mumbai, now has an intersection named after late Bollywood producer Surinder Kapoor, the father of actors Anil and Sanjay Kapoor, and producer Boney Kapoor. Remembering his father on the naming of Surinder Kapoor Chowk, Boney Kapoor said his family members are true "Chemburites".



"As a son, I have a lot of memories with my dad, but overall we, including our neighbours in Chembur where we all born and brought up, remember him as a warm-hearted, respected and jovial man. He always had a smile. Although he went through a tough time at one point in his career as a film producer, I never saw him dejected or bitter. He fought all crises with a smile and that is a quality all of us brothers whether me, Anil and Sanjay have imbibed. Life was never easy for us but my father believed that one does not have to be negative to deal with a bad situation," Boney told.

Boney recalled his father's journey from Peshawar after Partition, remembering how he had been mentored by Prithvi Raj Kapoor, and how he worked as an assistant on "Mughal-e-Azam", before he went on to produce films like "Hum Paanch", "Woh 7 Din", "Judaai", "Pukar", "No Entry", and "Sirf Tum".

"Papaji came to India in 1952 and he was a socialist. So, whenever he would get a job, he would raise his voice against injustice on employees and then the company would fire him. My grandfather was worried, so he told Bade Papaji (Prithvi Raj Kapoor) to take him under his wings," said Boney.

According to Boney, his father always stood by all his unit members and provided equal facilities to even employers of the lowest hierarchy. "That is how my father won loyalty from every employee. I have tried to maintain the same. In our company there are people working for the last 30 years. When I went through a bad time, I couldn't pay them salaries on time but none of them left us, because for all of them, it was not the company' going through a bad phase, it was us'. So together' we faced a bad time and came out of it. Perhaps that is the socialist attitude and trust-building that we have till today," shared the producer of the cult film "Mr India".

What is so special about Chembur? "Aapnapan hai ek, ye kaise samjhaoon (there is an affinity, how do I explain this)? My father got a foothold in the film industry because of Bade Papaji and Shammi (Kapoor) uncle. After his marriage, Raj Kapoor saab had given him a place to stay in his Shantibagh bungalow in Chembur. Since my father was a socialist, he refused to take any financial help from my grandfather and also from my maternal grandfather to buy a house. So until he got one, he stayed at the outhouse of Raj uncle's bungalow," Boney said.

Describing their native house in Tilak Nagar as a one-room kitchen set-up with a community toilet that was used by six other families, who were neighbours, Boney said: "We had less money but we were happy. My brothers and I, as well as our sister Reena, who taught me driving that came handy later in life as a production guy. We still love calling ourselves Chemburites'. I took Sri(devi) to show our old house in Chembur before our marriage. She took me to Chennai to show her native place. I can go on, but in nutshell we brothers are Chembur Boys' till today!" Boney thanked the people of Chembur and Sanjay Asrani, Chairman of Safal Group, and Rahul Shewle, Member of Parliament, for the honour bestowed on his late father.

Sara Ali Khan: I don't take people's opinions seriously



Actress Sara Ali Khan, who is gearing up for the release of "Love Aaj Kal", says that she doesn't take people's opinions too seriously. She added that in the age of social media, people make and break opinions only too quickly.

"I think it (passing judgments quickly) is great. I feel you should make your judgments quickly because in the age of social media, you also take it back quickly. When someone says that he or she doesn't like a shot or a song (in a film) in a glance, but if they will watch it two or three times, then they might like it. So, I feel we shouldn't pay heed to what people say. I think everything is there in an open display, and people express their opinions a lot in today's time. People make and break their opinions too quickly, so I don't take it too seriously," said Sara, while promoting her upcoming film "Love Aaj Kal" with co-star Kartik Aaryan in Mumbai.

Sara's comment came in the wake of her recent statement during an interview, where she said that the harsh criticism that the trailer of her new film drew from certain quarters has hurt her. In the interview, she said that she didn't care if people judged her for her weight or fashion choices, but it did affect her when her acting skills were panned. The trailer for Imtiaz Ali's "Love Aaj Kal" was heavily panned online, mostly by netizens who felt Sara was overacting. Fans were disappointed at Sara for seemingly hamming through a particular scene. However, Sara says she was actually crying while shooting for the scene. Criticism apart, people are eager to see Kartik and Sara's chemistry on the big screen for the first time, as it has been reported that the two stars have been dating for a while now.

"We are grateful for it," Sara said about the buzz that the film has generated, adding: "It's not very often you see people showering this kind of love even before anything of the film came out. I am 98 per cent thankful but I am still two per cent nervous because there will be a lot of scrutiny on Valentine's Day. Keeping that aside, we are very thankful for all the encouragement we are getting for this film." Being the daughter of Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh, does she feel her talent is inborn? "I wish that was the case but contrary to popular belief, its (acting) not in the genes. My father and mother have a lot of experience as actors and I have seen them doing that, so I can get some benefit out of that. But talent is a separate thing. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses, and everyone has their destiny and journey. So, I donat think that way," she said.

Sonu Nigam: 'Yeh dil' in 'Pardes' changed my career

Bollywood playback star Sonu Nigam considers his popular hit "Yeh dil deewana" in the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer "Pardes" as the song that changed the course of his career. Sonu feels before that song released, filmmakers and fans alike would dismiss his talent, saying he was just another Mohammad Rafi clone. "Yeh Dil Deewana", filmed on SRK in the 1997 Subhash Ghai film, changed all that, according to the singer. "No one discovered my originality till they heard 'Yeh dil deewana'. I sang this song exactly how the director envisaged it, and both the song and film became superhit, and I became the Sonu Nigam," he added.

Sonu recently paid a visit to Ghai's Whistling Woods film school, where he went down memory lane and recalled about his experience of singing "Yeh dil deewana" for Shah Rukh in the film. The singer is currently busy performing at live concerts and working on non-film songs.



Natalie Portman arrives at the Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles.

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