Secular
# Hindustan
English Daily

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RNI:APENG/2002/09014

Vol : 2 Issue No:296 FRIDAY,20,NOVEMER,2026 Hyderabad Pages :8 Rs 2/-

## Dismantle entire terror networks, prevent attacks before they happen: Amit Shah tells officials



NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday called for a coordinated, intelligence-driven and proactive national strategy to combat terrorism, stressing that security agencies must dismantle entire terrorist networks, choke their funding channels and prevent attacks before they occur.Addressing the inaugural session of a two-day national counter-terrorism conference organised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Shah said effective Centre-state coordination, stronger intelligence-sharing mechanisms and clearly defined accountability were essential to achieving lasting success in the fight against terrorism.Highlighting recent counter-terrorism operations, the Home Minister said the elimination of Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist Latif Bhat had marked a significant milestone, claiming that Kashmir was free of India-born terrorists for the first time in 35 years.Shah also said the Shahzad Bhatti network had been designated a terrorist organisation under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), with more than 40 of its modules neutralised across the country. Over 100 cases had been registered and more than 271 people arrested in operations against the network in recent times.Describing the pre-emptive identification and arrest of terrorists as the hallmark of an effective security agency, Shah urged state police forces to study and replicate the model, saying the objective should be to apprehend terrorists before they could execute attacks.The Home Minister reiterated the government's zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and said a series of legal, institutional and operational reforms had been undertaken to strengthen the country's counter-terrorism framework.Shah said 303 fugitives had been brought back to India from 36 countries since 2019 under a special initiative involving the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the Ministry of Home Affairs and intelligence agencies.“Bringing back those responsible for terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking, particularly the masterminds operating from foreign soil, were critical moves in eliminating these threats,” Shah said.He cited the September 2022 crackdown on the Popular Front of India (PFI) as an example of effective inter-state coordination, claiming that simultaneous operations across 11 states in a single night dismantled the organisation's network and prevented potential security threats.Highlighting the reorganisation of the Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) to cover cyber security, narcotics, organised crime networks and emerging radicalisation hotspots, Shah said its functioning was modernised in 2023 through advanced technology. A National Memory Bank and centralised database were also developed to improve intelligence coordination.Emphasising the need for further reforms, Shah called for stronger cyber capabilities in state Anti-Terrorism Squads (ATS), improved coordination with financial investigation agencies and a comprehensive approach to dismantling terror-financing networks.He stressed that intelligence gathered at the police station level must pass through multiple institutional layers to reach Directors General of Police, ensuring timely and actionable inputs.The Home Minister also called for establishing a Quadrangular Regional Security Grid in border states and strengthening the operational capabilities of ATS units nationwide. He said the coordinated approach must target not just individual terrorists but the entire ecosystem supporting terrorism.Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Intelligence Bureau Director Mahesh Dikshit, Special Secretary (Internal Security) Anand Swarup and NIA Director General Rakesh Aggarwal were among those present.Senior police officers from states and Union Territories, counter-terrorism agency representatives, and experts in law, forensics and technology are attending the two-day conference, which aims to strengthen coordination and develop an integrated national response to emerging security challenges.

## India now a rich country but sanitation performance remains poor: SC



The Supreme Court has expressed concern over India's poor sanitation record despite its economic growth, saying the failure to effectively implement Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules has undermined progress made in other sectors.A bench of Justices SVN Bhatti and NV Anjaria, in an order passed on November 17, said the country had the resources to address its sanitation challenges but stressed the need for coordinated action by government authorities and citizens."The court notes that Bharat is now a rich country but has poor sanitation performance. The growth achieved in other fields is completely negated by the negative impact from this manageable dereliction by all the stakeholders," the bench observed.The court was hearing appeals arising from National Green Tribunal orders on compliance by municipal corporations with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 and 2026.It said the initial steps of initiating the process and establishing an administrative mechanism to monitor the implementation of the 2026 rules had been completed. However, the overall performance continued to fall short of the objectives set by Parliament.Emphasising the need for collective responsibility, the bench said poor sanitation and waste management affected the image of both society and the country. It pointed out that economies with comparable resources, both within India and abroad, had successfully achieved their sanitation and hygiene targets."Our existing resources make it possible, albeit through unwavering implementation by the statutory enforcing authorities and adherence by the citizens," it said.The bench also flagged a lack of coordination among different arms of the government, observing that each organ of the State appeared to be functioning independently."The cogs (citizens) that connect them must work towards the objective for realising good results," it said.Noting that the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and the SWM Rules were already in place, the court said their implementation remained inadequate. It said it had taken up the task of monitoring local bodies through the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee (SCMC) to ensure the constitutional right to a pollution-free environment.The bench described the exercise as an urgent intervention, saying the committee's efforts should eventually give way to a system of self-regulation by stakeholders.Reposing confidence in the SCMC and district collectors, the court said district-level officials had a crucial role in ensuring compliance. It asked collectors to devise strategies suited to local requirements and work with chief secretaries and the monitoring committee to implement the rules.The court also pointed to gaps in the SCMC's report, particularly regarding the unorganised residential, commercial and business sectors, which account for a significant share of the waste management problem.It noted that the report did not provide details of notices issued to defaulters or additional areas identified for temporary disconnection of water and electricity supply to ensure compliance.

## Japan to hold its first live-fire missile drills on Indian ranges next year



NEW DELHI: India and Japan on Thursday signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) under which Japan's Self-Defence Forces will conduct live-fire drills at Indian firing ranges next year, including with surface-to-ship missiles. It will be the first time Japanese forces fire missiles on Indian soil.The LoI was the biggest outcome of the fourth India-Japan 2+2 foreign and defence ministerial dialogue in Tokyo. Defence minister Rajnath Singh and external affairs minister S Jaishankar held talks there with their Japanese counterparts, Shinjiro Koizumi and Toshimitsu Motegi.Announcing the outcome after the joint press conference, Koizumi said: "We agreed that next year, the Self-Defense Forces will use an Indian firing range for the first time. This is also a major step strategically."Explaining the reason behind the move, a source in the defence establishment said Japan simply does not have the space at home to fire a missile with a 1,000-km range. "You need a long stretch of open sea for such firings and that is what Indian ranges offer," the source said. According to the sources, Tokyo is eyeing Indian facilities to train with its new Type-25 surface-to-ship missile as well as smaller attack drones. They added that the DRDO's Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur, on the Odisha coast, is the likely venue.The Type-25 is an upgraded version of the Type-12. It entered service in March as Japan's first home-grown stand-off missile. Tokyo will be following a well-worn path. Singapore, which is even shorter of training space at home, has for years sent its gunners to Deolali, its F-16s to Kalaikunda and its mechanised units to Babina. On the defence-industrial front, the two sides set a timeline for UNICORN, (short for Unified Complex Radio Antenna). The stealth mast bundles a warship's communication antennas into a single enclosed structure to reduce its radar signature. It is fitted on Japan's Mogami-class frigates and would be Japan's first defence equipment export to India.According to the joint statement, the ministers expect India to grant Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for the project by February next year. The AoN, usually granted by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), is the first formal step in India's defence procurement process.The ministers also committed to exploring joint development and design of naval ships, and to strengthening mine-countermeasure capabilities.In a strong message to Pakistan, the ministers also condemned cross-border terrorism and called for concerted action against UN-listed groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and their proxies.The Resistance Front, an LeT proxy, was behind the Pahalgam massacre last year. Operation Sindoor had struck nine LeT and JeM terror camps in Pakistan and PoK, including their headquarters at Muridke and Bahawalpur.China was not named, but its shadow was hard to miss as the ministers discussed the South and East China Seas and restated their opposition to any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force or coercion. They also flagged "grave concerns" over economic coercion through arbitrary export restrictions, which is widely seen as a swipe at Beijing's curbs on rare earths and critical minerals."We agreed to accelerate cooperation in the areas of niche, underwater and missile technologies," Singh further said. He added that both sides want an early agreement under which each country's navy could repair warships at the other's facilities.A day before the 2+2, the defence minister had also inspected a Mogami-class stealth frigate at the Yokosuka naval base. Japan has been pitching the 5,500-tonne warship to India, offering its design and the option of building it in Indian shipyards. As TNIE reported in July, the proposal is understood to include fitting Indian weapons such as the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. India is actively evaluating it, and the frigates are likely to be built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders or Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers.The two sides also backed each other's bids for permanent seats in an expanded UN Security Council. The next 2+2 is set to be held in India with the two marking 75 years of diplomatic ties.

## Green India Mission a 'total failure' over 10 years, says PAC chief Venugopal

Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairman KC Venugopal on Thursday termed the Green India Mission a "total failure", alleging that the programme had failed to achieve its objectives even a decade after its launch.Speaking to reporters after a PAC meeting in Parliament, the Congress leader said members were dissatisfied with the Environment Ministry's performance and concerned about the mission's implementation.The committee heard presentations from officials of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on the subject of 'Performance Audit on Green India Mission', based on a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)."All members of the committee are very concerned about the failure of this scheme. Nothing has happened in this mission over the last 10 years. The Green India Mission is a total failure," Venugopal said.He said the committee was particularly concerned about Delhi's worsening pollution situation and stressed that the Aravalli range should be accorded priority under the mission.Venugopal said the ministry secretary had assured the panel that the guidelines would be finalised within one or two months. However, the committee remained dissatisfied with the ministry's action plan, he added.The National Mission for a Green India, commonly known as the Green India Mission, is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change. Launched in February 2014, it seeks to protect, restore and enhance the country's forest cover while addressing the challenges of climate change.The mission aims to strengthen biodiversity conservation, ecological sustainability and the livelihoods of communities dependent on forest resources. Its approach extends beyond tree plantation to include the conservation of mangroves, wetlands and critical habitats, besides

# A test for judicial review in India

*The highest court in the U.K., earlier this month, found that the actions of Prime Minister Boris Johnson to prorogue Parliament were unlawful. The matter had come to be heard before a panel of 11 Justices, the permitted maximum quota of serving Justices, of the Supreme Court. The verdict had the effect of quashing the Queen's order to prorogue Parliament on the advice of the Prime Minister. By doing so, the U.K. Supreme Court asserted its majesty in the constitutional framework and functioned as the true sentinel on the qui vive. As legal ramifications of this decision ripple through common law countries and constitutional democracies, what is equally startling is the time taken by the country's apex court to hold and conclude these proceedings. It was known that the Boris Johnson-led government had promised to make Britain leave the European Union by October 31, even if that meant an exit without a deal. The suspicion around actions of the government grew when Mr. Johnson advised the Queen to prorogue Parliament for it to reconvene on October 14. The process was widely perceived to be a sharp and calculated move by the government to conclude the Brexit process with minimal parliamentary scrutiny. This triggered a legal challenge culminating with the Scottish Court of Session finding that the Prime Minister had misled the Queen with regard to the prorogation of Parliament. Simultaneously, the matter was heard by the High Court of England and Wales, which ruled that the prerogative powers of the government were non-justiciable. These conflicting decisions were handed down on September 11. The appeals emanating from these two courts were heard by the Supreme Court between September 17 and September 19 and the judgment was delivered on September 24. The entire judicial approach, in dealing with a matter concerning the "fundamentals of democracy", underlines the effectiveness of the judicial review process when conducted in a timely manner. The last parliamentary session in the United Kingdom, which began in June 2017 and lasted more than 340 days, was one of the longest in recent history. The government justified that the prorogation was necessary under such circumstances and also for the preparation of the Queen's Speech. Accepting these arguments, the Scottish Court of Outer House, in the first instance, dismissed the legal challenge on the grounds that this was a matter of "high policy and political judgment" and as such was non-justiciable. Allowing the appeal, the Inner House found that the advice given by Mr. Johnson, which formed the basis for the Queen's order, was justiciable and further, declared it to be unlawful. Upholding this judgment, the Supreme Court confirmed that the prorogation was "unlawful because it had the effect of frustrating or preventing the ability of Parliament to carry out its constitutional functions without reasonable justification." In other countries following the Westminster system of government, this decision should naturally lead to increased introspection of executive actions and provide a boost to due parliamentary processes. Closer home, there have been at least two key executive actions this year that have undermined parliamentary processes: Reservation for Economically Weaker Sections and the Bills passed around Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The Constitutional (One Hundred and Third) Amendment Act 2019 providing reservation for Economically Weaker Sections was brought for consideration of Parliament in less than 48 hours from the time the decision was taken by the Centre. By doing so, the government ensured that there was insufficient time for Parliament scrutiny. The Bills around J&K also suffered from a similar defect. The Monsoon Session of Parliament was originally scheduled to end on July 26 but was extended to August 7 by the government. On August 5, the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019 was suddenly introduced to the 'Parliamentary List of Business'. When the Rajya Sabha convened, Home Minister Amit Shah, at 11.15 a.m., moved the Statutory Resolution proposing to nullify all clauses in Article 370 apart from Clause(1). Copies of the Bill and the Resolution were not provided to MPs till 11.30 a.m. The conventional practice is that legislative documents are provided at least a few days before they are tabled. This is done for the MPs understand the contents of the legislation, seek views and formulate their positions better. The manner in which both these Bills were introduced in Parliament was also in direct violation of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business. In Rajya Sabha, specifically, Rule 69 talks about 'Motions after Introduction of Bills' and 'Scope of Debate'. According to the proviso of Rule 69, there is discretion given to the Chairman in exceptional situations. But, every discretionary power does require that the Chairman must exercise it judiciously and with proper application of mind. There has been no cogent or detailed explanation given by those presiding our Houses of Parliament as to why the government has been allowed to flout parliamentary rules and convention on more than one occasion. Such actions of governments of Mr. Johnson and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have revealed a complete disregard for established parliamentary processes. This has placed democratic institutions in the peril of being weakened. While the courts in the United Kingdom have made their determinations on these issues, there is sufficient material for Indian courts to assess whether executive actions have indeed undermined parliamentary processes. How the court responds to this challenge will determine the majesty of the judicial review process in India.*

# Creating jobs for young India

Amartya Sen had once quipped that India's unemployment figures were low enough to put many developed countries to shame. Professor Sen was, of course, not commending the country's record in employment creation, but instead, highlighting the difficulties involved in measuring employment and unemployment in a developing country. Unemployment has been at the centre of public debates in India recently. The government's Periodic Labour Force Survey carried out in 2017-18 revealed that unemployment in the country reached an all-time high rate of 6.1%. What explains this sudden jump in unemployment in India, which had remained at a rather low rate of around 2% for several decades?

Our estimates based on official employment surveys and the Census show that in 2018, there were 471.5 million persons employed and 30.9 million unemployed in India. At the heart of the unemployment problem in India were young, unemployed men aged 15 to 29 years who comprised 21.1 million or 68.3% of all the unemployed in the country. To understand how their numbers rose recently, we need to examine the behaviour of not just labour demand but also labour supply over time. First, the size of labour supply in India is getting a boost from the rapid expansion of the working-age population in the country — the population of 15-59-year-olds increased at the rate of 14 million a year in the 2000s.

Second, the nature of labour supply is changing too, with increasing enrolment of young adults for education and their rising job aspirations. Of all 15-29-year-old females in India, 31% had been attending schools or colleges in 2018, up from 16.3% in 2005 (although, it needs to be mentioned here that there have been questions on the quality of education received and skills acquired by these young people).

Third, the size of the workforce engaged in agriculture (and allied activities) has been declining in India: from 258.8 million in 2005 to 197.3 million in 2018 (which still accounted for 41.9% of the total workforce in the country). This decline has been partly due to the 'push' from low-productivity agriculture, which has suffered due to stagnant public investment from the 1990s onwards. The decline has also been driven by the 'pull' of new opportunities that emerge in the towns and cities. A significant number of people who are 'employed' according to official statistics could actually have been in 'disguised unemployment' in agriculture (consider a person who does no job but occasionally assists his family in cultivation). Young persons in rural areas will be increasingly keen to exit disguised unemployment in agriculture.

As a result of the above-referred factors, there has been a significant increase in India in the supply of potential workers for the non-agricultural sectors. These are 15-59-year-olds who are not students nor engaged in agriculture. If provided the relevant skills, they could possibly work in industry, construction and services. Our estimates show that the potential non-agricultural workforce in India grew at the rate of 14.2 million a year between 2005 and 2012, which rose further to 17.5 million a year between 2012 and 2018.

How has the growth of labour demand matched up to the job challenge in India? Between 2005 and 2012, construction had been the major source of employment in India, absorbing men who exited agriculture in rural areas, especially in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

The growth of construction jobs was associated with a revival in agricultural incomes and rural wages during this period.

However, the growth of agricultural incomes and the rural economy in India slowed down markedly after 2012. New employment opportunities in construction created in rural India amounted to 18.9 million between 2005 and 2012, which fell sharply to 1.6 million between 2012 and 2018. The size of the manufacturing workforce in India declined by one million between 2012 and 2018, with micro and small firms in the informal sector suffering severe setbacks. At the same time, some segments of the services sector, especially education and professional, business and allied services recorded acceleration in employment growth after 2012. The crisis in the rural economy appears to have been moderated to some extent by an increase in governmental spending in 2016-18.

Even from 2005 to 2012, job creation in industry, construction and services in India (at the rate of 6.3 million a year) was inadequate to absorb the increase in potential job seekers into these sectors (at the rate of 14.2 million a year). Between 2012 and 2018, while the supply of potential workers into the non-agricultural sectors accelerated (to 17.5 million a year), actual labour absorption into these sectors decelerated (to 4.5 million a year). Thus, the mismatch between potential supply of and demand for labour deepened after 2012. While only the women suffered due to the mismatch during 2005-2012, young men were also affected after 2012. In fact, 30-59-year-old men managed to secure 90.4% of all new non-agricultural employment opportunities that emerged in India between 2012 and 2018, leaving too few new jobs for women and younger men.

Faced with the inadequate number of new jobs generated in the economy, women withdrew altogether from the labour market. Of all 15-59-year-old women in India, only 23% were employed in 2018, down from 42.8% in 2005. Correspondingly, there had been a sharp rise in the proportion of women who reported their status as attending to domestic duties in their own households. At the same time, the response of young men to the slow job growth in the economy was to continue in the labour market as job seekers. Among 15-29-year-old men, there was an unprecedented increase in the number of the unemployed, from 6.7 million in 2012 to 21.1 million in 2018. This was indeed the main contributor to the sudden increase in overall unemployment in India.

India faces a tough challenge in creating decent jobs for its growing young population. To tackle this, action will be needed on multiple fronts including investments in human capital, revival of the productive sectors, and programmes to stimulate small entrepreneurship. If the country is unable to make effective use of the strengths of its young women and men now, it can perhaps never do so. Within the next two decades or so, India's population will gradually start getting older, and it will be tragic for millions of poor Indians to grow old before getting even moderately rich.

# The link between jobs, farming and climate

At a panel discussion hosted recently by the students of Delhi's Ambedkar University, the topic was, 'Are we heading for an economic crisis?' Presumably, they had been prompted by the all-absorbing news of a slowing economy. It is indeed correct that such a slowing is taking place. Growth has slowed for the past few quarters the past two-and-a-half years, if we go by annual growth rates. That this has not been comforting to the government is evident from the fact that its Ministers are running from pillar to post in an effort to goose the economy. But should we be worried?

Those who heard the address to the United Nations climate change summit by the teenager Greta Thunberg earlier this month may not be as worried about economic growth as the government is. Globally, industrial growth driven by mindless consumption is the cause of climate change, now unmistakably upon us. But India does need some growth as income levels here are still very low. The problem of low incomes can, however, be tackled even with less growth so long as it is of the appropriate type. So, the slowing of growth in India cannot reasonably be termed a crisis.

There is, however, one feature of the economy that does answer positively to the query of whether it is in crisis today, and that is unemployment. Figures reported in the report of the last Periodic Labour Force Survey point to a dramatic rise in the unemployment rate since 2011-12, when the previous survey on unemployment was undertaken. Apart from the category of 'Urban Females', the most recent estimate of unemployment shows that it is the highest in the 45 years since 1972-73. But even for 'Urban Females', it is double what it was in 2011-12. For the largest cohort, namely 'Rural Males', in 2017-18, it is four times the average for the 40 years up to 2011-12. These figures should convince us of the existence of a grave situation, if not crisis, with respect to employment in the country. In the average country of the OECD, an increase in unemployment of such magnitude would have triggered a nationwide debate, not to mention agitation on the streets.

The government has responded to the slowing of growth by announcing a range of measures, the most prominent of them being the reduction in the corporate tax rate. While this may have a positive effect, the move is not based on the big picture. The tax cut is meant to be a remedy for stagnant corporate investment. But if the level of corporate investment itself reflects some underlying reality, it is only by tackling the latter that we can get to the root of the problem. A large part of corporate sales is driven by rural demand, reflected in the reported lay-offs by biscuit manufacturers. We do not hear their voices or, more importantly, the government does not, as they are less organised than some other sections of the corporate world, the automobile industry being one such.

The rural picture matters not only because the largest numbers are located there but also because of their low incomes. This means that the future growth of demand for much of industrial production is likely to come from there. After all, how many more flat-screen televisions can an urban middle-class household buy once it already possess one? The high unemployment rate for 'Rural Males' does suggest that we have zoomed in up to a reasonable degree of precision on the site of low demand. We must now answer the question of why rural incomes are growing so slowly. The recent history of crop agriculture points towards one reason. In the nine years since 2008-2009, this activity has recorded zero or negative growth in five. Put differently, in the majority of years, it has shown no growth. The economy has very likely not seen anything like this since 1947.

When growth fluctuations include production decline, a particular feature emerges. Households incurring consumption debt in bad crop years would be repaying it in the good ones. This implies that consumption does not grow appreciably even in good years. Recognising the record of agricultural production is sufficient to grasp what we see in India today. This does not imply that other factors do not matter, and we could imagine several, ranging from low export growth to the state of the banking sector, but this does suggest that poor agricultural performance is a significant explanation of slack domestic demand.

Unstable agricultural production first lowers the demand for agricultural labour and, subsequently, its supply, showing up in greater unemployment. It has been pointed out that the investment rate has declined. This is indeed correct but this may well be a reflection of the poor agricultural performance. Private investment both follows output growth and leads it. When non-agricultural firms observe slow agricultural growth, they are likely to shrink their investment plans and may not revise their decision till this growth improves. Thus, attempting to influence the private investment rate is to only deal with a symptom. It is rural income generation that is the problem.

Any long-term solution to the problem of unemployment to which the slowing growth of the economy is related must start with agricultural production. Observing the performance of crop agriculture for close to a decade since 2008-09, we might say that we are witnessing something wholly new in India. It has long been recognised that there is a crop-yield cycle related to annual variations in rainfall but we are now witnessing a stagnation. Now, unlike in the case of a cycle, recovery cannot simply be assumed. We would need the expertise of agricultural scientists to confirm what exactly is responsible for this state but it would not be out to place to ask if there is not a role for ecological factors in causing agricultural stagnation.

These factors encompass land degradation involving loss of soil moisture and nutrients, and the drop in the water table, leading to scarcity which raises the cost of cultivation. Almost all of this is directly man-made, related as it is to over-exploitation or abuse, as in the case of excessive fertilizer use, of the earth's resources. Then there the increasingly erratic rainfall, seemingly god-given but actually due to climate change entirely induced by human action. A deeper adaptation is required to deal with these factors. Intelligent governance, resource deployment and change in farmer behaviour would all need to combine for this.

It is significant that the reality of an unstable agricultural sector rendering economy-wide growth fragile has not elicited an adequate economic policy response. Policy focus is disproportionately on the tax rate, the ease of doing business in the non-agricultural sector and a fussy adherence to a dubious fiscal-balance target. It is now time to draw in the public agricultural institutes and farmer bodies for their views on how to resuscitate the sector. We may be experiencing an ecological undertow, and it could defeat our best-laid plans for progress.

# The problems with a DNA registry

Despite the spate of violent attacks against women, including rapes, in India, very few of the men implicated have been convicted. While identifying the rapist is the first step to serving justice, his identity does not guarantee due punishment or a stiff sentence for the crime. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, only about a quarter of rape cases ended in conviction in 2016. These rates are low in other countries too. The outrage over these attacks has reinforced the belief that India needs a sex offenders' database or a DNA database of those accused and charged with rape. India has developed a draft Bill for such a DNA database and the Andhra Pradesh government even announced that it has signed up with a private agency for collecting DNA from all its citizens.

Based on experience in other countries, building such a database is not easy, does not always offer justice, and is an ethical landmine of sorts, say many experts who have been studying the use of DNA databases for forensics. A few people may roll their eyes at these concerns, since rape is such a serious offence. But even those who routinely use DNA databases express serious concerns about DNA databases and profiling. For instance, Peter Neufeld, co-founder of the Innocence Project, which uses DNA to exonerate people on death row, has said that we need to make "forensic science more about science and less about law enforcement so it becomes an impartial assessor of evidence rather than a branch of law enforcement."

DNA identification technologies have advanced so much that even minor genetic differences, such as those among family members, may be used to distinguish individuals and identify a person from his or her unique DNA. Still, planting of DNA in a crime scene, misinterpretation of tests, and errors in analyses have all taken place in cases where DNA has been used to implicate a suspect, resulting in the miscarriage of justice. Besides, everybody leaves traces of DNA in numerous places, as cells are shed, leading to ridiculous mistakes such as the Phantom of Heilbronn (when the German police admitted that a woman they were searching for more than 15 years based on DNA traces at crime scenes never in fact existed). Protecting innocent people's privacy and their civil liberties and rights are the main concerns.

In the aftermath of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, people will have a better appreciation of how their DNA information could be misused just as their personal information and profiles are being misused by many data mining companies.

When DNA tests were initially used, they were meant to supplement other evidence. For instance, when the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Combined DNA Index System was first developed, it was limited to those who had been convicted of serious crimes. But the law was changed and now DNA is collected from suspects who may be arrested (not convicted) or charged with minor offences. The expansion of this technology to include potentially innocent people squashes their constitutional rights with the assumption of guilt.

The police sometimes use DNA dragnets whereby all the people in a community are persuaded to give their saliva or blood in order to identify a possible suspect amongst them. These methods are simply an expansion of the 'stop and search' approach to target particular groups of people on the basis of race, ethnicity or class, even though most of their members would be innocent. Such samples later get included in forensic DNA databanks, thus violating people's civil liberties.

In a number of cases, the police may follow persons they suspect and then gather their DNA surreptitiously (for example, by taking a bottle or cup they were drinking from) and without warrants. Collecting this so-called "abandoned DNA" has been challenged as being clearly unethical and unlawful.

In the recent capture of an elusive serial killer in California, DNA at a crime scene was matched from a company that gathers DNA for genealogy. A related family member, a great-great-grandparent, according to the Los Angeles Times, was matched and using the family tree, possible relatives who could be the suspect were then identified.

Later the police followed the suspect and obtained his DNA surreptitiously. The use of the genealogy database, a source not used in the past, was seen as a novel technique, a breakthrough by law enforcement agencies that had been stymied for a long time. Still, a number of people would fall under suspicion simply because they are related to a suspect. As with Facebook, where a person's personal details also end up breaching the privacy of their friends, there is lot to be concerned about.

Law enforcement is responsible for gathering DNA for forensics, and police bias towards minorities leads to the latter's over-representation. It was reported that in 2007, close to three-quarters of the young black male population in the U.K. were on the DNA database. Scholars have discussed this civil rights matter extensively in the media.

If such a system were set up in India, one would expect minorities to make up the bulk of the DNA, not implying that they are the criminals, just that they are the ones the police would most suspect and therefore gather DNA from.

What, then, are the implications of living in a society where DNA can be readily gathered, analysed, profiled, and then the data stored permanently in a number of databanks? An increasing number of sites for genealogy, genetic testing, medical information and criminal justice are now gathering and maintaining such information. How can it be used in a way that respects the rights of people and their privacy?

In 2010, the National DNA Database of the U.K. contained DNA profiles and samples from about six million individuals. Later, based on the requirements of the Protection of Freedoms Act of 2012, the U.K. government said that it deleted the profiles of close to 1.8 million innocent adults and children. Some people have said that having everyone's DNA in the database would be a good thing, since anyone can be apprehended if matched to a crime scene. But experience with the U.K. and U.S. databanks has shown that having more innocent people's DNA stored increases the chances of a false positive and has not increased the chances of finding a guilty match.

Regarding a DNA database for India, at the very least, the following should be ensured. One, it is absolutely essential that the people from whom DNA is taken give their informed consent; taking DNA surreptitiously should be prohibited.

Two, a court order should be required for obtaining DNA without informed consent and the DNA should only be compared with the crime scene DNA for the suspect.

Three, those who are cleared for a crime should not have their DNA information stored, and DNA gathered from offenders should be destroyed after identification so that such information is not used for profiling in future. Four, a court order should be necessary to access medical records for genetic data.

# Where the law needs to change track: on the Railways Act

In late April, a bus with schoolchildren collided with a train at an unmanned railway level crossing, near Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh. Thirteen of them died. This is not the first time that an incident of this nature has occurred, so some questions need to be asked. Is there any mandate for manning all level crossings? In an incident such as this, where the bus driver was reportedly negligent, is the railway administration liable even if the train engine driver cannot be faulted?

We can look for some answers in a 1997 Supreme Court judgment (Union of India v. United India Insurance). In May 1979, at Akaparampa in Kerala, 40 passengers and the driver of a passenger bus that had been hired were killed when the vehicle was hit by a train at an unmanned level crossing. Cases were filed before the Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal, Ernakulam, claiming compensation against the owner and insurance company of the bus as well as the Indian Railways.

The Tribunal awarded compensation against the owner. The liability of the insurance company was restricted to a measly ?500 per victim on the basis of restriction of liability contained in the terms of the policy. In appeals taken to the High Court, the Railways too was made liable for negligence in not making provisions for a gate and personnel to mind the gate. Aggrieved, the Railways went to the Supreme Court. The legal issues addressed by the Supreme Court are instructive for what the Railways was required to do.

A claim for damages for negligence of the defendant falls in the arena of a civil wrong called a tort action. In relation to claims for railway accidents, the Railways Act provides for fixed compensation on predetermined scales. It also provides a forum for passengers to make claims in the form of Railway Claims Tribunals situated in different parts of India. But there is a limitation. Only a passenger on a train can make a claim before the Tribunal. Passengers of a bus or motor vehicle who may have been harmed after a collision with a train can only approach the Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal. However, this tribunal can entertain the claim against the Railways also as a joint tortfeasor if the negligence of the Railways is established.

In the course of the judgment, the Supreme Court borrowed the neighbourhood principle articulated in Donoghue v. Stevenson (1932). It said that the duty of care for the Railways extends not only to those who use the Railways' services but also to people who are "neighbours" namely, users of vehicles on roads that intersect with tracks. Consequently, there is a common law liability for the railway administration for an accident at an unmanned crossing, even in the absence of specific provisions in the Railways Act, where the Central government can direct the administration to lay manned crossings. An action at common law can be filed for nonfeasance because the Railways was involved in what are recognised as dangerous operations and hence is bound to take care of road users.

It took up the issue of whether there could be any breach or a common law duty on the part of the Railways if it does not take notice of the increase in the volume of rail and motor traffic at the unmanned crossing, and if it does not take adequate steps such as putting up gates with a watchman to prevent accidents at such a point. It said that there existed a precedent from England that was examined by the House of Lords that the Railways should take all precautions that will reduce danger to the minimum. It approved the estimate made in Lloyds Bank Ltd. v. Railway Executive (1952) that if 75 to 100 vehicles crossed the level crossing per day, the Railways owed a duty of care at common law to provide for a gate with a watchman.

If such a duty can be seen from factual circumstance, the corollary shall be that non-exercise of the power of the government to direct the Railways to lay gates shall be construed as irrational. Alternatively, if the plaintiff had no idea of particularly relying upon the exercise of power by the authority in his favour but is a matter of general reliance, society could by previous experience expect the exercise of such a power and if such an expectation stood belied, then too a conclusion could be drawn that the non-exercise of power by the authority was irrational. The running of trains by the Railways, as pointed out in Commissioner for Railways v. Mc Dermott (1966), has been recognised as inherently perilous and creates a general expectation that safety measures have been taken by the railway administration.

The decision by the Railways to equip all level crossings in India with gates by 2020 does not mean that unmanned gates will be relegated to history. After all, these gates have not come about because the Railways laid tracks across roads and kept these places unguarded. On the other hand, because of the operations of the Railways, where tracks are laid across large tracts of land, there is greater human movement in these areas; in turn, roads are laid across tracks on both sides. The railway administration should have continuous audit of tracks; when new roads come on either side, traffic must be calibrated, adequate infrastructure built, and safety measures put in place.

Railways Act 1989 (through Section 124) provides compensation on strict liability basis. This means that "when an accident occurs in the course of working a railway" (a collision between trains, or when one is a train carrying passengers, or derailment, or any other accident with a train or any part of a train carrying passengers), then whether or not there has been any wrongful act, neglect or default on the part of the railway administration, an injured passenger or one who has suffered a loss can lawfully maintain an action and recover damages.

On instructions from the principal Bench in Delhi, in every one of the major accidents in India between 2016 and 2017, the families of victims were contacted by the Tribunals where the families resided, and applications for compensation filed. There was quick adjudication for payments. In the incident of a stampede on a foot overbridge at Elphinstone Road station, in Mumbai in 2017, the Bombay Bench of the Railway Claims Tribunal awarded compensation amounts without any contest from the Railways.

Hitherto, responses to claims for compensation arising out of accidents have been on an ad hoc basis but it is time the government amends the Railways Act to provide for compensation on a proactive basis without driving victims or their families to file applications in Tribunals. The ex gratia payments will then be substituted by rights-based compensation regimes that will sensitise the Railways to administer their operations with greater focus on public safety. It is also essential to include within Section 124 of the Railways Act a provision for a claim from a "neighbour to a passenger" in the manner that the Supreme Court recognises, namely, a road user of a motor vehicle.

# AI helped design a promising drug in flat 21 days

In a significant development, a Hong Kong-based health startup has used Artificial Intelligence (AI) to design a drug in just 21 days that showed potential treatments for fibrosis - a discovery that can speed up drug designing for various incurable diseases. The AI system called generative tensorial reinforcement learning (GENTRL) helped design six promising treatments for fibrosis in 21 days. "Four compounds were active in biochemical assays, and two were validated in cell-based assays. One lead candidate was tested and demonstrated favorable pharmacokinetics in mice," said Insilico Medicine in a paper published in the journal Nature Biotechnology.

In comparison, traditional drug discovery starts with the testing of thousands of small molecules in order to get to just a few lead-like molecules and only about one in 10 of these molecules pass clinical trials in human patients. In a similar technique used by DeepMind to outcompete human GO players, GENTRL -- powered by generative chemistry that utilizes modern AI techniques -- can rapidly generate novel molecular structures with specified properties. Insilico has also made GENTRL's source code available as open source on Microsoft-owned repository GitHub.

"The development of these first six molecules as an experimental validation is just the start," said Alex Zhavoronkov, CEO of Insilico Medicine. "By enabling the rapid discovery of novel molecules and by making GENTRL's source code open source, we are ushering in new possibilities for the creation and discovery of new life-saving medicine for incurable diseases," he added. The new technology leveraged Insilico's groundbreaking academic research in 2016 about using modern AI techniques of generative adversarial networks (GAN) and generative reinforcement learning (RL) to accelerate drug discovery.

"When we first proposed the idea of using the AI technique of generative adversarial networks to accelerate drug discovery in 2016, most of the industry was sceptical," said Zhavoronkov. The creation of the new molecules marks the industry's first scientific validation of using of generative and reinforcement learning AI technologies for the successful discovery and generation of new molecules.

Insilico Medicine is developing a comprehensive drug discovery pipeline utilizing AI generating novel molecules with the specified properties for a variety of target classes. "This paper is certainly a really impressive advance and likely to be applicable to many other problems in drug-design," said Dr Michael Levitt, professor of structural biology, Stanford University who received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2013.

# Never too late to start statins for clogged leg arteries

Statins, a class of drugs that reduce illness and mortality in those who are at high risk of cardiovascular disease can also prove effective for those with the peripheral arterial disease even if they start its medication late after diagnosis. According to the study presented today at the 'ESC Congress 2019' patients who stop the drug are at similar risk to those who never start. The research showed the importance of starting and adhering to lifelong medication, preferably at a high dose.

Around 200 million people worldwide have peripheral arterial disease (PAD), a condition in which arteries in the legs are clogged. This restricts blood flow to the legs and raises the chances of stroke and heart attack. Around 30 per cent of patients have pain and cramping in their legs when they walk - referred to as intermittent claudication - while others have gangrene in the feet due to poor circulation. Statins are recommended for all patients with PAD, together with smoking cessation, exercise, healthy diet, and weight loss. Statins diminish the risk of stroke and heart attack by reducing low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, which causes blocked arteries (atherosclerosis).

"The study shows that adherence to statins is essential for the best prognosis. We also show that it is never too late to start medication and benefit from it. On top of that, it is crucial not to reduce the dose because LDL cholesterol levels rise again, thus increasing the overall risk on top of the residual risk for further events," said Dr Jorn Dopheide of Bern University Hospital, Switzerland. The study examined whether adherence to statin therapy influenced survival in patients with symptomatic PAD. The study enrolled 691 patients admitted to hospital between 2010 and 2017 and followed-up for a median of 50 months.

At the beginning of the study, 73 per cent of patients were on statins, increasing to 81 per cent at the 50-month follow-up. The dose of drug also increased between the two time periods, which was paralleled by a significant drop in LDL cholesterol from 97 to 82 mg/dL. Patients who stopped taking a statin had a similar mortality rate (33 per cent) to those who never took the drug (34 per cent). Adhering to statins throughout the 50 months was linked with a 20 per cent rate of death. Taking high-dose statins throughout the study was linked with the lowest mortality rate (10 per cent) while reducing the dosage during the study was related to the highest death rate (43 per cent)

# Weight-loss surgery linked to lower death risk, heart complications

Weight-loss surgery performed on patients with Type 2 diabetes and obesity is associated with a lower risk of death and major adverse cardiovascular events than usual medical care, suggests a study. According to the study published in the journal 'JAMA,' such patients also lost more weight, had better diabetes control, and used fewer medications for diabetes treatment and cardiovascular disease than those undergoing usual medical care.

The observational study looked at nearly 2,300 patients who underwent metabolic surgery and 11,500 matched patients with similar characteristics who received usual medical care. Patients underwent one of four types of weight-loss surgery (also known as metabolic surgery): gastric bypass, sleeve gastrectomy, adjustable gastric banding, or duodenal switch. The primary endpoint of the study was the occurrence of death or one of five major complications associated with obesity and diabetes: coronary artery events, cerebrovascular events, heart failure, atrial fibrillation, and kidney disease.

Over an eight-year period, patients undergoing metabolic surgery were 40 per cent less likely to experience one of these events than those receiving usual medical care. Patients in the surgical group were 41 per cent less likely to die from any cause. "The striking results that we saw after metabolic surgery may be related to the patients' substantial and sustained weight loss," said Ali Aminian, a bariatric surgeon at Cleveland Clinic and lead author of the study.

"However, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that there are beneficial metabolic and hormonal changes after these surgical procedures that are independent of weight loss," added Aminian. Patients who had metabolic surgery had an average of 15 per cent greater weight loss and lower blood sugar levels. "Cardiovascular complications from obesity and diabetes can be devastating. Now that we've seen these remarkable results, a well-designed randomised controlled trial is needed to definitively determine whether metabolic surgery can reduce the incidence of major heart problems in patients with Type 2 diabetes and obesity," said Steven Nissen, Chief Academic Officer of the Heart & Vascular Institute at Cleveland Clinic and the study's senior author.

# Measles cases spike globally as gaps persist in vaccination coverage: WHO

The Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean region, and Europe experienced the greatest upsurges in measles cases in the year 2017 with an estimated 1,10,000 deaths related to the disease across the globe, according to a new report by World Health Organization (WHO). The report, 'Progress Toward Regional Measles Elimination - Worldwide, 2000-2017' a joint publication of WHO and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released on Friday suggested that the spike in measles cases occurred owing to gaps in vaccination coverage.

However, the Western Pacific is the only WHO region where measles incidence fell, the report stated. "Since 2000, over 21 million lives have been saved through measles immunizations. However, reported cases increased by more than 30 percent worldwide from 2016," the report said. "The resurgence of measles is of serious concern, with extended outbreaks occurring across regions, and particularly in countries that had achieved, or were close to achieving measles elimination," said Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Deputy Director General for Programmes at WHO.



*Alluring Oshin Brar`s catty eyes, enough to mesmerize.*

# Varun Dhawan and Alia Bhatt collaborate for their next project





Actress and philanthropist Alia Bhatt has announced the next instalment of her closet sharing initiative 'Mi Wardrobe is Su Wardrobe'. After Anushka Sharma and Sonakshi Sinha, Varun Dhawan is the third celebrity guest to share handpicked favourites from his personal wardrobe, for charity . Proceeds from this wardrobe will support Salaam Bombay Foundation, which works with adolescents growing up in urban slums, to keep them in school through multiple programs that impact their education, health and livelihood. The wardrobe will be available from 20th August on Saltscout.com, an online platform for charity auctions and sales.

Talking about Varun Dhawan's wardrobe contribution, Alia Bhatt stated,"Varun is making his MiSu debut and I'm really thankful for his support! We need to start adopting a more conscious approach towards buying and discarding garments. We want to encourage more and more people to consider adding quality, preowned garments to their wardrobes and to help our environment by reducing waste.`

Speaking on the association, Varun Dhawan said, `Sharing a garment is the most fun form of recycling it and keeping it away from landfills. Mi Wardrobe is Su Wardrobe not only gives fans across the world the opportunity to own a garment from my personal closet, but together, we're also doing our bit for the environment."

Mi Wardrobe is Su Wardrobe is a closet sharing initiative conceptualized by Alia Bhatt. The first 2 installments of MiSu saw Alia's wardrobe on sale, proceeds from which supported the Liter of Light program and The Corbett Foundation respectively. The third installment featured fellow eco-warrior Aunshka Sharma's wardrobe and the fourth had Sonakshi Sinha's support. Proceeds from which have supported various causes that the actors have been associated with. Alia Bhatt has been championing the cause of conservation at multiple levels. She started an ecological and animal welfare initiative called Coexist, 2 years ago, followed by Mi Wardrobe is Su Wardrobe last year.

# Raima Sen opens up on a 'psychologically tiring job'

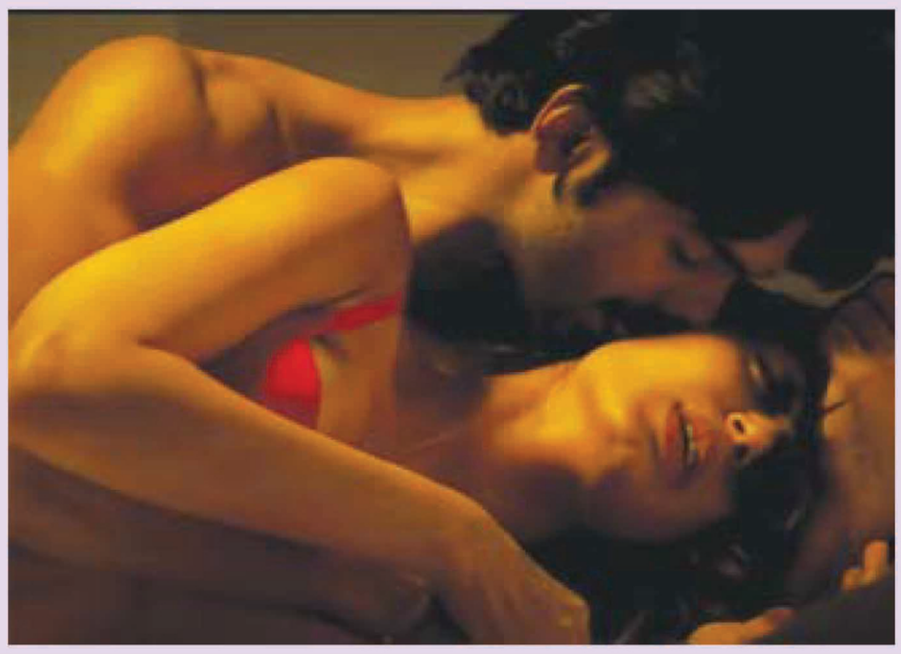
Actress Raima Sen found working on her upcoming film Aliya Basu Gayab Hai a psychologically tiring job. The film has only three characters and has largely been shot in a warehouse. "Working on 'Aliya Basu Gayab Hai' was a very psychologically tiring job. It's not easy for an actor to play a character like Aliya where you go through psychological as well as physical stress, but the way this film has come out, I feel it was all worth it," said Raima. "I had a great time working with my co-actors Vinay Pathak who is also an old friend, and Salim Diwan, a hard-working actor with great future ahead. My director and producer Preeti Singh was always clear with her thoughts, and that has helped us a lot in our performances," she added. Vinay enjoyed preparing and working on the film. "It's a psychological thriller that has a twist in the end. It's something I'd never done before. I can't wait to see how today's audience, who in my opinion are very evolved and observant, react to it," he said.

# 'Raat Ke Saaye Tale' from Bullets raises the mercury

After treating the fans with an entertaining trailer the makers of Bullets have unveiled a steamy song from the film just after the premiere. The song is a perfect weekend treat to raise the mercury. 'Raat Ke Saaye Tale' has been sung by Aakanksha Sharma. The lyrics have been penned by Rohit Sharma. The music has been scored by Raghav Sachar.

Tina and Lolo are bold, badass and brave girls who find themselves on a mission to thwart an illegal arms/weapons deal between two countries. On the quest to gather evidence, a mishap occurs and the duo is suddenly up against an influential politician. They soon find themselves being chased not only by his goons but also by the police. Whilst on the run to save themselves from the repercussions of an incident, they are faced with multiple hurdles.

Will they get arrested, will they get killed or will they be able to complete their mission? Shot in the most stylish and beautiful locales in India and Malaysia, this unpredictable and thrilling chase packed with high octane action will definitely keep you on the edge, craving for more. Along with Sunny Leone & Karishma Tanna, this perfect masala entertainer also sees Deepak Tijori, Viveck Vaswani, Amaan F Khan, Taaha Shah & Mohan Kapur in pivotal roles and is directed by Devang Dholakia.






*Zaara Yesmin`s cool look in a sports bra and shorts.*

# Deepika Padukone is loving this period of creative fertility



Global icon Deepika Padukone who is riding high on the success and glory of her International eye is enjoying and loving this period of creative fertility where the actress is reading new scripts, meeting different directors and exploring a spectrum of creative spaces. Deepika is treating herself by reading a whole range of poetry while also focusing on delving deeper into the characters that she is getting.

The actress, who has always given us some of the most cherished roles is now, closer to finalising her next films, for the upcoming months. Talking about same Deepika Padukone said, `I find listening to various scripts and ideas the most exciting period in an actors creative journey. I'm always looking forward to those moments of creative discussion and collaboration`.

# My character is quite like the real me: Ananya Panday on her upcoming Pan-Indian project



Ananya Panday is on a roll and there's no slowing down, the actress made a strong debut with SOTY 2 in 2019 following which she was seen in Pati Patni Aur Woh. At the same time, the actress was also shooting for Khaali Peeli and most recently, her first Pan-India film with south superstar Vijay Deverakonda was announced. Talking about her character in the Puri Jagannadh movie to a leading daily, Ananya shares, `My character is quite like the real me. I think young girls will be able to relate to her cute, funny and charming personality. I am working on my Telugu too, learning a few words every day on the set. I will try to dub for myself in as many languages as possible.` The actress has been making all the right moves all year long and won several accolades for her debut performance with the most recent ones being the Filmfare award for best debutante and also the 'Exciting Fresh Face' award at the Femina Beauty Awards. Ananya has a busy line up in 2020 with various projects in the pipeline, the youth sensation has always been up for experimenting with various projects and always looks forward to bringing out the various characters to the audience.

Published By : Mir Amjad Ali Khan 16-9-407/A, , Old Malakpet, Hyderabad -36 Contact No : + 9885106759. R.N.I.APENG/2002/09014,
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