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President Droupadi Murmu urges young doctors to uphold medical ethics; make healthcare more people-centric



NEW DELHI: President Droupadi Murmu on Friday urged young doctors to uphold medical ethics and place compassion, sensitivity and service to humanity at the heart of healthcare.Addressing the 12th convocation of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Medical Sciences and Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital (ABVIMS-RMLH), she told the graduating doctors that through their research and efforts, they can make healthcare more effective, accessible, affordable, and people-centric.She also emphasised that their expertise should also benefit remote, underserved communities and the country's primary health care system.She highlighted that access to quality healthcare must not remain limited to urban centres and privileged sections of society, and called upon the doctors to extend their services to people living in remote and underserved areas. “Your thinking and actions should be such that the benefits of your skills reach the underserved communities of society,” she said.The president also encouraged the graduates to contribute not only to clinical care but also to medical research, innovation and the development of solutions suited to India's specific socio-economic, nutritional and environmental conditions.She said that medical education is both a privilege and a profound responsibility towards society. While congratulating the young students, she appreciated the high number of female graduates and observed that the achievements of the daughters reflected the growing participation of women in medical education and the healthcare sector.The president awarded 324 medical graduates degrees across undergraduate, postgraduate and super-speciality disciplines. She also presented 58 gold medals for academic excellence.Highlighting India's transformation in healthcare over the past decade, the president observed that sustained government initiatives had strengthened healthcare delivery from the grassroots to advanced tertiary care.She noted that approximately 1.75 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs were operational across the country, expanding access to primary healthcare services.She also highlighted the expansion of tertiary healthcare and medical education beyond metropolitan cities into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, enabling people, particularly those from rural and underserved communities, to access specialised healthcare services closer to their homes.The president also emphasised the importance of telemedicine in bridging geographical barriers and ensuring that quality medical consultations reach people in remote areas.Noting the growing importance of early screening, detection and management of non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, mental health conditions and various forms of cancer, she said the large-scale screening initiatives undertaken across the country were essential to identifying health conditions at an early stage and ensuring timely treatment, particularly among vulnerable populations.Referring to the central government's initiatives towards strengthening financial protection in healthcare, the president highlighted the role of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY), which provides health coverage of Rs 5 lakh per family per year, helping reduce the financial burden of hospitalisation and improving access to quality healthcare for economically vulnerable families.Describing ABVIMS and Dr RML Hospital as a pioneering institution and a beacon of excellence in medical education and healthcare, Union Health and Family Welfare Minister JP Nadda said that the institution provides an exceptional learning environment by combining a high volume of patient care with quality medical standards, thereby offering students invaluable clinical exposure and practical experience.More than 19 lakh patients availed RML Hospital OPD services in 2025.Nadda said the central government has allocated Rs 15,000 crore towards the creation of 10,000 undergraduate and postgraduate medical seats, and underscored the significant investment made in strengthening India's medical education infrastructure.He urged the graduating doctors to recognise this investment as a responsibility to serve society with dedication, compassion and professional excellence.He also emphasised that students must remain grateful to their teachers for their guidance and acknowledge the sacrifices and support of their parents throughout their academic journey.He observed that the achievements of medical graduates are not solely the result of their individual efforts but also reflect the collective contribution of families, teachers and the larger society.Highlighting the transformation of medical education in India over the past decade, the Union Health Minister noted the expansion of the country's healthcare and medical education infrastructure, including the establishment and operationalisation of 23 All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).He said these institutions are equipped with modern infrastructure and advanced facilities, thus strengthening India's capacity to provide quality medical education and specialised healthcare services.“The government of India is committed to providing world-class medical education infrastructure and healthcare facilities across the country,” he said.He further urged the graduating doctors to carry forward the values of professional integrity, compassion and service, and to dedicate their knowledge and skills towards the health and well-being of the nation.The graduating batch comprised 100 MBBS students from the Batch of 2020, including 79 male and 21 female students. A total of 177 students graduated from MD/MS programmes across 17 broad specialities from the batches of 2022–2025, comprising 115 male and 62 female students.In the super-speciality disciplines, 47 students graduated from DM/M.Ch./DrNB programmes across 13 specialities from the batches of 2022–2025, including 35 male and 12 female students.

Cultural ties strongest guarantee of global peace, says Modi at first SCO Civilisational Dialogue



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the inauguration of the first Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Civilisational Dialogue Forum, at Purana Qila, in New Delhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said cultural connections were the strongest guarantee of global peace, asserting that civilisational cooperation among member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) could further strengthen ties and bring the world closer together.Inaugurating the first SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum at Delhi's Purana Qila, Modi said that while empires had changed the world's map, civilisational dialogues had transformed the way people thought. He said the forum could emerge as a platform to provide direction to the world rather than remain a ceremonial gathering."At a time when discussions about war and unrest dominate the world, we in India are engaging in initiatives on civilisational dialogue and connectivity. This is also important because cultural connections are the strongest guarantee of global peace. This makes this event all the more significant," he said.The event was attended by delegates from several SCO member countries, including Pakistan's minister Musadik Malik.Modi said international collaboration and people-to-people connections, which are widely discussed today, had been nurtured by earlier generations for centuries.Highlighting the history of trade and cultural exchanges, he said the Indus Valley Civilisation and Mesopotamia had trade relations around 5,000 years ago, with subsequent trade routes expanding these networks."India, China, Central Asia and many regions of Eurasia were connected through these ancient trade networks. Scholars and Buddhist monks travelled these routes alongside traders. These journeys led to an exchange of ideas, languages and traditions," he said.The Prime Minister said technological advancements in the 21st century had created new opportunities for cultural connectivity, allowing people in countries that once took months to reach to connect within seconds.Digital platforms had made knowledge-sharing, cultural exchange and international collaboration easier than ever before, he said, urging SCO member countries to make full use of these opportunities.He also highlighted the role of museums, libraries and archives in preserving the shared heritage of member nations, saying ancient manuscripts, rare texts, historical documents and artworks reflected their interconnected histories."Today, technology offers tremendous opportunities to bring this heritage to the next generation," he said.Recalling that the SCO had marked its 25th anniversary a couple of months ago, Modi said the organisation had expanded cooperation in security, economy and connectivity over the years."Cultural and civilisational cooperation among member countries can further strengthen these ties. I am confident that this forum will encourage new ideas and create fresh opportunities for cultural cooperation," he said."Our shared civilisational experiences can also play an important role in bringing the world closer together," he added.Referring to the venue, Modi described Purana Qila as an extraordinary part of India's cultural heritage, with a history that scholars believe dates back thousands of years to the Mahabharata era.He said the cultural performances organised at the historic site, including Vedic chants, presentations on Buddhist philosophy and a depiction of Lord Hanuman's journey, offered glimpses of India's traditions while conveying a message of love and unity."These emotions, these ideas, these teachings are as universal as they are ancient. Beyond geopolitical boundaries, they naturally connect us with one another. This is the purpose of this summit, and it is also what the times demand," he said.Before inaugurating the forum, Modi visited the 'Mahabharat Scroll Pavilion — Anant: A Rare 18th Century Mahabharata Scroll', which showcased an illustrated scroll highlighting India's epic and artistic traditions.He also visited 'Astitva — The Essence of our Existence', an exhibition tracing Delhi's history through archaeological evidence dating from 1,200 BC to 1200 CE. The display includes excavated remains, artefacts, architectural fragments and other discoveries.The three-day forum, being organised by the Union Ministries of Culture and External Affairs, will continue until November 22. It brings together scholars, academics, experts and cultural representatives to explore the shared civilisational heritage of SCO countries.The initiative follows a proposal made by Modi at the SCO Summit in Tianjin, China, in 2025 to establish a dedicated platform for civilisational dialogue under the organisation's framework. The proposal was subsequently welcomed in the Bishkek Declaration of the SCO.Founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001, the SCO initially comprised Russia, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. India and Pakistan became permanent members in 2017, while Iran joined in 2023.

CM Dhami seeks PM Modi's push for roads, rail and tourism in Uttarakhand

DEHRADUN: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Thursday sought the Centre’s support for a host of infrastructure, connectivity, tourism, health, education and energy projects during a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, including an expressway connecting Delhi and Haldwani and expansion of rail connectivity in the hill state.Dhami sought the Prime Minister’s guidance and approval on several proposals, citing Uttarakhand’s strategic, spiritual and tourism significance, geographical challenges and limited financial resources. He said continued central assistance was giving fresh impetus to the state’s development.Among the key demands, Dhami urged the Centre to exempt hill states with limited financial resources from the cap on Externally Aided Projects (EAPs). He also sought financial and technical assistance for the expansion, modernisation and civil-military use of the Chinyalisaur airstrip.To improve connectivity and boost tourism in Kumaon, the chief minister sought approval for a Delhi-Haldwani expressway. He also raised several railway proposals, including a road-cum-rail tunnel, final location survey and approval for an additional alignment of the Tanakpur-Bageshwar rail line, a survey of the Bageshwar-Karnaprayag rail line, doubling of the Haridwar-Dehradun line and consideration of the Rishikesh-Uttarkashi rail line.Dhami further requested the establishment of one of the three proposed All India Institutes of Ayurveda at Kichha in Udham Singh Nagar district.He thanked the Centre for its support in approving the alignment of the Dehradun Ring Road project, estimated to cost around Rs 1,200 crore, and for cooperation in studies and forest clearances for the Dehradun-Mussoorie ropeway.He also acknowledged central assistance for energy, hydropower, drinking water, healthcare, medical education, academic institutions, disaster management and reconstruction projects.Following the meeting, Dhami said the Centre’s continued support was crucial for Uttarakhand’s development, given its geographical constraints and resource limitations.The chief minister also presented Modi with gifts reflecting Uttarakhand’s folk art, heritage and local produce, including a handcrafted coatpatti from Malari, a traditional woollen garment called dorkha, honey, Badri ghee, rajma and red rice from Harsil, besides a replica of Maa Ganga depicting the spiritual significance of the Haridwar Kumbh-2027.Dhami said the state was pushing its ‘Vocal for Local’ and ‘Local to Global’ initiatives. Under an MoU with the ITBP, the state has supplied 2.18 lakh kg of meat sourced from 7,255 goats and 30 tonnes of fish.He said the ‘House of Himalayas’ brand was helping local products reach national and international markets, with its turnover touching Rs 6.9 crore. The brand has registered 22 trademarks, including 11 related to Geographical Indications

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.

We spiced up action, but not emotions in Major: Sesh



Hero Adivi Sesh is excited, enthusiastic and also tired, ahead of the theatrical release of his film Major. He has been going various places along with his team. The film's screened are held in different parts of the country and the response is totally positive from every show. Sesh says he treats Rajamouli as one of his gurus and he followed strategy of RRR in promoting Major by conducting press meets in different cities. Sesh is against the term Pan India, particularly for this movie, as he feels Major is an Indian cinema.

"I don't know Pan India, but I know Indian cinema. Coming to Major, we're releasing the movie countrywide, as not to expand the market. We shot every frame in Telugu and Hindi simultaneously. The treatment was also changed for the two languages. Almost every actor including Saiee Manjrekar dubbed for their roles in Telugu. I don't call it a universal subject, but Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan is a universal man. Everybody knows that Major sacrificed his life, in order to save hundreds in 26/11 attacks. But not many know that he was born in Kerala and was brought up in Bangalore. He was the captain in Hyderabad cantonment and was fought in Kargil war in Kashmir. He was a training officer in Haryana. He did NDA training in Pune and then army training in Indian Military academy in Dehradun. The man went to these many places belong to All India."

Sesh informs he gathered lots of information about Major through different interviews, by meeting his friends, parents, colleagues etc. "It would have been a 10-part series, that much content we gathered. But due to length issues, we had to cut many scenes." We generally see spiced up scenes and elevations to give raise to protagonists in biopics. Sesh says almost everything in Major is very genuine. "We spiced up action scenes, but not emotions. The love story was genuine. We spent two days with hostages. We have hours of records with his friends, parents, colleagues etc." The film, directed by Sashi Kiran Tikka will be hitting the screens in another 3 days on June 3rd.



Huma Qureshi pose for a snap.

Dil Raju values own money than others' purse



Whenever Dil Raju distributes a film at the cost of producer against NRA (Non Returnable Advance) he releases in more theaters. Though he sees drop in collections he never takes out the film from his theaters. But when it comes to F3 he is playing safe. He released the film in a very planned manner. He took away the film from theaters considering the drop in collections. Generally any big film irrespective of footfalls will sustain in three theaters in RTC Cross Roads. But within one week F3 was brought down to single theater. Wherever he is doing own distribution, he took the same care by decreasing the theatres.

Even in the big towns he confined the film to one or two theatres only. In a way this is good as the collections appear more for getting concentrated in less number of screens. If he can do this for his own film, why can't he follow the same for other producers' films as well? This is the question from industry circles now. Well Dil Raju is a shrewd businessman. He saves his own rupee but never cares for others' money.

Seen so many transitions in this film industry: Mahesh Bhatt



Veteran filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt, who has been in the Hindi film industry for more than four decades, says he has seen a number of transitions in the industry including the time when filmmaker Vikram Bhatt marked his debut and then made a name for himself. Besides Vikram, who is Mahesh's family friend, Vikram's daughter Krishna too has boarded the filmmaking band wagon with her upcoming web-series "Untouchables".

"I think I have seen so many transitions of this industry and Vikram came and joined me and then Vikram became a force to reckon with. He has made his foray into the world wide web and Krishna is one of that streak," said Mahesh in a statement.

"As you get older you have faith in the younger people and I personally feel that the younger generation has the urgency and idiom of today to communicate with the world in their language but what they need is the draw from the emotional depth of the journeys that we have taken. My journey, her father's journey and that's how her graph will be fuelled by a deeper understanding and I think she already has that in her," he added. While Mahesh debuted in the film world with his direction of the film "Manzilein Aur Bhi Hain" in 1974, Vikram entered the film industry in 1992 with "Jaanam".

Craft of acting can be taught: Manoj Bajpayee



National Award winning actor Manoj Bajpayee, whose forthcoming release is Neeraj Pandey's "Aiyaary", says the craft of acting can be taught but it needs relentless passion from the learner.

Can acting be taught or does it come from the experiences of life?

Manoj, whose application to the National School of Drama (NSD) was rejected multiple times, told. "I think the craft of acting can be taught. Yes, there's a lot we embrace from the experience of life and to a certain point, there is an inborn talent. But acting is a mix of talent and craft. "I know many average actors, who learnt the craft rightly and with the years of practice, they have managed to find their way. That is why we go to some of the great institutes in our country like NSD and Film and Television Institute of India. Some of the greatest personalities of the craft visit there to teach youngsters about acting.

"Having said that, I believe one can only teach you the art of acting if you are passionate about it... This art form comes from passion." In "Aiyaary", Manoj shares the frame with young actor Sidharth Malhotra. He is impressed by Sidharth's interest in learning.

"I love to share my experience with youngsters, especially with those who have an interest to learn the craft. I have been conducting acting workshops from the age of 26 when I learn it from Barry John. When Sidharth called me and showed his interest to know more about the craft of acting, I was more than happy to share.

"While shooting, I do not try to correct anybody because that is the director's area. But off the set, if a youngster like Sidharth is willing to learn, for me, sharing becomes all the more enjoyable," Manoj said. Giving a glimpse into the story of "Aiyaary", he said: "The story revolves around a mentor and protegee and the ideology between two different generations. The journey of these two characters that I and Sidharth are playing is the life of the story.

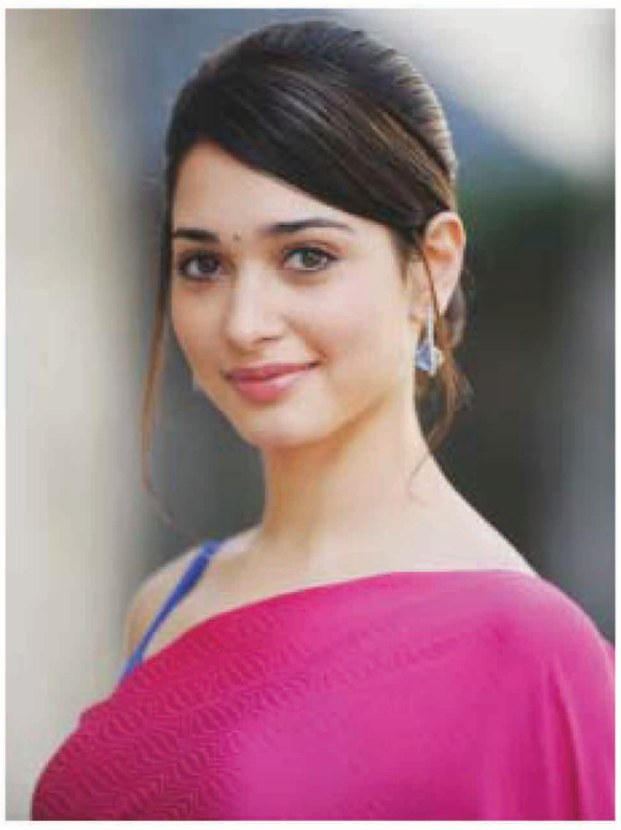
"Yes, there are some look changes in the film which comes in some of the crucial parts of the film, but moreover, the story is very interesting. It is not about soldiers fighting for the country on the border, but within the country." In the past, Manoj has worked with director Neeraj Pandey in films like "Special 26", "Saat Uchakkey" and "Naam Shabana". So how has their relationship evolved?

"I think my bonding has evolved with Neeraj film to film. Off the set, we meet many times and talk a lot about sharing ideas and opinions. We are on the same wavelength intellectually and as creative people," Manoj replied. Starting his career in 1994, Manoj has struggled through his life and most of his content-driven films were not well-promoted. Now that he has opened up with the media and indulges in promotional activities, how does he find the change?

"Well, it is something that needs to be done and to an extent all, we actors are happily doing it. There are some conversations with our media friends that I find interesting. At times, it is not exactly boring, but yes a little monotonous. But I think promoting a film is a good thing. "Earlier in my life, when I started acting in films, there was a constant struggle to get visibility of those films. Now it has changed," he said with a smile.

"Now, every film finds its audience. Therefore, it is a great time for actors. There are so many opportunities and one has to be fit-and-fine to do justice to the performances. When I am staying fit, it does not mean building up the body, but being mentally and spiritually fit enough to act. Mental health matters a lot when you are performing, because you are emoting emotions," he shared. "Aiyaary" is releasing on February 9.

Royalty always intrigued me: Tamannaah Bhatia



Actress Tamannaah Bhatia, who will be seen as a South Indian royal in a campaign, says royalty is something that always intrigued her. The actress has been roped for a South Indian textile brand, Pothys. For its campaign shoot, she will be essaying a South Indian royal. Drawing inspiration from the founder of Bengaluru, Kempe Gowda's lineage, fashion designer Nishka Lulla has put together Tamannaah's look.

"The only time I was essayed aristocracy in the creative format was in 'Baahubali'. This time around it's for a commercial ad shoot and I'm very impressed with the way Nishka has curated my entire ensemble," Tamannaah said in a statement. "Royalty is something that always intrigued me to a great extent. I've always wanted to be part of a period drama and playing gentry is such a mastered form of the fine arts," she added.

Lulla took two months to design the entire look. "I did a lot of research on South Indian royalty and the whole look is inspired by royalty. I have draped two silk saris together in red and peach and emerald green and hot pink and have used a lot of heavy gold jewellery," said the designer.

It is always encouraging to be recognized for the work that you do: Jackie Shroff



An elated Jackie Shroff received Best Actor (Male) for his performance in the short film Khujli, at the Jio Filmfare awards 2018. Jackie Shroff has always been celebrated for his acting prowess and is hailed as one of the most recalled Bollywood actors of all times. After entertaining the masses for over four decades on the big screen, Jackie Shroff treated his audience by appearing in a short film titled Khujli. The timeless actor took the new age medium of entertainment and surprised viewers with a bold take on BDSM. Jackie Shroff showcased his kinky avatar, as he brought to the forefront the quirks of senior couples. The actor was honoured with an award at the Jio Filmfare 2018, for his contribution in the arena of short films. Jackie Shroff shares, `It is always encouraging to be recognized for the work that you do. Khujli was a different stint for me and I am glad that it received this kind of love and praise. It only reiterates that content is key and motivates me to keep trying new avenues of filmmaking as an actor.

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