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Nitin Nabin to sound poll bugle for Chandigarh municipal elections



CHANDIGARH: As Chandigarh Municipal Corporation elections are all set to be held on December 23, BJP National President Nitin Nabin will sound the poll bugle tomorrow (November 22) as he will address a party workers' conference in Chandigarh.BJP chief Nitin Nabin will address the Booth Workers' Conference (Karyakarta Sammelan) at Shree Ram Leela Maidan, Sector 27. Following the Sammelan, Nabin will proceed to the BJP State Office, Kamalam, in Sector 33, where he will hold a meeting with Core Committee Members, State Office Bearers, and State Morcha Presidents.Thereafter, he will attend the Pravasi Karyakarta Meeting at the same venue to interact with the Karyakartas and guide them on public outreach and organisational expansion.Chandigarh president Jatinder Pal Malhotra said that Nitin Nabin will address office-bearers and party workers from the booth level to the state level. He added that his guidance and direction would further strengthen the party organisation in Chandigarh and provide a clear roadmap for the upcoming Municipal Corporation elections.Malhotra said that the BJP follows a democratic and transparent internal process for the selection of candidates. The candidate selection process is currently underway at the organisational level.A meeting of the Election Committee will be held within one or two days. He added that the BJP's upcoming Sankalp Patra (Manifesto) would not be prepared merely through discussions within the party office.Suggestions and feedback will be sought from Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), Market Associations, various social organisations and ordinary citizens of Chandigarh.Through this public participation, the party will seek to understand what kind of development, improvements in civic amenities, adoption of modern technology, digitisation and changes in Municipal Corporation functioning the residents expect in the coming years.He said that the BJP would also present before the public the development work undertaken in Chandigarh and the achievements of the Municipal Corporation.Approximately 11 workers from each of the 575 booths will participate in it. In addition, state office-bearers, representatives from all six districts, Mandal office-bearers and workers from various Morchas and cells will also attend. Around 6,500 party workers and office-bearers are expected to participate in the conference.Chandigarh Municipal Corporation Election in-charge and MLA from Delhi Satish Upadhyay clarified that candidates would be selected through the party's internal democratic process.Due consideration will be given to representation from all age groups, different geographical areas and every section of society. He said that the BJP's target is to win all 35 wards, and party workers will enter the electoral arena united with this commitment. "The party consistently provides opportunities to new faces, and changes in organisational responsibilities are a normal part of its functioning," said Upadhyay.

'No one can take away livelihood of skilled people': PM Modi on AI fears



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said people with skills would continue to have livelihood opportunities despite growing concerns over artificial intelligence replacing jobs, asserting that skilled workers would command greater respect than those who merely held academic certificates.Addressing the fifth National Skill Convocation Ceremony at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan in Lucknow, Modi said India was moving towards becoming the world's skill capital and stressed the need to give vocational education the same importance as conventional academic courses."There is a lot of discussion about AI, but remember that no one can take away the livelihood of a person who possesses skills," he said."Times are changing. Skilled individuals will command greater respect than those who merely hold certificates," he added.The Prime Minister said students of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) deserved the same recognition as those studying at Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)."Be it IIT or ITI, for me, students are the treasure, strength and future of the country," he said.Modi also announced that India would host the 2027 WorldSkills Competition in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh.Reflecting on India's traditional craftsmanship, the Prime Minister alleged that foreign invaders had deliberately targeted the country's skill-based economy because of the prosperity it generated."When invaders came to India, their first attack was on our skills. They knew that the craftsmanship of Indians was making the country great and prosperous, and sought to destroy it by cutting off the thumbs of artisans," he said.He said the British later weakened India's traditional skill-based education system by introducing a model that prioritised producing clerks."The British were more sophisticated. They changed their methods. (British politician Thomas Babington) Macaulay imposed an education system that reduced our skill-based system to producing clerks," Modi said.Even after Independence, the emphasis on clerical employment continued, while vocational training and traditional craftsmanship remained neglected, he said."Over time, being a paper clerk came to be seen as a matter of prestige," he added.Modi alleged that the British had used education to undermine India's traditional skills while promoting manufacturing in their own country with Indian resources.He said the country was now undergoing a shift towards recognising vocational skills and preparing its workforce for emerging technologies.

Himachal passes Bill mandating 80% jobs for locals in industries, plans land bank to boost investments



CHANDIGARH: With barely a year left for the Assembly elections, Himachal Pradesh has passed legislation mandating industries operating in the state to reserve 80 per cent of jobs for local residents, alongside plans to create a land bank comprising suitable public and private land to facilitate industrial expansion and attract investment.The Himachal Pradesh Investment Promotion and Simplification Bill, 2026, was introduced by Industries Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan and passed by the state Assembly through a voice vote.The legislation seeks to establish a statutory framework to accelerate inclusive, balanced, sustainable and green industrialisation, while ensuring employment opportunities for the state's residents.The Bill aims to simplify investor facilitation, expedite project approvals, strengthen industrial infrastructure and generate employment for Himachal Pradesh's youth. It also provides for a legal framework to ensure that 80 per cent of the workforce in industries comprises Himachalis.Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said the passage of the legislation marked a decisive step towards establishing Himachal Pradesh as a transparent, responsive and competitive investment destination."Our government's objective is not merely to attract investment, but to secure responsible and sustainable investment that generates quality employment for Himachali youth, strengthens local enterprise and promotes balanced development across the state," Sukhu said.The legislation provides for time-bound facilitation, digital approvals and institutional accountability, replacing procedural complexities with a streamlined investment process.Investors seeking to establish industries in the state will be able to obtain necessary clearances through a Single Window System. Industries Minister Chauhan said industrialists would be legally bound to comply with the government's conditions, including the stipulation that 80 per cent of their workforce be drawn from the state.The Bill provides for the establishment of a Single Window Approval, Clearance, Reviewing and Monitoring Authority, headed by the Chief Minister, to ensure time-bound processing, approval and implementation of investment proposals.A dedicated state-level facilitation mechanism will assist investors and coordinate clearances across state and central government departments. It also provides for a digital platform and a Combined Application Form for regulatory and non-regulatory approvals.Among other provisions, the legislation introduces self-certification for eligible investors, auto-renewal and perpetual validity of notified approvals, risk-based inspections, simplified exit procedures and an automatic appeal mechanism for applications delayed beyond prescribed timelines.It also provides for stakeholder participation in policymaking through an Industrial Advisory Forum.The legislation envisages the creation of a land bank comprising suitable public and private land, optimal utilisation of industrial plots, development of industrial estates, clusters and green corridors, and public-private participation in industrial infrastructure.A high-powered mechanism involving the government, industry and registered transport operators will also be set up to rationalise logistics freight rates.The proposed framework seeks to balance investor facilitation with accountability by providing for action against investors violating agreed conditions as well as officials responsible for substantial delays in processing applications.Chauhan said the legislation would provide the statutory foundation for the state's forthcoming industrial policy and help accelerate balanced and green industrialisation while generating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.Himachal Pradesh's move comes amid similar attempts by other states to link private-sector employment with local residency.Neighbouring Haryana enacted the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act, 2020, in March 2021 and notified it on January 15, 2022, mandating 75 per cent reservation for local residents in certain private-sector jobs. However, the Punjab and Haryana High Court struck down the law as unconstitutional in November 2023. The state government subsequently challenged the ruling before the Supreme Court.Karnataka, too, has pursued a similar proposal. In 2024, its Cabinet cleared a Bill mandating industries, factories and other establishments to employ local candidates in 50 per cent of management positions and 70 per cent of non-management positions.Meanwhile, Punjab earlier this year passed the Punjab State Outsourced Personnel (Transition to Contractual Engagement) Bill, 2026, unanimously in the Assembly. The legislation seeks to bring 26,000 to 28,000 outsourced employees under direct contractual engagement with the government in the first phase.It removes private contractors from the employment chain for eligible Group C and Group D workers and provides benefits such as provident fund, gratuity, Employees' State Insurance, maternity leave and casual leave. The government has said the move would also ensure that workers no longer lose 15 to 22 per cent of their earnings to commissions charged by outsourcing agencies.

NWMI questions Delhi Police's handling of women journalists' harassment complaints during anti-SIR protests

NEW DELHI: The Network of Women in Media, India (NWMI), in a rejoinder filed in the Supreme Court on Saturday, said the Delhi Police's affidavit failed to rebut allegations of harassment of women journalists during anti-SIR protests and instead "itself reveals the extent of the interference complained of".The police had said 3,747 women personnel were deployed during the day and 664 at night, and that women taken away were accompanied by a woman officer.NWMI said these figures did not identify the personnel who handled women journalists, adding that "crowd control is not a zone in which a woman's dignity and bodily integrity stand reduced".On sexual harassment complaints closed by the Crime Branch, NWMI said the closure "reinforces the very concern underlying the prayer for an inquiry independent of the police force whose personnel are complained against".The rejoinder comes after Delhi Police filed an affidavit in mid-November responding to petitions, including one by NWMI, over alleged police excesses, detentions and harassment during the October 10-11, 2026, protests against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.NWMI questioned how the same police force accused of harassment could be allowed to investigate and close complaints against its own personnel."That is exactly why an independent inquiry is needed. A woman's reluctance to pursue a complaint cannot be treated as conclusive proof that the conduct did not occur," it said.Reluctance, fear, pressure, repeated questioning and lack of faith in the process are reasons women withdraw complaints, not proof that nothing happened, the organisation contended."The police cannot justify an interference with personal liberty simply by refraining from calling it a detention or arrest," the rejoinder said.NWMI also argued that Delhi Police had no legal authority for its actions against journalists, particularly women, during the anti-SIR protest. It questioned the force's lack of preparedness, saying it could have arranged designated press areas, liaison officers, safe routes and helmets."On its own showing, the indiscriminate removals... were neither necessary nor proportionate," NWMI said, urging the Supreme Court not to rely on the police affidavit and seeking safeguards, independent scrutiny and contemporaneous records.The organisation further contended that the

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.



Shama Sikander looks sutnning in bikini.

Here's why Hrithik Roshan changed his daily routine

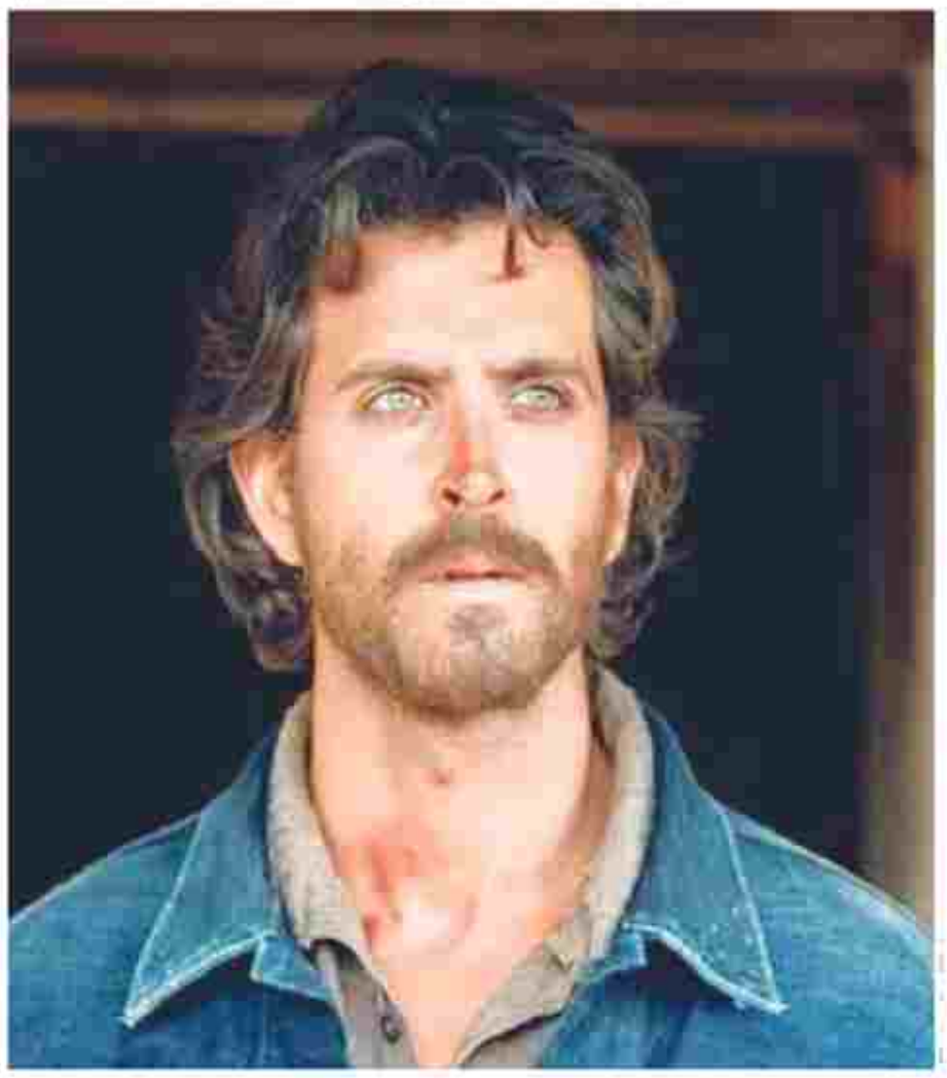
Hrithik Roshan who prefers going to bed early and start his day with his gym session, has, however, changed his routine in order to accommodate the night schedule for his upcoming next. One of the most disciplined actors of Bollywood, Hrithik Roshan is known to follow a strict routine. However, as his upcoming film demands night shoots, the Superstar has made a change in his schedule. The actor is also traveling a lot as the movie is being shot at multiple locations in Mumbai.

Excited about the project Hrithik Roshan shares "I have always been a morning person. I like to start my day early but for the film that I am currently shooting, we are also doing a lot of night shoots. It is a big shift in my daily routine, but as actors, over a period of time, we get immune to it"

Despite shooting at night, Hrithik's energy continues to be captivating as the moment he enters the sets, he spreads cool vibes around.

Irrespective of the hour of the day, Hrithik Roshan exudes an energetic charm, enchanting an aura on the sets. The actor who runs by the clock never wastes time and completes his schedule before the day ends.

Even when he has been up since morning doing daily chores, he doesn't let anyone know that he is tired or has been traveling for hours. The actor brings in the same level of energy and positive attitude when he comes for the night schedule.



Shraddha Kapoor is sweetheart on the sets too

Shraddha Kapoor who is currently shooting for her upcoming next was showered with appreciation by her co-star and choreographer of her film

Nivedita who will be sharing the screen space with Shraddha in Street Dancer 3D and is also the choreographer took to her social media and expressed her admiration for the actress as she shared, "This woman right beside me is the most hardworking and the humblest soul I have ever met I know her since Abcd2 and she still remains the same she was back then.



Shraddha di I really admire and appreciate you for who you are

Shraddha thanked her for her kind words as she replied," Wow. Such kind words with so much encouragement. There's too much to learn & absorb from you." Shraddha Kapoor is currently shooting for the first schedule for her upcoming film Street Dancer 3D at London. The actress is training and rehearsing hard for leaving no stone unturned for it, to an extent Shraddha is practicing and rehearsing even on her off day. This shows the dedication of which Shraddha exhibits towards her work. The actress in high spirit and always excited and energetic when it comes to dancing. We have seen Shraddha spilling the magic of her dance moves on screen several times, 'Sun Saathiya', 'Cham Cham', 'High Rated Gabru' are chartbusters given by her where audiences have loved her dancing avatar. The makers of Street Dancer 3D recently released the poster featuring Shraddha Kapoor and the actress is raising the temperature looks super hot and stylish.

Kriti Sanon shares a cute BTS picture from her upcoming film

Kriti Sanon who is all set for her first release of the year with Luka Chuppi shared a BTS picture of the song 'Tu Laung Main Elaichi' showcasing the actress in a never seen before avatar which is absolutely cute. The actress took to her Instagram account to share a cute BTS photo of herself from the song 'Laung Elaichi' of the film. Kriti looked stunning in a saree in the picture. The actress captioned the post, "Let the child within you always be alive!! No matter how you are dressed ???? Every memory has its own soundtrack.. this one's from Laung Elaachi ???? #Rashmi #LukaChuppi".

Kriti Sanon can pull off a western or an Indian look easily and the actress looks elegant as she Dons a saree on screen.

Kriti Sanon has a gigantic fan falling across the nation and worldwide as well. Ever since the Luka Chhupi trailer has come out fans are praising Kriti's small-town character from the film. Before Luka Chhupi Kriti had nailed the small town character in Bareilly Ki Barfi and now Kriti is all set to blow our mind with her new character Rashmi from Luka Chuppi.



Kriti Sanon has a hectic schedule ahead with her 4 films releasing this year and multiple brand shoots on which the actress is working on simultaneously. The actress is doing to and fro from Karjat where she is shooting for her next and then to locations of the other projects which Kriti has in her kitty.

Over the years, Kriti is known to portray characters that have resonated with her audience. The actress' last outing Bareilly Ki Barfi garnered a lot of critical acclaim and love from her viewers.

Only 4 films old, actress Kriti Sanon has an exciting film line up to look forward to with projects like Housefull 4, Luka Chuppi, Panipat and Arjun Patiala. The young actress is leaving no stone unturned to treat her fans with her versatile performances in varied genres of films.

Siddhant Chaturvedi AKA MC Sher crashes Twitter with his own Rap

Siddhant Chaturvedi AKA MC Sher crashes Twitter with his own Rap! Siddhant Chaturvedi who gauged immense love and appreciation for his performance as a rapper MC Sher in Gully Boy took to Twitter to unveil the rapper in him. The actor shared a video of his own rap which the actor wrote during his prep, proving to be a surprise treat to his fans. The rap was inspired by real underground rappers like Naezy and Divine.

Siddhant Chaturvedi tweeted the video and captioned it in Gully Boy style saying, "Kya bolte public! Ye suno, dil se #BohtHard Tum bhi karo Download. https://gullybeat. app.link/FFzPR0BM6T " Siddhant made his rap through the Gully Beat app which lets us write our own rap and give it a beat too. The app makes it easier for rappers to get all the components in one place. The actor has asked everyone to download this app and create a piece of your own.

Siddhant Chaturvedi was spotted by Zoya at Inside Edge success party where he was seen dancing. Zoya then asked him if he'd audition for Gully Boy.

This embarked the journey of Mc Sher. Gully Boy, co-written by Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar, is a joint production venture between Excel Entertainment and Tiger Baby Productions. The film also features Kalki Koechlin, Siddhant Chaturvedi, Vijay Raaz and Vijay Varma in important roles.

Aamir grows his hair and beard before his films

Aamir Khan likes to explore with the character he plays and the actor likes to surprise his fans with new characters. To experiment with roles, Aamir grows his hair and beard before every film.

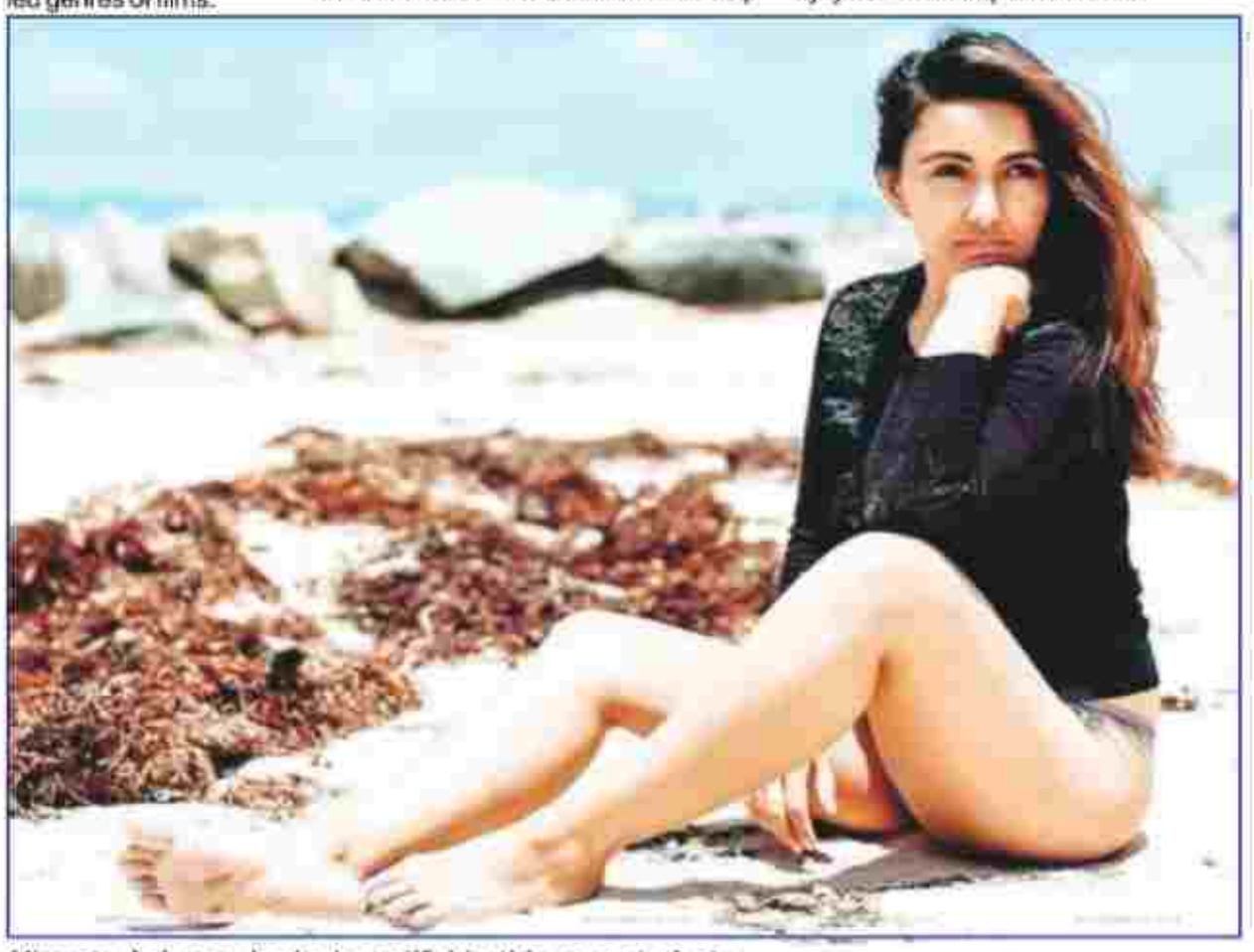
Aamir who loves to be a perfectionist, before his films he prefers to grow his hair and beared because that helps him to play with different looks. This also gives him the flexibility to play with multiple looks in one film.



His different characters in all these films like secret superstar, Dangal, and Thugs of Hindostan is the testimony that Aamir is not only an idealist about the role he plays but also works really hard for his looks in every film.

To keep his looks more natural, Aamir doesn't use any hair extension or fake moustache, but takes a natural route. The Actor doesn't just sign films but he keeps a lot of patience while doing a film waiting for the right script to come. The actor believes in playing strong characters rather than playing hero.

Aamir would be loved to be called by character name he plays. That's why he always gives his best, if it's about playing different roles, choosing a script or about his looks. Aamir does everything to play characters. Aamir felt really happy.



Niyanta Acharya looks beautiful in this recent photo.

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