

IN BRIEF



Hindujas top 2019 list of Britain's wealthiest

LONDON
The Hinduja brothers are once again the wealthiest people in Britain, according to *The Sunday Times* newspaper's Rich List 2019. London-based Sri and Gopi Hinduja, of the Hinduja Group of companies, have a fortune worth £22.0 billion, up £1.4bn from last year. The Indian-born brothers previously topped the list in 2014 and 2017. **AFP**



Germany moots 'mosque tax' to nix foreign funding

BERLIN
Support is growing in Germany for a "mosque tax" to make Islamic institutions less dependent on potentially anti-democratic or "radical" foreign funding sources, a media report said. The federal government sees it as "a possible path", according to an answer to a Parliamentary query, the *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper reported. **AFP**



Wrestler Silver King dies after collapsing in ring

LONDON
Mexican wrestler Silver King, famous for playing the villain in the film *Nacho Libre*, died after collapsing during a show in London. The masked wrestler, 51, real name Cesar Gonzalez, was taking part in The Greatest Show of Lucha Libre event on Saturday. **AFP**

70 years on, Berlin recalls ‘candy bombers’

In 1948, pilots flew supplies to 2.5 million people during Soviet blockade of the city

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BERLIN

When in 1948 U.S. bombers started dropping tiny, improvised parachutes loaded with sweets into Berlin during the Soviet blockade, one little German girl wrote to complain.

Mercedes Wild, now 78, recalled how she protested that the constant drone of airlift planes disturbed her chickens – and during the Soviet blockade of West Berlin, eggs were a valuable commodity.

Then Gail Halvorsen, the U.S. pilot who dreamed up the candy drops, wrote back, enclosing sticks of chewing gum and a lollipop with his letter. His gesture sparked a long-lasting friendship between Mr. Halvorsen, Ms. Wild and their families, she said.

“It wasn’t the sweets that



Back in time: Former pilot Gail Halvorsen, right, from the U.S., hugging Mercedes Wild at the Berlin Airlift memorial. **AFP**

impressed me, it was the letter,” Ms. Wild recalled.

“I grew up fatherless, like a lot of (German) children at that time, so knowing that

someone outside of Berlin was thinking of me gave me hope.”

“Candy bomber” Halvorsen insists that the real he-

roes of the Berlin Airlift – the mammoth logistical operation to air-drop supplies into West Berlin after the Soviet blockaded it – were inside the city.

“The heroes of the Berlin Airlift were not the pilots, the heroes were the Germans – the parents and children on the ground,” said the American veteran.

15-month blockade

“They were the stalwarts of the confrontation with the Soviet Union, not the guys bringing in the food, it was the people (of West Berlin) standing up for themselves.” Sunday marked the 70th anniversary of the end of the 15-month Soviet blockade.

The frail 98-year-old ex-pilot was back at Berlin’s former Tempelhof airport for the festivities to remember the operation by the western Al-

lies in 1948-49. He was guest of honour at Sunday’s festival to mark 70 years since the lifting of the Soviet blockade which sparked ‘Operation Vittles’, as the Berlin Airlift was officially known.

It flew in supplies to West Berlin’s 2.5 million population amid cold war tensions in Germany’s ruined capital, still reeling from the Second World War.

Operating almost non-stop and through the harsh German winter, the Airlift carried more than two million tonnes of supplies on more than 2,77,000 flights, mainly into Tempelhof.

At least 78 U.S., British and German pilots and ground crew lost their lives in accidents in the air and on the ground, as the Allies delivered fuel and food to prevent Berlin’s population from starving.

Podcasters find niche audience in Arab world

Have takers even in conservative Saudi



Sinking in: Rana Nawas, right, the producer of *When Women Win*, with comedian Hatoon Kadi in Dubai. **AFP**

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DUBAI

Rana Nawas left the corporate world nearly two years ago to produce and host a podcast – one that is now considered the most popular in the Arab world.

The English-language series, *When Women Win*, tells the stories of successful women from all over the world and, according to Apple, has become the most listened to podcast in the Middle East.

It first gained traction in 2017 in Dubai, where it is produced, before it started to spread across the region.

Ms. Nawas said she created the series “to give women all over the world access to role models” by highlighting the “extraordinary things” ordinary women are doing.

“I’ve been surprised at how the region has embraced *When Women Win*,” the 40-year-old said, adding aviation giant Emirates Airline would start airing her show this month.

“There’s a thirst for content, there’s clearly a thirst for female role models,” said the Briton of Lebanese and Palestinian origins.

“*When Women Win*, which is available to download in 144 countries, is the most popular podcast even in the ultra-conservative kingdom of Saudi Arabia, according to Ms. Nawas.

Ms. Nawas, whose show is entirely self-funded, said she hopes to be able to draw financing from other sources. “It’s not sustainable,” she said.

“I am hoping in a couple of years, once I have the impact that I want..., to start bringing investors on or bringing advertisers or sponsors on board.”

Like Ms. Nawas, Sudanese-born Omar Tom and friends created a podcast in 2016 that touches on topics they feel are neglected in traditional media.

His English-language podcast – the Dukkan Show – focusses on is life in the Gulf for members of its huge expatriate population.

In the show, the hosts chat to guests as if sitting in a dukkan – or “corner store” – where it is common culture in the Arab world to socialise with friends and neighbours.

Podcast vs radio

Many young Arab people now prefer podcasts over traditional radio programmes. For Rami Baassiri, 26, podcasts allow him to be more productive and do two things at once.

“There’s a lot of downtime in my day, whether I’m commuting to work, driving, in the gym, in queues in the mall, at the airport, so I like to make use of that time,” he said.

300 yaks starve to death in Sikkim

After heavy snowfall, a rescue team with feed and fodder has reached Mukuthang

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW DELHI

At least 300 yaks starved to death in a remote Himalayan valley after a bout of unusually harsh winter weather.

Officials in Sikkim said they received the first distress call from around 50 people cut off in the remote Mukuthang Valley in December.

Following very heavy snowfall, the residents asked for help to provide feed for their herd of around 1,500 yaks, a source of local milk, milk products, transportation and wool.

Transportation hit

“We made several attempts to reach them but couldn’t.



A file photo of yaks at Lake Tsomgo in Sikkim. **K.R. DEEPAK**

No roads or air transport could reach there because of the weather conditions. We reached there now and have already confirmed at least 300 yak deaths,” the North Sikkim District Magistrate

Raj Kumar Yadav said.

“The local families say that 500 yaks have died because of starvation. We are trying to confirm that. Around 50 yaks are also receiving urgent medical atten-

tion,” Mr. Yadav added.

“It appears that these dead yaks had got nothing to eat during the prolonged period of snowfall since December last year,” he said.

The animal husbandry department’s medical team has finally reached Mukuthang, he said.

The team carried feed and fodder for the yaks which are still alive, he said.

Yaks are one of the mainstays of the region’s tourism-dependent economy.

A few yaks die because of extreme conditions in the region each year, but the authorities say that this year’s toll is unprecedented.

The officials are making arrangements to bury the dead yaks. *(With PTI inputs)*

‘Meditation is not pleasant for everyone’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

Meditation – which is widely believed to be an antidote to mental health issues – may not always be a pleasant experience for everyone, according to scientists who advocate more research into such practices.

The research, led by scientists from University College London (UCL) in the U.K., found that over a quarter of people who regularly meditate have had a ‘particularly unpleasant’ psychological experience related to the practice, including feelings of fear and distorted emotions.

The study was published in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

Lantern maker lights up holy month in Jerusalem’s Old City

Lamps are a symbol of Islamic culture and heritage

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JERUSALEM

At his shop in Jerusalem’s Old City, Palestinian craftsman Issam Zughair makes traditional lanterns for Muslims marking the holy month of Ramzan, battling competition from cheap Chinese imports.

Mr. Zughair’s shop is decked out with lamps, both large and small, some hanging from the ceiling and others displayed outside to draw the attention of passers-by during lively Ramzan evenings.

He learned the trade from his father, a carpenter who originally made lanterns out of wood.

“My father opened this shop in the 1950s – we want to protect that heritage,” Mr. Zughair said, sitting with his wife in their small home above the business.

The largest lantern in the shop is two metres tall, shaped to resemble a mosque and created specially for Ramzan.

It was made from sheet metal and glass, using a technique that is believed to date back to the Fatimid caliphate in 10th century Egypt.

Best and biggest

Mr. Zughair believes the lantern is the largest traditionally-made one in Jerusalem. “There is no-one that rivals me in building them,” he said.

The 67-year-old imports materials from Egypt and Turkey and crafts the lanterns in his Old City shop.

He can add Koranic verses, religious phrases or names of God, according to the wishes of buyers.

Lanterns play a special role during Ramzan, which began on Monday.

As Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset, nocturnal life takes on added significance.



Expression of light: Issam Zughair, along with his wife, standing outside his shop in the old city of Jerusalem. **AFP**

Traditionally, lanterns light the way for religious events. Najeh Bkerat, from the Al-Aqsa Academy for Science and Heritage in Jerusalem, said they are a symbol of Islamic culture and heritage, especially during the fasting month.

Mr. Zughair said he starts to receive requests for personalised lamps a month before Ramzan.

Clients are from Jerusalem and the Israeli-occupied West Bank as well as Arabs from Israel itself, the majority of whom identify as Palestinian.

The lanterns sell for between 10 and 1,000 shekels (\$3 to \$280), depending on their size and the intricacy of their design.

But Mr. Zughair said he has seen a major slump in demand for the more ornate models since the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising, or intifada, in 2000.

Israel began constructing a wall in 2002, cutting off Jerusalem from much of the West Bank.

Israeli authorities said it was necessary to curb Palestinian militant attacks, but critics labelled it as collective punishment and a land grab.

“Before the intifada, all of

Palestine used to come to buy from me, but today I have lost 70% of my customers as a result,” Mr. Zughair said.

Cheap Chinese imports

The purchasing power of Palestinian residents of east Jerusalem has declined by 30% since 2000, said Ziyad Hamouri from the Jerusalem Centre for Social and Economic Rights, citing the wall as a key barrier to trade.

Mr. Zughair also faces another threat – cheap Chinese knock-offs.

“I don’t have any competitors in the market except China,” he said.

In a shop selling household appliances inside a gate of the walled Old City, Hamzeh Takish displayed a selection of small Chinese-made plastic lanterns, some of which play popular Arabic songs.

Their prices start from just 15 shekels (\$4).

“I don’t sell the traditional lanterns, people here are looking for new – every year they introduce new designs,” he said.

Alaa Wael, 27, was buying six Ramzan lanterns, two for his home and the rest for relatives. “They only cost 10 shekels, the type doesn’t matter to me,” he said.

Instagram tests new sticker feature

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
SAN FRANCISCO

Facebook-owned messaging app Instagram is testing a new Sticker feature that will show music lyrics of a song playing in the Stories background.

Still in development, the feature was predicted in April on Twitter by reverse engineer Jane Manchun Wong, who even demonstrated its working in a short music video from Rick Ashley’s *Never Gonna Give You Up* along side its lyrics, *The Verge* reported.

Details about what exact region is the app testing the feature in remains unclear as of now.

In 2018, the app brought music to its Stories feature, allowing users to add background music to accompany their posts and customise their stories with specific clips for certain pictures or videos.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PHOENIX

Paz Lopez was set to spend Mother’s Day behind bars. The 42-year-old mother of six had been locked up in a Phoenix jail for the past month on forgery and other charges. She couldn’t post her \$2,050 bail.

But on Thursday night, she walked out and into a car waiting to give her a ride home, thanks to a drive to bail out moms so that they can spend Mother’s Day with their children. In a tearful video made immediately after her release, Ms. Lopez said it was a privilege that she would now get to see her children. She welled up when speaking about the coming birth of her first grandchild.

Red planet



Call to action: Members of the action group Extinction Rebellion (XR) holding banners in front of Eiffel Tower in Paris on Sunday after spilling fake blood on the Trocadero esplanade during a demonstration to highlight the state of decline of biodiversity. In a report last week, the UN warned that a million of earth’s estimated eight million species are at risk of extinction. **AFP**

Bailing out jailed moms, that’s the gift for Mother’s Day

U.S. activists are arranging for the release of prisoners so that they can spend time with their loved ones



Cheyenne Brewington, after she was released on bail, receiving a hug from a volunteer in Maryland, U.S. **REUTERS**

“There’s just no greater feeling than being a mother,” Ms. Lopez said. “I’m grateful for both of you to help me be able to spend the day with them and be able to see my grandchild be born.”

Ms. Lopez had her bail covered by Living United for Change in Arizona, or LU-

CHA, a social and racial justice group. The organisation said they were inspired to do this for a second year by an initiative known as “Black Mamas Bail Out,” which is posting bail for dozens of mothers of colour for the third straight year.

Critics contend the na-

tion’s courts are unfairly punishing poor defendants by setting high bail for low-level crimes that causes them to languish in jail for months, separating them from their jobs and families.

Need for reforms

In some cases, they remain locked up until their case is dismissed or they take a guilty plea just so they can get out of jail, albeit with a criminal record. There has been a national push to reform bail by advocates who say incarceration should depend on a suspect’s risk to public safety, not the ability to pay.

Mary Hooks, co-director of Southerners On New Ground, came up with the idea in 2016. She joined with Law For Black Lives to bring

together a collective of organisations. It’s been difficult at times to get sympathy, she said, because people often think someone sitting in jail pre-trial must have done something wrong.

“We’re in a political time right now where ‘Barbecue Becky’ or anyone else can call the police on someone and you can get arrested instantly for barbecuing,” Ms. Hooks said, referring to the white woman who called police on two black men using a grill in an Oakland, California, park. The men were not arrested. “This notion ‘you’re in jail because you’ve done something horrible,’ we have to remind ourselves we have a Constitution that says ‘innocent until proven guilty.’”