



THE HINDU

ANALYSIS

THE FRIDAY - FEBRUARY 11, 2017 HINDU

By Prashant Mavani

IN ENGLISH



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the rest.**

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The hole in the middle

Gig work and its skewed terms

NEWS

- **2nd meeting** of foreign ministers of the Quad in Tokyo
- Further **movement towards formalisation** of the platform
- **Mike Pompeo**: China's bullying tactics in the South and East China Seas, the Mekong, the Taiwan Strait, and in the Himalayas



ASIA



- Other foreign ministers insisted on upholding **international rules**, respecting **territorial integrity** and maintaining **freedom of navigation** and **overflight** in the region.
- China's **aggressive behaviour** - is bringing the Quad nations together
- Beijing's desire to **rewrite the rules** of engagement that is creating tensions
- Misuse of **power differential**

- Quad members now have agreements among themselves that allow their **militaries to access each other's bases** and **coordinate closely**.
- If the Indo-Pacific is the future, it's time the region gets a **credible, rules based security architecture**.

Hathras Horror

- UP government has thrown a surprise by approaching - **SC-monitored CBI probe**.
- Apex court oversight of investigators is an implicit admission of **institutional failure, misgovernance** and **political pressures**.
- SC-monitored CBI probe offers the **best hope for justice** now.



Vrinda Shukla

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- A classic case of **revenge porn** — an **invasion of sexual privacy** and a **form of online harassment** where the perpetrator, usually a disgruntled ex-partner, posts intimate photos, often to **shame the subject**.
- The consequences for victims can be extreme, encompassing honour killings, breakdown of relationships, destruction of reputation and career, and immense emotional trauma.



- Two high profile suicides last year involving Korean pop star, **Goo Hara**, and a student at the University of London, **Damilya Jossipalenya**, both victims of revenge porn, are cases in point.
- While the police may succeed in collecting evidence and prosecuting the perpetrators of such crimes, it can do little to **clean up the mess left behind** on the internet, the root cause of the victim's suffering.
- Reporting of such non-consensual content by victims to the concerned **social media platforms** is often of **no avail**.

- The scale of the problem can be gauged from the **half-a-million reports** of revenge porn received **per month** by **Facebook** alone.
- All social media companies operate Law Enforcement Agency (**LEA**) portals where police authorities make requests for IP addresses of errant accounts and the removal of obscene content.
- However, often the portals are a **mere formality**, with the requests from investigative agencies remaining **unacknowledged** and **unaddressed**.

- A country which offers **one of the largest subscriber bases** in the world deserves better legal support.
- There is merit in clearly **classifying revenge porn** as a **sex offence** in the IPC.
- The more important intervention is **demanding accountability** and **responsiveness** from social media giants for law enforcement and investigation purposes.

The hole in the middle

- This year's **Nobel prize in physics** awards studies that established the existence of **black holes**.
- It celebrates **theoretical work** as much as it does **dedicated observation**.
- **Andrea Ghez** is only its **fourth woman** recipient.
- **Roger Penrose**, now at Oxford, who gets half the prize, ingeniously used **mathematics** in the 1960s to theorise **under what conditions black holes must form**.



- This was a time when the reality of black holes as a solution to Albert Einstein's field equations of the **General Theory of Relativity** was not accepted by many prominent physicists.
- **Event horizon** — the **point of no return** beyond which even light cannot escape the black hole's gravitational attraction.

- The other half of the prize is jointly awarded to **Reinhard Genzel**, at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics, Garching, Germany, and **Prof. Ghez**, of the UCLA, U.S., for showing that the dense region in the centre of our galaxy — the **Milky Way** — **is indeed a black hole**.
- Towards the end of the **1960s** it was clear that the region named **Sagittarius A*** occupies the centre of the Milky Way, which is about **26,000 light years away**.
- Around this, all stars in the galaxy orbit.

- In the 1990s, when telescopes and equipment were developed that could tackle this distance, **Prof. Genzel** and **Prof. Ghez** set up independent groups to explore this region.
- They built unique instruments and pursued research from **Very Large Telescope**, in Chile, and the **Keck Observatory**, Hawaii, respectively.
- For three decades, the groups tracked nearly 30 stars, in particular one named S-2 (or S-O2).
- This star's orbit has been nearly **completely tracked**.

- These stars followed elliptical, Keplerian, orbits, which can only imply a **central concentrated massive object** — a supermassive black hole.
- Thus, the prize strings together theoretical research from the 1960s driven by conviction, and a three-decade long observational study that started in the 1990s.
- It reiterates that in the pursuit of truth, time is but a twinkle.

Gig work and its skewed terms

- The new **Code on Social Security** allows a platform worker to be defined by their **vulnerability** — not their labour, nor the vulnerabilities of platform work.
- Swiggy workers have been **essential** during the pandemic.
- Even so, they have faced a **continuous dip in pay** and no rewards for being essential workers.



- During the last six months, many platform workers have unionised under the **All India Gig Workers Union** and have protested day in and day out, deploring **Swiggy** for reducing their **base pay from ₹35 to ₹10 per delivery order**.
- **Stable terms of earning** have been a key demand of **delivery-persons** and **drivers** through years of protests.
- The **three new labour codes** passed by Parliament recently acknowledge platform and gig workers as **new occupational categories** in the making, in a bid to keep **India's young workforce secure** as it embraces '**new kinds of work**', like delivery, in the digital economy.

- But do the codes let Swiggy workers ask for the pay that they were promised? **No**.
- The specific issues of **working in factories**, the duration of time needed on a factory floor, and associated issues are recognised as the parameters for defining an ideal worker under most labour laws, and this has not shifted much.
- The **wage relationship** is an important relationship in the world of work, especially in the context of a large informal economy.

- Since the laws are prescriptive, what is written within them creates the limits to what rights can be demanded, and how these rights can be demanded.
- Platform delivery people can claim benefits, but not labour rights.
- This does not allow them to go to court to demand better and stable pay, or regulate the algorithms that assign the tasks.

- In the **Code on Social Security, 2020**, platform workers are now eligible for benefits like maternity benefits, life and disability cover, old age protection, provident fund, employment injury benefits, and so on.
- However, **eligibility does not mean** that the benefits are **guaranteed**.
- None of these are secure benefits, which means that from time to time, the Central government can formulate welfare schemes that cover these aspects of personal and work security, but they are not guaranteed.

- The ‘**platform worker**’ identity has the potential to grow in power and scope, but it will be mediated by politicians, election years, rates of under-employment, and large, investment-heavy technology companies that are notorious for not complying with local laws.
- But there are no guarantees for better and more stable days for platform workers, even though they are meant to be ‘**the future of work**’.

- **PM Modi launches ‘ Jan Andolan’ campaign for COVID-19 Appropriate Behaviour**
- **COVID-19 recovery rate improves to over 85 pct in country**
- **Cabinet approves signing of Memorandum of cooperation in field of cyber-security between India & Japan**
- **Indian Air Force celebrates its 88th Anniversary today**
- **EC revises norms concerning star campaigners for all ongoing & future elections**

- **Interest subvention on MSME loans extended till end of March 2021: RBI**
- **Railway Board gives approval to zones for 39 new trains**
- **Smriti Irani launches first ever Brand & Logo for Indian Cotton on 2nd World Cotton Day**
- **Dinesh Kumar Khara assumes charge as new Chairman of State Bank of India**
- **World Bank President calls upon wealthy nations including China to cancel debts to poor countries**

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Nalanda = Na+alam+Daa, meaning “*no stopping of the gift of knowledge*”

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