

The Weekly

## OBSERVER

## Of diabetes and disorders

India is rapidly succumbing to a sweet poison. It isn't for kicks that we observe World Diabetes Day (November 14) every year. In a place better known to the outside world for malnourishment, drought and farmers' suicides, India is now set to become the global capital for diabetes.

Out of a population of 1.2 billion Indians, 40 million, as per statistics provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO), suffer from diabetes. Dr. Anoop Misra, an endocrinologist with Fortis Hospital, New Delhi says cases in rural and semi-urban areas constitute only five to eight percent of the total population affected by

plans and organizing awareness campaigns, the results are showing up at the work place too. People suffering from obesity and high blood pressure will take sick leave more often. Output will definitely be adversely affected if the workforce consists of diabetics, who generally suffer from both obesity and high blood pressure.

Besides, human insulin is a Rs 3 billion industry, with major players like Novo Nordisk, Eli Lilly, Wockhardt, Biocon and Shreya Lifesciences being involved. Looking at the disease as a market is not the best

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approach to follow to try and contain the growing number of diabetics. The Indian government, apart from organizing the odd health camp or awareness programme, has no real credit to its name. It has simply looked at diabetes as a market for companies to sell their drugs. Imported drugs are given up to 35% margin to cover post-manufacturing expenses as compared to the 100% margin given to Indian companies. We now have a new inhalant version of the drug Oral-lyn, India's first needle-free insulin by Shreya Lifesciences and US-based Genex Biotechnology Corp. The performance of the drug needs to be monitored after availability in retail stores as per the post marketing surveillance regulatory requirement

But the real economic value of a country lies in a healthy population. For this we need a good education about the implications of the kind of lifestyle that has become trendy. Instead of focusing attention only on opening markets for multinational drug companies, the government needs to actively involve the young Indian in its health and awareness programmes.

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J.JAGANNATH

Gandhi used to be an epitome of non-violence and post that sleeper hit "Lage Raho Munnabhai" Gandhi's theory of "Show another cheek if one cheek is slapped" found a halo around it. Unfortunately, people fail to understand that this philosophy has made us meek at the most crucial times. Meek shall inherit the earth is a ruse to keep the aam aadmi at bay by the powerful ones.

Sample this: the Indian Express-CNN-IBN-Divya Bhaskar-CSDS Gujarat poll says that "an average Gujarati wishes to forget 2002 riots as a bad dream that must not recur, without taking or assigning responsibility for what happened." By now it is an ascertained fact that most of the surveys conducted in India do not have authenticity attached to them because of their adumbrate nature. But what if this particular

survey has an iota of truth to it? The Tehelka expose need not galvanise the Gujaratis to vote against Modi; the picture of Qutbuddin Ansari should be good enough to prick their conscience. Public memory is notoriously fickle, and this is clearly evident considering the fact that the most carefully planned pogrom, perpetrated by Modi and his cohorts, has been condoned (read it as conveniently forgotten) by the victims themselves-the people. After every bomb blast by the dime-a-dozen terrorist outfits, a bromide, popularly known as press release, comes out of the Home Ministry condemning the act as "heinous", paying lip service in the name of ex gratia and promptly ordering a CBI investigation.

After these Pavlovian reflexes of the mandarins its back to the grind for the common man and dust gathers all over those files

containing the CBI investigation. Ever since it turned into a magazine, Tehelka has a page dedicated to the cases, which were shocking at that time, but later are not even a speck on the vast human expanse. Some of the high-profile cases, which faded into oblivion with the passage of time, are custodial killings in Kashmir, murders in Khairlanji and many more.

What, however, takes the cake is the reaction of politicians to the bomb blasts in Mumbai in 2005. After a couple of days understanding very well that a breakthrough is difficult to get by, the politicians turned smarmy towards the citizens mouthing the platitude: spirit of Bombay.

I don't know whether it is craven deference or a perfect example of the Stockholm syndrome that we still fall to these stratagems. It happens only in India!

## There she goes...

SHILPA KRISHNAN

Last Monday, Rajasthan House at New Delhi played host to an interesting array of persons from all races, cultures and complexions. On the one hand were men clad in green, performing genuflections at periodic intervals, holding placards reading, "Get lost Nusreena". On the other, were men, women and bald-headed babies from all over Planet Earth (except of course the green nations), holding placards that read some weird gibberish. Gibberish it was because these people were predominantly from third world countries and had written the placards in their native tongue. Since languages like Azerbaijani were not popular in India, it was hard to find a translator. Moreover, their shouts and cries of protest were also in those foreign languages and so it was hard to decipher what they were trying so hard to say. However, some ingenuous Indian journalists, with the help of the

Universal Sign Language, managed to crack the code. These Third World protestors were shouting, "Come home to us, Naslima".

From Armenia to Zaire and from Burkina Faso to Tajikistan, most countries had their representatives clamouring for Nusreena Muslin's attention. They all wanted the same thing. They wanted her to take asylum in their nation. However, Nusreena wanted to disappear to the Bermuda. But the people of Bermuda were against this as they felt that her return would result in the resurfacing of several of the "Lost". These people would apparently resurface after being unable to tolerate her pathetic attempts at literature.

On the other hand, the residents of Virgin Islands were most welcoming to Nusreena. One of the college students from this nation had done a thesis on Nusreena and had arrived at the conclusion that she must be a virgin. And since the island gives

asylum only to virgins, the officials at Virgin Islands said they would be most honoured to have Nusreena with them. She declined the offer saying she was no Virgin Mary.

Meanwhile, Nusreena also announced her plans to translate her work into other languages. Primary among those are Yi, Yiddish and the Gibberish languages. She said she would also consider translating her work into Afrikaans and Hungarian.

On being questioned about where she wanted to stay, she replied that she would love to stay in India. However, not many places in India were willing to accept her. Finally, Jhoomri Talayya, a village in rural India welcomed her. The owner of Ramchand Footwear factory at Jhoomri Talayya gave her the job of writing in the accounts book. Whether she writes about the interesting rituals of Muslims or whether she actually concentrates on the accounts of Ramchand Footwear remains to be seen.

## Live and Let live

ANUYA ULPE

While smokers have an undisputed right to kill themselves, they have no right to kill other people, says George Monbiot. But how do you prevent an expectant mother from smoking and harming the life growing inside of her. She only needs to look down to be sure, no? How does one make an asthmatic patient realize that instead of recklessly spending money on packs day after day, why not buy an inhaler or medicines that will keep you alive for five extra minutes of your life? No place left today uncontaminated with smoke. And places like closed restaurants that do not care to notify people whether or not it's smoking (or non-smoking), some merely choose to smoke at the table and nonchalantly go, "You don't mind if I smoke, do you?" How do you possibly reply to a question framed

like that? It is bad enough that there is no clean air on an open stretch of road, thanks to the increasing number of vehicles and pollution caused. Yet we want to ruin the oxygen that we are trying to breathe in with a decent meal inside four geometrically, well-painted walls and chocolate fountains. We follow in the steps of our 'heroes' oozing with manliness and blindly (and foolishly) copy their filmy ishtyle. Reading George Monbiot's article on passive smoking, I have no choice but to localize it to my vicinity since it applies in the same context as London. This country has had ban s on public smoking but lenient implementation like most other bans makes the public health sector seem too lackadaisical in their attitude to take severe measures in this area. As a future tax paying citizen, I would like to know

whether my health is of any importance to my government. It convinces itself and the consumers that by placing statutory warning signs saying, "Smoking Kills" and "Smoking is injurious to health", it has done its bit in educating us on ill-effects of tobacco. But for all we know, our government, as I fondly call it, may only be interested in gathering excise on tobacco and alcohol rather than negating the 'made for each other' cigarette campaign. George Monbiot is a journalist and an author who writes for The Guardian in the United Kingdom. In his experience, he has been a victim of violence in various instances in his own country and outside. He has stated strong opinions on global warming and maintains that the climate issue is a "moral question of the 21st century".

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