



## Britain and India design project to help female textile workers



COLLABORATION IN FASHION: Aratrik Dev Varman (third from left) with IMG Reliance and British Council officials

FASHION designers from Britain and India are set to collaborate on a project to help women textile workers in India's north-east.

The British Council and IMG Reliance signed an agreement last month to help promote indigenous textile products from the north-east region through a project called *A Telegram from Tripura*, a senior official of the council said.

"It will bring together UK designer Bethany Williams and Indian designer Aratrik Dev Varman (from Tripura state) to explore new fashion systems and approaches

with women textile workers of the north-east region in focus," said Alan Gemmell, director of the British Council in India.

IMG Reliance is a joint venture between US-based IMG Worldwide and Reliance Industries from India.

The final collection, to be presented at the Lakmé Fashion Week in February next year, will showcase female textile artisans and demonstrate how design innovation can promote a fairer, more inclusive fashion industry, Gemmell said.

"We want friendship between India and the north-

east, in particular by bringing art and culture, and educational opportunities from our country," he said.

The British Council awarded scholarships to 100 Indian women to study STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects at premier higher education institutions in the UK to mark the 70th anniversary of the Council in India, Gemell said.

"We want to inspire young people across Arunachal Pradesh and the north-east region to think about the UK as a place to study," he added.

## Survey reveals workplace bias

MORE THAN a quarter of UK workers have said they have faced discrimination, a survey revealed last Saturday (29).

The study, which was released by Sky last weekend to mark National Inclusion Week, showed one in five thought being from a BME background reduced the chances of getting a job or promotion.

It also found one in five under-25s believed being a woman negatively affected the chances of being employed.

Debbie Klein, group chief marketing and corporate affairs officer at Sky, said: "It isn't just about stopping discrimination. We also have to actively promote inclusion."

# Social media's divorce role

## MORE ASIAN COUPLES SEPARATING AMID GROWING USE OF ONLINE MESSAGES AND PICTURES IN CASES



STATUS UPDATE: Legal experts say couples view social media as an 'essential weapon' in bitter divorce battles; and (inset below) Amjad Malik

by NADEEM BADSHAH

**SOCIAL media is increasingly being used as evidence during divorce battles as the number of Asian couples filing for separation is on the rise, experts have said.**

Facebook posts featuring pictures and details of holidays are used to expose lies about a person's income or assets, according to legal experts.

Screenshots of messages and images are also being collected to show their partner's whereabouts during proceedings.

Around a third of divorce cases now involve the use of social media, according to Leeds-based firm Lake Legal.

Meena Kumari is a family law director for Duncan Lewis Solicitors in Bradford.

She told *Eastern Eye*: "I have experienced an increased use of social media evidence in most facets of family law cases.

"In divorce cases it has been used to corroborate additional assets and lifestyle.

"In domestic abuse it has been used to prove the behaviour of the perpetrator.

"In cases concerning children it has affirmed the relationships with children and the unhealthy lifestyle of the parents.

"In some circumstances, the evidence turned the case based on information from

social media, as factual evidence that may otherwise have been unavailable to support an allegation has been proven with the help of social media. In family law, social media can be a tool of success and destruction."

Amjad Malik, a solicitor in Rochdale, Greater Manchester, said he handles around twice the number of divorce cases among Asian couples compared to five years ago, and has been involved with more than 100 since 2013.

He told *Eastern Eye*: "Society's demands and rights and responsibilities are rising, and sometimes young couples do not understand the meaning of marriage which requires trust, team work and justice.

"Marriages in the UK can't be run on an Asian philosophy where one man is the main earner.

"In the UK both the husband and wife run the marriage like a state; however, imbalance is causing the mayhem.

"I have dealt with dozens of cases this year. The lack of knowledge of English law and ego to snatch all rights from the other side seems to be the mantra.

"The role of advice clinics like the Citizens Advice Bureau and law centres should be enhanced for better decision making for couples before or after divorce."

There were 106,959 cases of couples legally separating in 2016, an increase of 5.8 per cent compared with 2015. The rate of divorce increased the most among the over-50s.

A survey by Censuswide in 2015 covering 2,011 husbands and

wives found the reasons for checking their spouse's social media profiles were to discover who they were communicating with and where they were going.

Phillip Rhodes, a family lawyer at Slater Heelis Solicitors, said: "Clients view social media almost as an essential weapon in their armoury, particularly when allegations have been raised, or accusations denied.

"Quite often, the likes of Facebook or Instagram offer the evidence needed to determine a particular issue, which can sometimes have a significant effect on the overall outcome of a case.

"Historically, when it was a legal requirement to prove adultery, private investigators would be instructed to obtain the necessary evidence required by the court. Now, self-incriminating photographs and WhatsApp messages provide the 21st-century equivalent.

"There is a danger, however, that social media can be used for people to air their dirty laundry or perhaps to undermine the other parent.

"We would always caution against this course of action, which invariably attracts criticism and can adversely impact a client's case."

## 'Guru' jailed for sexual abuse

A MAN who posed as a "spiritual guru" and sexually abused women has been jailed for three and-a-half years last month.

Mohaniel Rajani, 76, was found guilty of sexually assaulting two women.

Rajani, who claimed he was God so women should "sacrifice their bodies" to him, abused the victims during "spiritual message sessions" on at least 10 separate occasions each at a place of worship in Leicester and at his home in 2008.

He admitted four counts of sexual assault, representing a course of conduct, at Leicester crown court.

Rajani admitted touching both of the women's breasts with his feet during massages and touching their breasts once with his hands.

Judge Robert Brown said: "It was a gross breach of trust. You had the trust, loyalty and devotion of those girls and you took advantage of them for your own sexual pleasure."

## Drowning death 'an accident'

A DOG WALKER died as she tried to save one of her pets who had fallen into a river, a inquest heard last week.

Seonaid Patel, 35, drowned in June attempting to rescue her dog Goose after it went into the River Welland, Lincolnshire. She had been walking her dogs at the Moulton Marsh Nature Reserve.

Witnesses describe seeing her other three dogs "moaning and crying" besides the water, as Patel descended the river bank and disappeared. Her body was later found between a barge and the wall of a jetty.

Coroner Murray Spittal concluded her death was an accident at Boston coroners' court.

"She was seen to descend the bank to look for one of her dogs. It is unclear whether Seonaid fell or went deliberately into the water," he said.

Anthony Gray, Patel's partner, claimed she was "a strong swimmer" but said he did not think she would have entered the water purposely.