

# S. Korea's Moon under fire over sex offender's family funeral



Moon Jae-in (L) receives a kiss from Ahn Hee-Jung (R) (file photo)

AFP | Seoul

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who promised to be a “feminist leader” during his election campaign, was under fire yesterday for sending condolence flowers to the funeral of a convicted sex offender's mother.

Moon and dozens of senior politicians -- almost all of them male, and from both sides of the aisle, but mostly from his ruling centre-left Democratic Party -- sent bouquets for this week's ceremony for Ahn Hee-jung's mother.

Former provincial governor Ahn was once a rising star and came second to Moon in the race for the 2017 Democratic presi-

dential nomination, but was convicted last year of sexual intercourse by abuse of authority after his female assistant accused him of repeatedly raping her.

He is serving three and a half years in prison.

The controversy over the funeral laid bare the attitudinal gender divide in a society that remains highly patriarchal -- it has the highest gender wage gap in the OECD club of developed economies.

And women hold only 19 percent of seats in its newly elected parliament, which would put it 116th in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's previously published 2020 ranking.

Sexual harassment victims often face pressure to stay si-

lent for fear of public shaming, but signs of change emerged after the country's own #MeToo movement -- sparked in 2018 by a prosecutor who publicly accused a superior of groping her at a funeral, prompting many to share their stories.

Ahn was by far the highest-profile individual named as a result.

But after he was temporarily released from jail to attend the funeral ceremonies, he received visits from scores of political heavyweights offering their condolences -- among them Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun, his predecessor Lee Nak-yeon, and ruling party leader Lee Hae-chan.

Ahn allowed media to cover

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the event and pictures showed a large white wreath in prime position, with a plaque bearing the presidential logo and Moon's name.

## Furious response

Women's groups and progressive politicians reacted furiously, saying the moves demonstrated the political establishment's traditionalist mindset and sent a signal that sexual crimes could be disregarded.

“Every message from a president is an act of governance, including condolences,” wrote commentator Choi Moon-sun in the Hankook Ilbo newspaper.



A bouquet from President Moon Jae-in, on display at the funeral

When Moon sent the flowers, she said, “there was no president for South Korean women”.

Jo Hye-min, a spokeswoman for the opposition Justice Party, said Ahn's victim was “still struggling in life in the face of non-stop shaming”.

“It is so clear that a message

and action by a politician is not a personal one but has a public nature,” she said. “We can't help but ask what their actions mean.”

The presidential office said yesterday it sent the flowers following a “comprehensive review of the situation”.

## India among most open economies, says India's Modi, calls for global investment

PTI | New Delhi

Wooing global companies, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said Asia's third-largest economy is one of the most open in the world and offers investment friendly, competitive business environment and immense opportunities.

Speaking at the India Global Week 2020, he said green shoots of economic revival are already visible in India that is coming out of coronavirus lockdown.

“India remains one of the most open economies in the world. We are laying a red carpet for all global companies to come and establish their presence in India. Very few countries will offer the kind of opportunities India does today,” he said.

He listed recent reforms in agriculture as well as those in defence and space sectors to seek global capital.

“We are making the economy more productive, investment-friendly and competitive,” he said. “There are many possibilities and opportunities in various sunrise sectors in India.”

Reforms in the agriculture sector provide a very attractive investment opportunity to invest in storage and logistics, he said. “We are opening the doors to investors to come and invest directly.”

Also, reforms have been



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address

brought in the small, micro and medium enterprises (MSME) sector, which will complement big industries.

“There are investment opportunities in the defence sector,” he said, referring to opening up of certain parts of defence manufacturing to the private sector.

Also, there are opportunities for private investment in space sector. “This will mean greater access to commercial use of space tech for the benefit of people,” he said.

Modi said the talk of global economic revival after the pandemic is often linked to the revival of the Indian economy.

Indians, he said, have the spir-

it to achieve what is believed to be impossible. “No wonder that in India we are already seeing green shoots when it comes to economic recovery.”

“When India talks of revival it is a revival with care, revival with compassion, a revival which is sustainable - both for the environment and the economy,” he said. “On the one hand India is fighting a strong battle against the global pandemic. With an increased focus on people's health, we are equally focussed on the health of the economy.”

History, he said, has shown that India has overcome every challenge, be it social or eco-

omic.

During the last six years, India has made great gains in areas such as financial inclusion, housing and infra construction, ease of doing business and bold tax reforms like the GST, he said.

“India is ready to do whatever it can to further global good and prosperity. This is an India that is reforming, performing and transforming,” he said.

The Prime Minister also spoke of his government's coronavirus relief package comprising free ration, cooking gas and cash to poor.

“In this time of a pandemic we have provided relief to our citizens and undertaken big structural reforms,” he said. “Our relief package has been smart and targeted to provide the most poor with the most help. Thanks to technology every penny has reached the beneficiaries directly.”



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NARENDRA MODI

## Bali hosts first centre to return captive dolphins to the wild



Dolphins are seen as Femke Den Haas cleans a net, after they were relocated at the Bali Dolphin Sanctuary rehabilitation centre

Reuters | Banyuwedang Bay, Indonesia

Just a year ago, Rambo was confined to a shallow, chlorinated pool in an Indonesian hotel on the island of Bali entertaining visitors from around the world by jumping through hoops.

Now, the bottlenose dolphin is swimming freely after being brought to what organisers say is the world's first permanent rehabilitation centre under a project initiated by Bali's government and animal rights groups.

“It's a model. It can be duplicated. And we're trying to do that in Europe as well, in Italy and in Crete,” said Ric O'Barry, an animal activist and founder of the Dolphin Project, the charity that runs the centre.

With the help of Indonesian authorities, activists rescued four dolphins last year and brought them to the centre in

a bay on the tropical island for treatment.

“It's more stressful for dolphins in captivity than any other animal we'll see at the zoo,” said O'Barry, who was featured in the Oscar-winning documentary “The Cove” about the capture and slaughter of dolphins in Japan.

More than 3,000 dolphins are in captivity around the world as part of an entertainment industry that generates up to \$5.5 billion annually, a 2019 report by World Animal Protection says.

Returning dolphins to the wild depends on their health and ability to catch food and interact with other dolphins.

“Often they switch off the sonar when they are kept in captivity, so that's one of the main tasks of the team here to prepare them for their life in the wild,” said Femke Den Haas, who runs the rehabilitation centre.