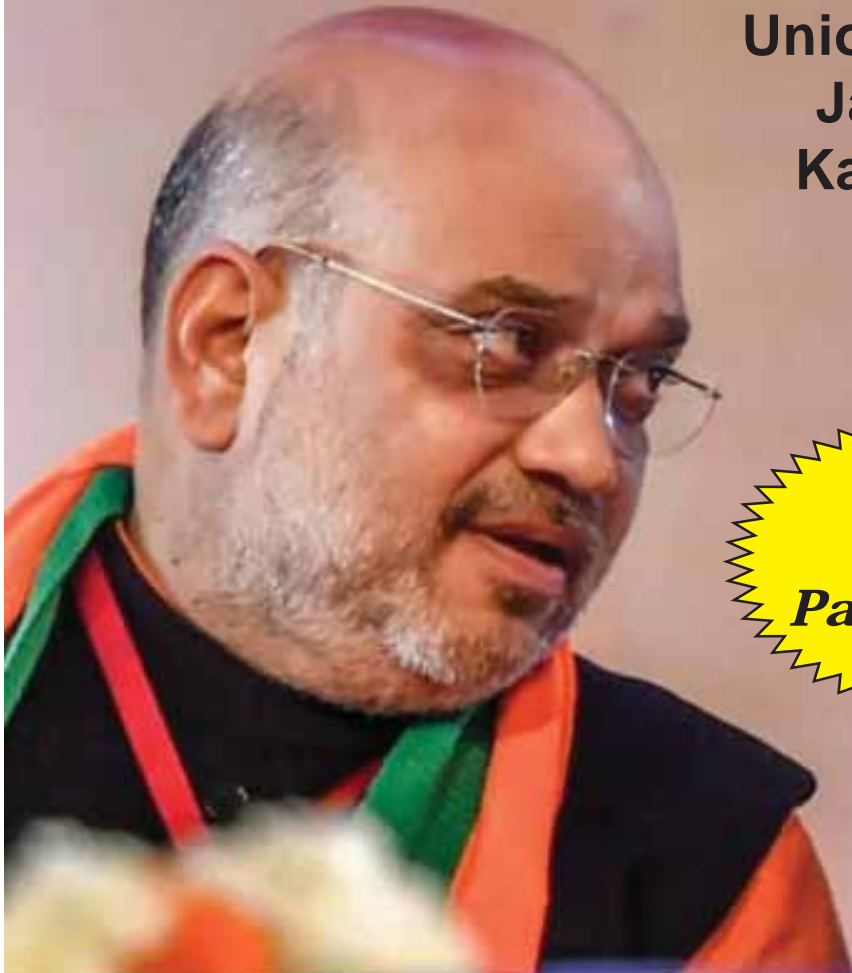


# “A Masterstroke”

August 5, 2019, will go down in history as one of the most momentous days in India’s history. It was the day when the state of Jammu and Kashmir was obliterated from the map of India.

But in reality, a historic wrong was corrected. An unholy compromise done post-Partition—for whatever reason, knowingly or unknowingly—was annulled by Parliament. A resolution was passed by Lok Sabha approving abrogation of the special status to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution and a Bill was passed for splitting the state into

Union territories:  
Jammu and  
Kashmir, and  
Ladakh.



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## Pranab Mukherjee to receive India's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna today

**Mukherjee was awarded India's highest civilian honour, in January, along with renowned musician Bhupen Hazarika and Bharatiya Jan Sangh founder Nanaji Deshmukh.**

Former President and veteran Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee will be presented with the Bharat Ratna by President Ramnath Kovind on Thursday evening.

Mukherjee was awarded India's highest civilian honour, in January, along with renowned musician Bhupen Hazarika and Bharatiya Jan Sangh founder Nanaji Deshmukh.

Kovind will present the award to Mukherjee in Rashtrapati Bhavan

at 6pm. Hazarika and Deshmukh, awarded posthumously, will also be honoured at the ceremony.

Pranab Mukherjee, 83, in his long and illustrious political career has served the country in various capacities -- Defence Minister, Finance Minister, External Affairs Minister, Leader of Lok Sabha, Leader of Rajya Sabha and as the President of India between 2012 to 2017.

Responding to the

announcement of Bharat Ratna being conferred on him, the former President who hails from Bengal's Birbhum had said, "It is with a deep sense of humility and gratitude to the people of India that I accept this great honour, Bharat Ratna, bestowed upon me. I have always said and I repeat, I have got more from the people of our great country than I have given to them."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his congratulatory tweet said,



"Pranab Da is an outstanding imprint on the nation's growth statesman of our times. He trajectory. His wisdom and has served the nation intellect have few parallels. selflessly and tirelessly for Delighted that he has been conferred the Bharat Ratna."

## Samjhauta Express shut down, says Pak minister, India denies claim



Islamabad has 'shut down' the Samjhauta Express train service between India and Pakistan, its railway minister Sheikh Rasheed announced on Thursday. Indian officials, however, say no formal notification to this effect was issued by Islamabad.

Indian Railway said that the train was stopped at Wagah border and arrangements were

being made to bring the stranded passengers to India. "#Samjhautaeexpress. Train will run. Train is being moved from Wagah and it will come to Attari," said an official tweet from Indian railway ministry. Reuters quoted Pakistan Minister Sheikh Rasheed as saying, "We have decided to shut down Samjhauta Express," he was further quoted

**Indian Railway sources confirmed that the train was stopped at Wagah border and passengers were stranded, reports PTI.**

suggesting the services will not be resumed any time soon, "As long as I am railways minister, Samjhauta Express can't operate," Reuters quoted Rasheed telling journalists. Samjhauta Express plies twice a week.

Before Pakistan Minister's tweet surfaced, an Indian Railway official, Deepak Kumar said, "Pakistan had raised issues regarding security of the train's crew and guard. We have told them that the situation this side was perfectly normal."

Station master of Attari railway station close to border

with Pakistan, Arvind Kumar Gupta said, "We got a message from Pakistan railways that the crew members and guards of Samjhauta Express refused to take the train into Indian territory. They allowed us to send our driver and staff to take the train from Wagah." He added that a train engine from Amritsar was being sent for this purpose, "We have called a train engine, its driver and other staff members from Amritsar railway station. The staff will go to Wagah for bringing the train into India." As per information, Samjhauta

Express was stuck at Wagah railway station on the Pakistan side since 9:30 am.

There are about 110 passengers on board the train stuck at Wagah and about 70 waiting to board the train to Pakistan on its return journey, said the railway source quoted above. The move comes after Indian Parliament okayed scrapping of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and dividing the state into two Union Territories. This was strongly criticised by Pakistan, which held a special session of its Parliament to condemn the issue and later decided to downgrade ties with New Delhi.

## Modi government looks to crack down on drug smuggling

**According to home ministry officials, a joint coordination committee, formed only last month under NCB director general Rakesh Asthana, met on Wednesday for the first time to discuss ways to curb the drug trade. According to estimates, India is abusing 36 tons of heroin each year.**

The Narendra Modi government has decided to cut the roots of terror funding by concertedly targeting drug smuggling in which, according to the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Delhi and Punjab have emerged as the principal fulcrums as hubs of both distribution and consumption of opium-based drugs.

According to home ministry officials, a joint coordination committee, formed only last month under NCB director general Rakesh Asthana, met on Wednesday for the first time to discuss ways to curb the drug

trade. According to estimates, India is abusing 36 tons of heroin each year.

The market value of 1 kg of heroin is Rs 1 crore, putting the value of heroin consumed in the country at Rs 36,000 crore (1 ton is equivalent to 1,000 kg).

"The drug survey conducted in February 2019 showed 20 lakh abusers of heroin, who conservatively are consuming 0.5 gram of drug. This means the total consumption is 360 tons but given the fact that drug is diluted by one-tenth, the conservative figure of drug consumption is 36 tons, but the

total seizure was only 1.5 tons," said a home ministry official.

With drugs being smuggled from both Afghanistan and Myanmar, the heroin seizures in India have touched a new high with 532 kilograms recovered from the Attari-Wagah integrated check post in June.

The biggest seizure by NCB is the 1,500 kgs it found on a boat in Gujarat's Kandla port in May 2017.

Given that the Modi government is worried not only about the terror funding but also the social impact of drugs, the NCB is being restructured and



two additional inspector general posts are being created for better enforcement. The NCB intelligence as well as operations units are being upgraded.

According to senior officials, a record 328,000 hectares in Afghanistan was cultivated for

opium poppy in 2017 with the help of the Taliban; the figure went down to 263,000 in 2018 with the heroin being smuggled through three major routes.

"The three routes are Central Asia to Russia, Balkan route via Iran and third to India via Pakistan.

# It is time to open up Kashmir

*The security imperative is important, but so are principles of liberty and humanity*



Kashmir has been locked up for three days. Movement is severely curtailed. Cable networks are off. Phone lines - both mobiles and landlines - are not operational. And internet services have been suspended. Leaders - including those who have no charges against them, and have pledged allegiance to the Indian constitution - are under detention. There is little information, except through official channels or sporadic satellite broadcasts, from the Valley about developments and the mood of the people.

The government took these steps in the run up to its landmark move in Parliament on Monday, to end the state's special status and bifurcate Jammu and Kashmir. The security imperative was understandable. There were concerns that the announcement could trigger unrest. The valley's security situation is vulnerable. Militants have often used times of political fragility and churn to spread disaffection and unleash violence. And the threat of Pakistan-based terrorists, or the Pakistan establishment, causing mischief is ever-present in the valley. The caution and preparations on the Indian side had a rationale to it. But along with security, the Centre must also keep in mind the principles of liberty and humanity. The civil liberties of Indian citizens in Kashmir today is severely curtailed. This has restricted their ability to live and work freely, or even manage essential supplies. It has also broken off links of Kashmiris outside the Valley with families back home, causing distress. It has affected those in the middle of medical emergencies, family events, including weddings, and affected all dimensions of life. With Eid around the corner, this is also meant to be a moment for families to come together. Except under extraordinary situations, it is important that the State actually enables citizens to live their lives freely. At a time like this, when there is understandable political anxiety in the Valley about its future, it is time for the Centre to lift restrictions, open up communication links, allow Kashmiris to engage with each other inside and outside, and express their views - while keeping up the security vigil.

## Let's be water wise for a secure future

**As per Niti Aayog, India is facing a water crisis, with around 50% population experiencing high to extreme water shortage. By next year, 21 Indian cities may run out of groundwater. Globally, India is ranked 120 among 122 countries in the world that are facing an acute water crisis.**

A couple of months ago, when India cricket captain Virat Kohli's household was fined by the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram for washing cars with running water from a pipe, one of my friends could not believe that this was an offence liable for penalty. Her reaction was obviously based on the assumption that water is a free commodity or a gift of nature to be used willy-nilly by all. Not anymore. The alarm bells are ringing loud and clear. As per Niti Aayog, India is facing a water crisis, with around 50% population experiencing high to extreme water shortage. By next year, 21 Indian cities may run out of groundwater. And by 2030, if proactive water management steps are not undertaken, 40% of India would have no groundwater and no access to drinking water. Globally, India is ranked 120 among 122 countries in the world

that are facing an acute water crisis. It's not very difficult to understand why we have reached this situation. With average decline in rainfall in most regions of the country year-after-year and reckless extraction, groundwater has been falling drastically. Rivers, lakes and wells have been drying up. The fact that forests are being cut does not help either. Besides, there is no water management. India does not store even one-tenth of its annual rainfall, neither is there any focus on recycling grey water and rejuvenating water bodies. What is worrisome is the fact that there are growing inequalities in water availability-people in villages in Marathwada walk for several miles to get a bucket of water, while in cities some continue to pilfer and waste it. Cut to Gurugram. The story is the same except that it is heightened manifold. Groundwater is falling drastically-by 1 to 3 metres every

year-and faster than the Indian average due to rampant extraction for construction, industrial and residential use through illegal borewells. Groundwater table in the city has fallen from 15 feet in 1990 to 80 feet in 2010. Because of heavy concretisation, rainwater is neither absorbed nor does the run-off get accumulated in water bodies, which, too, are disappearing. Buildings have been built on top of dried water bodies or else water bodies have been reduced to waste dumps and then encroached upon. Natural drains have been concretised. Storm water drains are clogged and their carrying capacity limited. The water supply infrastructure is faulty and has leakages leading to loss of substantial volume during distribution. There is next-to-negligible recycling of grey water. Overall, there is no focus on conservation, restoration, recharge or reuse.



Water efficiency alone can reduce water demand by a significant 25%. At the residential level, putting waste RO water to use in gardening, not using pipes to clean cars or to water plants, opting for bucket bath instead of a shower bath, using water more judiciously in cleaning utensils, installing rainwater harvesting systems and maintaining them, not allowing water tanks to overflow and using water efficient fixtures and appliances are some of the measures to save water. These solutions will now be reinforced with greater vigour by the centre and local municipalities. Nationally, the government has launched Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) to rejuvenate the water sector, much on the lines of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Covering water-stressed blocks in 255 districts across the country, the JSA focuses on a) rainwater harvesting, b) reuse of treated waste water, c) rejuvenation of water bodies, and plantation. The National Urban Sanitation Policy 2008 mandates reuse of at least 20% treated waste water. Besides, each city must initiate action to revive at least one water body under JSA. Plantation near water bodies, public spaces, parks and on roadside to improve green cover needs to be undertaken. The focus will be on citizen's participation and funds are being allocated by the Centre to the urban local bodies (ULBs)-in-charge of execution.

## *Blaming Trump for shootings is not the answer*

We have to stop blaming the politicians we loathe for the vile actions of the deranged, evil people who commit mass shootings. There is a pile-on underway of President Donald Trump, because commentators have said that the statement believed to have been written by the alleged El Paso shooter mirrors language the President has used regarding illegal immigration. Democrats in Congress and the party's presidential candidates are in full-blown attack mode against the President, trying to drive a narrative that he is responsible for mass shootings in America. However, the narrative took a hit when CNN reported Monday night that a social media account that appears to have belonged to the Dayton shooter contained "extreme left-wing and anti-police posts, as well as tweets supporting Antifa, or anti-fascist, protesters." It also featured a post saying, "Millenials [sic] have a message for the Joe Biden generation: hurry up and die." The account retweeted messages that were in support of Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, Democratic presidential candidates. Police in Dayton say race doesn't appear to be a motive in the shooting that left nine people dead, although if the social media account is indeed his, the personal politics of this shooter are pretty clear. What's more, the poster to this account clearly has no trouble making a hostile statement about former Vice President Biden and other older politicians. The shooter appears not to be a white nationalist, but rather a full blown, pro-Antifa socialist. Was his attack influenced by these political views? We don't know that yet. But here's the thing - it doesn't matter, because it is no fairer to blame Elizabeth Warren or the socialist wing of the Democratic Party for a supporter's actions than it is to label President Trump as responsible for someone pulling a trigger in El Paso.

The President has made mistakes on race issues, most notably in his statements after the 2017 white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, that left one dead and nine injured. He has certainly used incendiary rhetoric to describe what he sees as an illegal immigration crisis in America.

And now he has a responsibility, as our President and the person who should comfort the nation in times of crisis, to continue making statements like the one he issued from the White House on Monday morning. "In one voice our nation must condemn racism, bigotry and white supremacy," he said. "These sinister ideologies must be defeated." He should not deviate from that sentiment, nor should he allow himself to be baited into an unhelpful tit-for-tat with any political opponent. But the rush to rage against Trump -- and the predictive punditry that he will inevitably fail to unite the country -- seems counterproductive to people who want a meaningful policy outcome.

All politicians have a responsibility to ratchet down their own rhetoric, and to ask their supporters to stand down as well. Case in point: protesters -- presumably from the liberal left -- captured on Facebook outside the Louisville, Kentucky home of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao Sunday night shouting threatening and profanity-laced insults about McConnell, Chao and the US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement Agency. One protestor suggested on video that McConnell should have broken his neck instead of his shoulder, which McConnell shattered collecting the newspaper from his porch Sunday morning. These same protesters had also put similarly vile signs in the hands of the children they dragged along with them, teaching the next generation of political activists to be as hateful and violent as they appear to be. It is not comfortable to write about or risk glorifying the goon squad that appeared in McConnell's yard, but it is important for everyone to see that the radical left's harassment and calls for violence against conservative politicians is exactly the sort of thing that Democrats claim Trump himself has been doing to bring on El Paso. As a reminder, last year, anti-ICE protesters also cornered McConnell at a Louisville restaurant and shouted, "We know where you live, Mitch!" This week, they certainly proved they know where McConnell lives as they brought the threats of physical violence to his front yard. Mind you, Kentucky is a state where another US Senator -- Rand Paul -- had lung surgery this past weekend as he continues to recover from a savage beating administered by his deranged neighbor. Paul was also present at the congressional baseball practice shooting where a Bernie Sanders supporter shot up several Republicans, and others, firing 70 rounds, most from an assault rifle. Again, it isn't Sen. Sanders' fault. But you can't have it both ways. You either decry violence and violent rhetoric, or you don't. Liberals ought to take the same responsibility for their own, just as they demand the same from Trump. I don't blame Democratic politicians for the actions of their supporters in McConnell's yard; I am reasonably sure most of them would not condone it, although several partisan commentators and the Twitter platform itself are fanning the flames by glorifying the #massacreMitch hashtag.

The tag is ostensibly a criticism of McConnell's position on guns, but there's no question in my mind that some people mean it as a threat against McConnell.

I blame any politician who fails to demand his or her supporters stand down from accusations that portray

political opponents' rhetoric as an invitation to violence. Finally, politicians should be salving our raw nerves during this vulnerable time in our country, and not agitating. But Democratic Rep. Joaquin Castro does not seem to get this and is instead attempting to whip up anger against people in the San Antonio area who have donated to Trump's presidential campaign by tweeting out their names, saying that they are fueling a "campaign of hate." I agree with David Mastio of USA Today -- this is a "dangerous escalation" at a time when our nation needs messages of calm and reflection from the leaders of our two parties.

## *Pakistan's response will yield it little diplomatically*

The Pakistan government was under mounting pressure to respond to India's decision to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special status. Following a meeting of the country's top leadership, Islamabad announced it was expelling the Indian ambassador as part of the downgrading of diplomatic ties, and snapping bilateral trade. On Wednesday, Pakistan had closed a corridor of its air space which will affect Air India flights. A day later, it stopped the Samjhauta Express on their side at the Wagah border, citing security concerns. Islamabad said all bilateral arrangements would be reviewed, and the Kashmir issue would be taken to the United Nations (UN). The measures have had little impact on New Delhi, which has only called on Islamabad to review its decisions, and reiterated the changes in Kashmir are an internal matter.

Bilateral diplomatic contacts have been minimal over the past few years. India's trade with Pakistan accounts for about 0.3% of its total trade. Pakistan's first

Yes, President Trump needs to stay on message, and not have any erratic moments the way he did after Charlottesville. And liberal politicians must demand their activists cease the violent rhetoric aimed at McConnell and others, and not add to it themselves the way Castro has.

Only then can the nation heal. Only then can our leaders have the space they need to find a solution to the mass shooting crisis. The sweet spot of solution exists -- we can find it as long as the politicians let us.

two steps -- expelling the Indian envoy and snapping trade -- are unlikely to make a difference to the current stalemate. The two sides have sparred repeatedly at the UN on a range of issues, including Kashmir. A continuation of this trend is unlikely to lead to a change on the ground, especially when Pakistan enjoys little support globally because of its continued use of terrorism as an instrument of State. The international community, barring a few close friends of Pakistan such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, has responded coolly to overtures on the Kashmir issue. Other nations have indicated they are not opposed to the Indian position that the decisions of August 5 are an internal matter. The fear, however, is that a desperate Pakistan, especially when it believes it is needed for finding a solution in Afghanistan, could again resort to the use of terror to force the world community to heed its demands. India must be prepared for just such an eventuality.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

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A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

**REGD & MAILING OFFICE :****P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801****Phone: 917 612 3158 TelFax : 516 342 1076**

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# The abdication of the Opposition

*By failing to fulfil their responsibility in Parliament, non-NDA parties have let down democracy*

When a political party has just won an electoral majority, it can be expected that it would use its numerical advantage to push through its legislative agenda. When the victory has been accompanied with the rout of other parties at the polls, the incumbent has an additional political and psychological edge. And, so, it is understandable that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been able to convert its 2019 Lok Sabha victory into policy victories in the current session of Parliament, including on its constitutional moves on Jammu and Kashmir. But this still does not explain, or justify, the

utter abdication of responsibility by the Opposition parties. This abdication has taken two forms: the lack of clarity in its ranks on key policy matters being discussed in Parliament; and the inability to put up a democratic fight even in a chamber where they, collectively, outnumber the BJP. Take the first. On the government's move to render Article 370 ineffective, bifurcate Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), and reduce the state to a Union Territory, the Congress response has been marked by complete incoherence and confusion. Rahul Gandhi took over 24 hours to put out his first critical tweet.

Even as the leader of the party in the Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad, slammed the government, the chief whip of the Congress in the same House, Bhubaneswar Kalita, resigned, protesting, in principle, against the party's stance. Adhir Ranjan Choudhary, the leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, suggested that Kashmir was actually an international - and not just an internal - issue, prompting Home Minister Amit Shah to ask if this was the party's official stance. On the other hand, some other senior leaders like Janardhan Dwivedi backed the government. Do not be surprised if the



Congress workers on the ground, let alone citizens, have no clue what the party actually believes in. The incoherence is supplemented by the lack of unity and floor strategy. During the vote on the triple talaq bill, for instance, all Congress members did not turn up to vote. On Kashmir, the opposition fractured entirely, with

parties as critical of the BJP as Bahujan Samaj Party and Aam Aadmi Party backing the government. A range of other regional parties - the Telangana Rashtra Samithi, YSR Congress Party, and Biju Janata Dal - have been supportive of the government, helping it gain numbers in the Rajya Sabha. And every other

day, a member or two resigns from the Opposition benches, paving the way for fresh elections from states, which, in turn, helps swell BJP numbers. Put it all together, and it clear that not only was the Opposition trounced in the election, but it has also lost the will to fight. This bodes ill for democracy.

## Modi redraws the line, etches history with Mission Kashmir



Never before since Independence has the India's Parliament seen such a defining decision that will redraw the nation's Constitution, map and history - all in a single stroke.

Never before since Independence has the Indian Parliament seen such a defining decision that will redraw the nation's Constitution, map and history - all in a single stroke.

The revocation of Article 370 - a controversial corollary of Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir's accession to

India in 1947 that granted it special status in the Union - and bifurcation of the state's three ethnically and geographically distinct regions into two Union territories is inarguably the most audacious, and potentially contentious marker the Centre has ever etched on the border state with far-reaching consequences.

TECTONIC SHIFT AT CENTRE OF CONFLICT In a larger context, it also marks a tectonic shift in New Delhi's geo-strategic game plan in a state that has, for more than six decades, been at the

centre of conflict marked by three-and-a-half wars - and, at times, a perilous flashpoint - between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan. It signifies the assertion of India's sovereign writ on a territory that figures in Pakistan's narrative, and that of Kashmir - based secessionists, as "a disputed territory".

By clubbing Jammu and the Valley into a Union Territory (UT) with a predominantly-Buddhist Ladakh region as a separate UT without a legislature, the Centre has

***New geo-political dynamics weighed in the Modi government's strategic calculus pegged to a distinct possibility of pro-Pakistan Taliban gaining ascendancy in Kabul and its impact on Kashmir***

clinically divested Jammu and Kashmir of its statehood, while reshaping the political map of the state. In effect, it has done away with one of the country's 29 states, and added two new UTs to the existing seven. The last time the state's map was redrawn was in 1947-48 when Pakistan annexed almost one-third of it through an armed invasion of tribals.

Accordingly a UT status to Jammu and Kashmir regions gives the Centre a direct control in the affairs of the tumultuous territory, notably the Valley, which has long been plagued by a bloody insurgency, and spasms of secessionist sentiments. This, as Lt Gen JS Dhillon (ret'd), a former commander of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps, says will have "a significant bearing on the handling of

security challenges in Kashmir". Clearly, Narendra Modi 2.0 has invested its political capital, derived from a resounding mandate in the summer elections, into its carefully-crafted Mission Kashmir that will surely define his legacy.

Not only has the Modi-Amit Shah duo - the most powerful fulcrum in the history of modern India - lent a practical shape to their party's long-standing ideological project on Kashmir, it also marks the government's bold assertion on Kashmir on the fast-evolving geo-strategic chessboard.

GAME-CHANGING GAMBIT

It is hard not to miss the context of New Delhi's game-changing gambit: The cosyng up of the US with Pakistan, America's

desperation to get out of the Afghanistan quagmire and Donald Trump's offer on the trot to mediate on Kashmir as a quid pro quo for Islamabad's help to deliver the Taliban to the negotiating table. The new dynamics, rapidly unfolding in the 21st century version of the Great Game, surely weighed in the Modi government's strategic calculus pegged to a distinct possibility of pro-Pakistan Taliban gaining ascendancy in Kabul and its impact on Kashmir.

But, for now, Modi's toughest challenge will be dealing with the internal fallout of his decision which is sure to ignite a firestorm in Kashmir, where Article 370 has historically been rooted in public psyche as an article of Kashmiri identity.

# By making Ladakh a UT, the NDA has finally restored its dignity

By restoring the dignity of Ladakh, which was once compared to other Himalayan kingdoms such as Nepal, Mustang, Bhutan, Sikkim and Monyul, the Indian government has finally done the unthinkable. Ladakh feels liberated after 185 years of slavery and coercion. India's Kashmir policy was based on Jawaharlal Nehru's own wistful familial links with the Valley that undercut India's interests in several ways. India's Kashmir policy was based on Jawaharlal Nehru's own wistful familial links with the Valley that undercut India's interests in several poignant ways.

First, on October 26, 1947, when

the brief subjugation-links with the Maharaja of Kashmir had elapsed, the people of Ladakh persistently resisted being a part of the Jammu and Kashmir's (J&K) unitary framework. But Nehru refused to heed; instead, left Ladakh to the mercy of Kashmiris despite its territorial incompatibility. Sheikh Abdullah had no links with Ladakh whatsoever.

Second, Ladakh was made to suffer on demographic deficiency (low weight in electoral politics), often used as an alibi for the neglect. At the same time, New Delhi chose to turn a blind eye to the Kashmiri practice of sabre-rattling. In fact, as early as in

1950, father of Madeleine Albright, Joseph Korbel, who was then a United Nations observer, noted how Kashmiris were playing trickery on the people of Ladakh, if not frightening them to surrender under their control. Despite Kashmir's dire record of tricks and mischief, the Indian leadership was hell bent on appeasing the Valley. The results of that policy had long become untenable. In the late 1970s, Sheikh Abdullah even launched a nefarious "Greater Kashmir" concept to obliterate the identity of Ladakh.

Third, the territorial reality was that 82% of J&K was neither Jammu, nor Kashmir; it was

Ladakh and Gilgit-Baltistan. Why would 15% people rule the rest of 85%? It was a flawed arrangement, anyway.

Fourth, Ladakh remained critical for India's national security. Imagine, without Ladakh, the China's People's Liberation Army would be sitting on the southern foothills of the Himalayas. It has been self-harming to have ignored Ladakh thus far, even failing to underpin its strategic value for gaining direct access to the Tarim Basin and the Tibetan Plateau. It has cost the nation heavily thus far, while keeping such a vast strategic frontier area in the hands of separatist-oriented Valley

leadership.

Fifth, India's fallacious old-fashion statecraft failed to check both China and Pakistan from eating into the state's territory. Over 55% of the state's 222,236 sq km of J&K was occupied either by China or Pakistan. Also, India's tagging of Ladakh to J&K underscores its lack of strategic clarity. Further, the constitutional arrangement sought for J&K essentially contained the seeds needed for India's own destruction. The cumulative impact of those missteps has been getting clearer by the day.

Sixth, the myth of J&K had long outlived its historical inviolability.

## The supremacy of the Indian State and Parliament



Through a Presidential Order, the Narendra Modi government has taken the teeth out of Article 370. The government used clause 3 of the same article to undo it. Clause 3 empowers President to make any changes to this article by way of a "public notification". It comes with a

proviso that mandates recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the state for any such action of the President.

Opposition parties and some legal minds are raising questions on the basis of this proviso. Two things need to be understood.

Firstly, the Constituent Assembly has taken the form of the state legislature; and when the state is under President's rule, the powers of the state legislature automatically transfer to the President of India.

Secondly, the governments in the past had affected 44-45 amendments to this article, starting with replacing Maharaja with Sadr-e-Riyasat in 1952. On all these occasions, the same Presidential Order route was adopted. The amendments were subsequently adopted by the state legislature, and incorporated in the state's constitution. It is the same this time around, too.

Some respected members in the House have argued that Kashmir

is not purely an internal issue, and it has international ramifications. In 1994, during PV Narasimha Rao's prime ministership, the Parliament had unanimously declared that the only outstanding issue between India and Pakistan is the status and future of Pakistan occupied Kashmir. If it were an international issue, why was the same argument not invoked in the past when article was amended 45 times?

We must overcome this Himalayan confusion that Kashmir is an international issue. We have to confidently say that it is our internal matter. We gave the state an article as a temporary provision some seven decades ago; we amended

it several times, and now decided to completely undo it. Everything is the prerogative of the Indian State and Parliament.

Some learned members tried to drag Vallabhbhai Patel into the discussion, implying wrongly that he was instrumental in bringing Article 370. One member went to the extent of saying that Patel wanted Kashmir to be given away to Pakistan. There can't be a bigger lie than this.

Firstly, Patel had not dealt with the Kashmir matter at all. He was preoccupied with Junagadh and Hyderabad after completing the task of integration of over 535 princely states in the Indian dominion. Legally speaking, Kashmir too should have gone to him.

## India has succeeded in outflanking Pakistan

A bold and historic decision has been taken by the Narendra Modi government to scrap Article 370/Article 35A, separate Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), and make both of them Union territories (UTs). It would have undoubtedly considered at length its internal and external repercussions. If immediate violence on the ground may be prevented because of large-scale security deployments, the challenge would be to control violent protests once the local forces organise resistance on an Islamic platform, fuelled by propaganda in mosques and instigation from abroad.

Pakistan will do its best to

promote clashes between protestors and the security forces so that it can highlight the issue of human rights violations in J&K. Already in July 2018, India had to strongly rebuke the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva for its biased report on human rights violations in Kashmir. We have coped with such partisan attacks since 1990s in much more difficult external circumstances when western human rights organisations were targeting us viciously on the issue, and the US was unsparing in its criticism. One can expect the Pakistani parliament to pass an all-party resolution condemning and rejecting India's move. Massive

demonstrations in Pakistan against India's step could take place, but if jihadi organisations are too visible and call for violence against India, Islamabad will have to worry about the impact of this fervour on its commitments to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to curb the supporting structures of terrorism on its soil, besides preserving the right atmosphere for receiving the financial bailouts it needs.

Pakistan will surely approach the UN Secretary General and the Security Council on what it will argue are steps that are repugnant to Kashmir's "disputed" status and are violative of UN Resolutions. It will accuse India of "illegally"

integrating Kashmir fully into the Indian Union, violating the rights of Kashmiris, defying the international community, disturbing peace in a sensitive region and creating tensions that could degenerate into a conflict transcending India's borders. Pakistan may make some propaganda capital for domestic consumption but is unlikely to get any substantial satisfaction. India has consistently maintained that J&K is an integral part of India; that third parties, including the UN, have no role in J&K (which is why we do not recognise the writ of UNMOGIP on our side in J&K); and that the J&K issue has to be discussed bilaterally

between the two countries as per the Simla Agreement. This may not deter the UN Secretary General's office from issuing some objectionable statement, as it did very recently on "armed conflicts" in Kashmir and the Maoist belt, ignoring altogether the element of terrorism in both cases. We will, of course, reject any such statement if it is issued. The UN Security Council (UNSC) can hardly take cognisance of Pakistan's complaint. We may have already briefed the UNSC members, including the P-5, of the purpose of our legislative move. Pakistan is bound by the Simla Agreement, which excludes the jurisdiction of the UN.



# Why Punjab needs to decide its farmers' policy quickly

**Agrarian crisis and continuous groundwater depletion are the two biggest challenges facing Punjab.**

Punjab chief minister Capt Amarinder Singh is known for his brand of decisive leadership. Be it the controversial annulment of all river-water agreements with neighbouring states in 2004 during his first term, the crackdown on the militant-gangster nexus or clipping the wings of dissenting minister Navjot Singh Sidhu, he has rarely shied away from making tough decisions.

Yet, his government's response to the draft farmers' policy prepared by the Punjab State Farmers and Farm Workers Commission (PSFFWC) appears to be bordering on ambivalence. The commission headed by Bharat Krishak Samaj chairman Ajay Vir Jakhar has suggested a slew of significant initiatives and interventions - no free power to farmers owning more than four hectares of land, use direct benefit transfer for power subsidy, make area-specific crop production plans,

ban paddy cultivation on village common lands et al.

Missing sense of urgency All of these are aimed at addressing the agrarian crisis and continuous groundwater depletion - the two biggest challenges facing the state. But the sense of urgency is lacking. Though it was unveiled more than a year ago, there is no clarity on when exactly the draft policy was submitted to the state government as no one in the commission or the state government wants to talk about this.

The recommendations were discussed, for the first time and that too "informally", by the state cabinet last Tuesday where Amarinder decided to set up a cabinet sub-committee for a detailed study because of the "political implications" of some of its provisions. Though the sub-committee is yet to be notified, such panels are not known to do things quickly.

Noted farm economist Dr SS Johl says the commission's recommendations must be considered on priority. "Governments need to shun the practice of looking at their vote banks before making decisions on critical matters. We all know how much political will they show on such issues," he says, citing the decision to advance sowing of paddy by one week in the middle of elections and its impact on groundwater.

Staring at a parched future Anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests that Punjab is hurtling towards 'desertification' with groundwater extraction far exceeding the replenishment. The state has the highest rate of overexploitation of groundwater resources in the country at 149%.

The state, according to a report prepared by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), will be rendered a desert in 25 years if the ground water exploitation



continues at the current rate. Also, the wells in Punjab have reported the highest percentage decline in groundwater levels. CGWB's latest assessment survey, in which it compared pre-monsoon water level data with the decadal average water level, indicated that over 84% of the 245 wells it observed have shown a decline, the highest among the states, followed by Uttar Pradesh at 83%. All of these are worrisome pointers.

Agriculture experts blame the free power, coupled with the failure of successive governments to wean the farmers

away from water-guzzling paddy cultivation, for indiscriminate use of groundwater. Over 14 lakh agriculture tube wells get free, unmetered power supply.

This is a double whammy. As the groundwater level is going down, farmers are consuming more and more electricity to draw water. The decrease of 15% in annual rainfall in the last decade and availability of surface water from rivers have only made things worse. This year, the debt-laden government has budgeted over Rs 8,969 crore for free power supply to agriculture pump sets.

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# Mumbai could be Jaish's target, says Indian intelligence

**After scrapping of Article 370, Pakistan-based terror groups may target security forces in Kashmir and the hinterland.**

(News Agencies)- Jaish-e-Mohammed, the Pakistan-based terrorist group, is looking to scale up attacks on security forces in Jammu and Kashmir as well as economic targets in cities such as Mumbai, intelligence agencies have told the government.

The assessment comes a day after Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan declared that India's decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir could lead to "Pulwama-like incidents", even trigger a conventional war between India and Pakistan.

It is a statement that is being

seen as an indication of Pakistan attempting to ramp up its support to terror groups, even push terror groups to throw all that they had. A senior security official told HT that around the time Imran Khan made the statement, came news that Rauf Azghar, the younger brother of Jaish chief Maulana Masood Azahar had moved up to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after meetings in Rawalpindi yesterday.

Rauf Azghar's shifting closer to the border between the two neighbours ties in with reports emanating from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir about a large number of Jaish recruits shifting

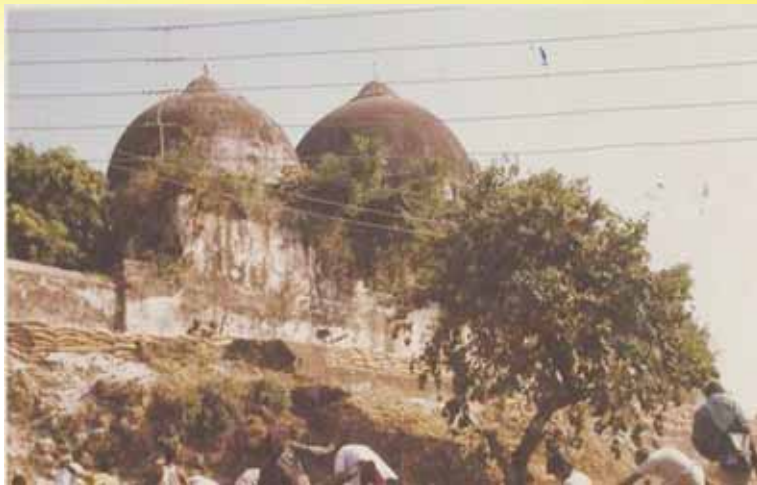


from its camps in Punjab towards the border. In the hinterland, a top government official said, the intelligence establishment assesses that there could be attacks against some infrastructure and economic target. The intelligence bureau suspects the Mumbai could be one of the targets on the radar of the Jaish-e-

Mohammed, an official said, attributing this assessment to a string of inputs that had been received. This set of inputs includes intelligence reports that a three-member Jaish team had been assigned the task of carrying out an attack in Mumbai and local sleeper cells had been activated. The security establishment had anticipated

much of these emerging developments. This is the reason why National Security Adviser Ajit Doval landed in Jammu and Kashmir for a last-minute review of the security preparations with army and paramilitary commanders along the Line of Control and beyond. The Centre had also told state police agencies to step up security at key places.

**'Lost papers in dacoity': Akhara tells SC on ownership of Ramjanmabhoomi**



(News Agencies)- On the second day of the day-to-day hearing in Ayodhya land case on Wednesday, a litigant Nirmohi Akhara told the Supreme Court that it had no proof of the ownership of the Ramjanmabhoomi.

"Do you have oral or documentary proof, revenue records of the possession of Ramjanmabhoomi before attachment," the top court asked the Akhara counsel during the hearing.

"A dacoity happened in 1982 and we lost records," the Akhara replied to the five-judge bench's query, reports ANI.

The bench, headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, started daily hearing of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute case from August 6.

This followed the failure of the mediation panel, set up by the

top court, to steer a compromise between the litigant parties

The three-member mediation panel looking into the dispute had last week informed the court that the various parties involved in it could not come to an agreement, drawing the curtains on almost four-and-a-half month-long negotiations between Hindu and Muslim litigants.

Taking cognizance of the report, the bench ordered: "We have received the report submitted by Justice (Retd.) FMI Kalifulla, the Chairman of the Mediation Committee. We have perused the same. The mediation proceedings have not resulted in any final settlement. We, therefore, have to proceed with the hearing of the cases/appeals, which will commence on and from 6.8.2019 (Tuesday). The hearing will be on day to-day basis until the arguments are concluded."



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# 'It's in your hands': NSA Ajit Doval tells security personnel in Kashmir

*Doval's visit came in the context of the internal security establishment's assessment that there could be attempts to incite street protests besides a spike in terror attacks.*

(News Agencies)- On a visit to Kashmir just before the presidential order stripping Jammu and Kashmir of its special status was issued, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval reached out to civilians in the valley, broke bread with them and gave security personnel deployed in the hot-bed of Kashmir militancy a pep talk. "The country's leadership, its future depends on how capable our forces are, how trained they are and how high their morale is," he told a group of security personnel in south Kashmir's Shopian. He continued: "It will depend on how big a sacrifice you are ready to make to achieve your objectives".

Shopian is crucial. The district, located south of the Pir Panjal mountain range, is considered the gateway to the Kashmir valley. Holding this region is also important because it can provide terrorists free access to cross over to Doda, Kishtwar and Poonch area of Jammu. Pulwama, the district where a Jaish suicide bomber had killed 40 CRPF soldiers in February this year, is just 20-odd km away. Shopian, often described as the ground zero of Kashmir's terror, is also where Hizbul commander Burhan Wani was killed in a deadly encounter with the forces in 2016 sparking violent protests across the valley. This is also one of the four Kashmir districts - Pulwama,



Kulgam and Anantnag were the other three -- that have been the focus of counter-terror operations this year which led to the elimination of 101 terrorists in the first five months of the year. Like Zeenat Naikoo, the local anchor to Jaish's foreign terrorists who cross over from Pakistan, who was killed in an encounter last week. Or

the top commander and bombmaker of Jaish-e-Mohammed a week earlier. Doval's visit came in the context of the internal security establishment's assessment that there could be attempts to incite street protests besides a spike in terror attacks. This is one reason why there had been

multiple visits to Kashmir by top security experts over the last month, right from the NSA to the chief of the army and intelligence chiefs. Doval returned to the national capital satisfied. In a report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the NSA said residents of the state were supportive of the Centre's initiative to scrap Article 370.

## ***Because this is about you, not us: A Kashmiri Pandit's open letter to Muslims in the Valley after Article 370 goes***

***Even as armchair experts try to position the removal of Article 370 to be majorly about Kashmiri Pandits, this one is for you. For Pandits, it may be too little, too late.***



(News Agencies)- You and I - we have suffered at the hands of history. We both have been victims of politics and prisoners of vested agendas. We have collectively bled at the behest of power-hungry people who put their interests ahead of ours. You have tided through seventy years of political and economic neglect and indifference - just as we, Kashmiri Pandits, have waited out three decades of forced exile from our homeland.

But in all this, what is most important is that we emerged survivors. Yet, today we stand at the cusp of another transition that is not of our making. We were neither a part of the formalisation and acceptance of Article 370 post-Independence, nor are we a party to its removal. We were always mute spectators, bystanders in decision-making. Having said that, we cannot afford to use yesterday's logic in today's situation. So, we may want to play an active and mindful part this time over. While many in the circles of armchair experts and journalists may try to position the removal of Article 370 to be majorly about Kashmiri Pandits and their rights, take it from me - this one is for you. For Pandits, it may be too little, too late. I spent the whole of August 5 accepting congratulations. Yes, there was a gleam in my eyes but most people misunderstood it. I have defied exile for a good

seventeen years by going to Kashmir every other month - even at the peak of militancy. It is home and will remain so. I had never given any state the right to restrict my claim to my homeland. It was a personal choice. But yes, for many other Kashmiri Pandits, scrapping Article 370 may unfold as an opening to reconnect, especially those who did not go back after the exodus. But understandably, even for them, it won't be a cakewalk. To me, reading the scrapping of Article 370 'just' as the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley is belittling it. Do people even realise that almost three decades have passed since the exodus? Kashmiri Pandits were forced into exile and now, they have jobs outside, their kids are studying or settled elsewhere. Most have sold their properties. Even the next generation on both sides has no exposure to the culture in the Valley where religions and beliefs co-existed



for hundreds of years. They have no emotional connect. Why will they uproot once again to reverse-migrate now? So, yes, it is a feel-good factor for Kashmiri Pandits - but for the time being, that is all it will be. As for me, I love Kashmir too much to belittle the issue to the level of my own rights as a Kashmiri Pandit woman. The removal of Article 370 must mean much more than that to the people in Kashmir. The larger impact must be seen through the prism of what the Special Status has given to

people (or must I say, has ripped them off) - the majority of them being Muslims, living in the Valley for seven decades of neglect. The Special Status was more like a badge of honour being worn over a tattered shirt with broken buttons. But now, revoking Article 370 must mean that a kid in Kashmir gets the same exposure and opportunity as a child in Delhi. It should mean good schools, better hospitals, more universities, jobs galore through big-ticket investments and stability for tourism and service industry to thrive.

# Article 370 move leaves Pak fuming: Imran Khan severs ties with India, suspends trade, closes airspace

(News Agencies)- The scrapping of Article 370 and bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories has finally had its impact on India-Pakistan relations. Pakistan has now announced that it will be downgrading diplomatic relations with India. It has also said it will be suspending bilateral trade with India. Hours later Pakistan also announced the partial closure of its airspace. Amid uproar over India's Kashmir provisions, Pakistan has also called for the review of bilateral arrangements. In a big development, Pakistan has announced that it will call its high commissioner back from India and expel the Indian envoy to Pakistan. Pakistani Foreign Minister

Shah Mahmood confirmed the news to local media. "We will call back our ambassador from Delhi and send back their" envoy, foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi announced in televised comments, while a government statement declared that Pakistan will suspend trade in a downgrading of diplomatic ties between the arch-rivals. To this, Indian government sources said that India will maintain status quo on suspension of trade with Pakistan, which was put into place after the Pulwama attack on February 14. Pakistan can take the matter to the UN but it won't change India's stand on trade, sources claimed. At present, Pakistan does not have a high

commissioner deputed in India. Pakistani diplomat Moin-ul-Haq was supposed to assume the post soon after he was appointed in May. However, now he will not be taking up the post in New Delhi. The decision came after Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan held a meeting of the National Security Committee in Islamabad on Wednesday. The meeting was attended by Defence Minister Pervez Khattak, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Hayat, Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa, Naval Chief Admiral Zafar Mehmood Abbasi, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan, ISI Director-General Lt Gen Faiz Hameed and other officials.

Imran Khan alleged that "India is a racist regime and violates human rights". Imran Khan added that all diplomatic channels will be activated to point out this out. He has also directed the Pakistan Army to "continue vigilance" on borders. Pakistan closes airspace Pakistan has closed a corridor in its airspace, which will result in an additional up to 12 minutes of flying time for overseas flights, an Air India official said on Wednesday. The flights will have to be diverted to other routes due to the closure, the official said. "One air corridor has been closed (in Pakistani airspace), requiring a maximum of 12 minutes diversion. It will not affect us (much)," said the Air India spokesman.



Move will hit Pak more Former Indian foreign minister Salman Khurshid commented on the development, saying that Pakistan's decision will not impact India. "No impact of Pakistan decision on India. It is a short-sighted decision, which is going to affect them badly, not us," he said. TCA Raghavan, a former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, said the decision would not make much difference to India as the bilateral trade has not been much.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan had on Tuesday set up a high-level committee to prepare a plan of action on India's decision to revoke Article 370 and bifurcate the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories. The Indian government on Monday revoked Article 370 which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir and proposed that the state be bifurcated into two union territories, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

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# Kashmir: The decision is a win-win for everyone

*The advisory to various state governments to ensure the safety and security of the residents of Jammu and Kashmir is a step in the right direction. It must now be followed up by a genuine outreach to the people of the state*

(News Agencies)- The speculation over Jammu and Kashmir is over with the announcement of revocation of Article 370, and the division of the state into two Union Territories. To some, it was evident that the events of the past few days had less to do with an enhanced security threat, but were carried out with a political objective in mind. The discussions over Article 370 has two sides. This subject will now be hotly debated in Parliament, and perhaps, in the Supreme Court. However, the Union government has taken a decision, and the immediate task is to deal with the challenges that this decision will bring.

The first, and most obvious result could be a worsening of the law and order situation in the Kashmir Valley. An immediate

parallel could be drawn with the situation that erupted following the killing of militant Burhan Wani in July 2016. However, the difference with 2016 is that the government and security forces are much better prepared today to deal with any disturbance. The scale of the protests in 2016 came as a surprise to the security forces, but the recent pre-emptive deployment of additional forces into Jammu and Kashmir enables the state government to deal appropriately with any situation. If large-scale protests do erupt, how they are handled will be extremely important. Obviously, a breakdown of law and order cannot be accepted, but the response of the security forces must be measured. Large-scale deaths and injuries to civilians will leave long-term scars, and will make conflict resolution more difficult.

Pakistan can be expected to fish actively in the troubled waters of Kashmir. Buoyed by the recent statements of United States President Donald Trump on mediation, Pakistan will attempt to internationalise the issue of Kashmir. I do not see any great success in Pakistan's diplomatic efforts, as the world is mostly tired of Islamabad's duplicity on terrorism, and sees Kashmir as an internal matter of India. Pakistan will undoubtedly step up its support to terror activities in Kashmir. This is perhaps the last chance it has of showing its backing to the cause of azadi (freedom) in Kashmir. If Pakistan does nothing, it could lose credibility not only in Kashmir, but also among terror groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad that are virtually an arm of the Inter-Services



Intelligence. However, there are limits to Pakistan's response. Hobbled by international pressure and a dire financial situation, Pakistan needs to ensure that the situation does not escalate to a conventional conflict. The Indian Army's deployment along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir is extremely robust, and will not allow large-scale infiltration. Notwithstanding this, a major terror incident in Kashmir cannot be ruled out, and it will primarily be the responsibility of intelligence agencies to ensure that there is no repeat of a Pulwama-type attack. It is also essential to not look at tackling the situation purely through a security approach. If the government's action aims to find a resolution to the Kashmir conflict, it has to take the local population into confidence. This is perhaps the most difficult task as past activities of the government have only increased suspicion and alienation among the Kashmiris. As long as this alienation is not addressed, long-term solutions will not be forthcoming.

## Can't accept more friend requests': Ladakh BJP MP after Article 370 speech



(News Agencies)- After Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the speech by Jamyang Tsering Namgyal on Article 370 the day before in Parliament, the Ladakh MP on Wednesday revealed facing a problem of plenty - friendship requests on Facebook.

"I cannot accept more friend request on Facebook Account as the limit of 5000 is crossed. So may please hit like and stay tuned with my official Facebook page attached here," he said in a tweet on Wednesday while providing a link to his official Facebook page.

Modi on Tuesday said that Namgyal delivered "an outstanding speech in the Lok Sabha".

"He coherently presents the aspirations of our sisters and brothers from Ladakh. It is a must hear!" Modi tweeted.

The Prime Minister also posted the link

to his speech.

In his 17-minute speech, Jamyang welcomed the government's decision on Kashmir and said the plea of the people of Ladakh had finally been accepted. "Modi hain toh mumkin hain" (If Modi is there it is possible), he said.

"Honourable member from Kashmir was saying after Article 370 is abolished what we would lose. Well I would say 'two families will lose their livelihood'," said Jamyang.

"Kashmir will now have a bright future," he said. The people from Kargil voted for Union Territory (UT) status in the 2014 parliamentary elections and it topped their manifesto even in the 2019 polls, Jamyang said.

"You can recall any war, Ladakhis have always sacrificed for the love of the nation", he added.

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## Sushma Swaraj cremated with state honours. PM Modi, other leaders pay tribute

cremated around 4.25 pm. Political leaders from across party lines were present at the cremation. Hundreds of party workers from Delhi and neighbouring states also came but many could not access the packed venue. Hundreds of BJP workers milled outside Swaraj's residence, though most connecting roads were barricaded by the police. Many called her a "political stalwart". Others recalled her 51-day tenure as Delhi chief minister in 1998. She was succeeded by Congress's Sheila Dikshit, who too passed away last month. One of the first visitors was Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who termed Swaraj a "prolific orator" and an "outstanding

parliamentarian". He was moved to tears as he met Swaraj's family.

"Sushma ji was a prolific orator and outstanding Parliamentarian. She was admired and revered across party lines. She was uncompromising when it came to matters of ideology and interests of the BJP, whose growth she immensely contributed to... Sushma ji's demise is a personal loss. She will be remembered fondly for everything that she's done for India. My thoughts are with her family, supporters and admirers in this very unfortunate hour," said Modi in a series of tweets. Swaraj, whose political career spanned around four decades, is survived by her husband, Swaraj

Kaushal, and daughter Bansuri. BJP stalwart L K Advani too broke down as he met Swaraj's family. Other BJP leaders who paid their respects include Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and Venkaiah Naidu, who earlier said Swaraj was the "true voice of the people" in the Rajya Sabha. Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, and former prime minister Manmohan Singh also paid their respects.

"Sushma Swaraj's absence has left behind a political vacuum which cannot be filled by any politician for a long time," Shah said.

Rahul Gandhi said Swaraj was an "extraordinary political leader, a gifted orator and exceptional Parliamentarian, with friendships

across party lines".

By 11 am, hundreds had gathered at the BJP head office and the crowd swelled as buses packed with people from Uttar Pradesh and Haryana reached the adjacent parking space.

Renu Tirkey from Jharkhand was one of the visitors at the party office. She recalled meeting Swaraj for the second time when she visited Parliament in November 2018. "The meeting was unplanned. It was my good luck. And she could identify me. I was surprised. In 2017, I had met her during a programme in Ranchi," said Tirkey, who is a member of the BJP mahila morcha in Jharkhand. Tirkey and two others were in Delhi for a meeting at the party office but it

got cancelled because of Swaraj's death, she said.

Likewise, Ghanshyam Rathode, a farmer from Madhya Pradesh, and five of his friends have been in Delhi for three days, meeting BJP leaders to request them to help fix a road that connects their village, Mammatkheda, to the nearest city, Ratlam. "We have come to Delhi after 18 years. We met LK Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and we wanted to meet Sushmaji too. We are sad it could not happen," said Rathode, also the BJP in-charge of his village. Rathode and his friends later joined a gathering that chanted slogans such as "Jai Shri Ram" and "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" outside the hall where Swaraj's body was kept.

## Article 370 is out, Kashmir is in: Why all eyes are now on Pakistan

If Vajpayee had delayed the decision to conduct nuclear tests too long, the arguments for and against may have sapped the resolve to take that fateful step. The Modi government, too, has rightly taken this capital step in the wake of its overwhelming electoral victory, rather than wait and allow the process of thinking and rethinking erode the determination to end the prolonged blood-letting in Kashmir by external and internal enemies. The government has, no doubt, considered deeply the internal and external

repercussions of its step. For the moment, it may contain violence because of stringent security precautions but the Valley is bound to erupt sooner or later.

The Kashmiris have been pampered far too long by the government of India and their sense of entitlement has grown immeasurably. The Valley has become Islamised over time, reflecting the growing radicalisation of the Islamic world in general. We have long failed to find an answer to Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorism against us. Even

Balakot has not buried the demons of Pakistani instigated terrorism fully, as reactions from Pakistan on our latest move shows. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, the pretentious peacemaker, has reiterated his country's support for the Kashmiri people, and, according to the Pakistan government, has "invited attention of world leaders and international bodies towards irresponsible, unilateral and irrational behaviour of the Indian leadership." Pakistan has warned that it will exercise all

possible options against India's "illegal" steps. What these options are realistically is not clear. Pakistan will try to raise the matter with the UN Secretary-General, but to what end? A change in India's domestic law on the status of J&K within the Indian Union is not an international matter.

We have always maintained that J&K is an integral part of India, a position not challenged by the UN. In any case, Article 370 was inserted in the Indian Constitution in 1954, years after the UN resolutions on J&K, and so there

is no nexus between the two.

All eyes on Pakistan

Pakistan will have to argue that international peace and security is being endangered by the Indian move. But this step is not an act of aggression against Pakistan. If peace and security are likely to be endangered, then it will be because of Pakistan's intervention in any form, especially by stepping up jihadi activities against India on which Pakistan's record is well known to the international community.

## Trump administration authorizes 'cyanide bombs' to kill wild animals

ducks and owls. Roughly 6,500 of them were killed by M-44s. On Tuesday, after completing the first phase of a routine review, the US Environmental Protection Agency announced that it would allow sodium cyanide's continued use in M-44s across the country on an interim basis. Yet the traps are facing increasing opposition, and have, in the past, led to the inadvertent deaths of endangered species and domestic pets and caused harm to humans. In 2017, a teenage boy named Canyon Mansfield was hiking with his dog in the woods behind his family's home in Pocatello, Idaho when Mansfield's dog triggered a cyanide trap that sprayed a plume of poison dust into the air. The dog died on the spot and Mansfield was

rushed to the hospital, where he ultimately recovered. His parents are suing Wildlife Services over the poisoning.

Mansfield's case made national headlines and has fueled opposition to M-44s. In May, in response to advocacy by environmental groups, Oregon's governor Kate Brown signed a ban on the use of the traps in the state. In 2017, Wildlife Services agreed to temporarily halt the use of M-44s in Colorado after environmental groups sued. The agency also stopped using them in Idaho after the Mansfield case came to light.

In the months before the EPA announced the reauthorization, conservation groups and members of the public flooded the agency with comments calling for a complete national ban on the predator-killing

poison. According to an analysis provided by the Center for Biological Diversity, which is a leading opponent of M-44s, 99.9% of all comments received by the EPA opposed the reauthorization of sodium cyanide for predator control purposes. Although the agency took a different view, it did impose new restrictions on the use of M-44s. Among other things, the agency will now prohibit government officials from placing M-44s within 100 feet of public roads or trails. The agency's reauthorization decision is only an interim one and a final decision on the matter is expected to come down after 2021. Brooks Fahy, the executive director of the environmental group Predator Defense and a leading opponent of M-44s, denounced the EPA's decision.

## Kashmir issue: From PM Modi's healing touch to Pakistan's 'no-samjhauta' in 10 points

Kashmir, while the bifurcation will also help Ladakh prosper as a separate Union Territory. He listed the government's plan to end corruption, atrocities, and violence in Jammu and Kashmir. He also urged a wide array of industries to come and invest in Jammu and Kashmir. The prime minister also asked the nation to stand in support of Kashmiris, adding that the restrictions will be removed soon. He also requested filmmakers from Bollywood, Tollywood and other regional film industries to shoot films in the Valley.

PM Modi also listed the benefits that Jammu and Kashmir citizens will enjoy now. PM Modi said there will be an immediate review of government employees

and police in the state. They will now enjoy the same benefits as other government employees posted in other states of India. He also said that central laws and schemes will now benefit minority communities in Jammu and Kashmir. He also spoke about how education will prosper in the state after the scrapping of Article 370. Healthcare and export industry will also flourish in the absence of Article 370, said PM Modi. During his entire speech, PM Modi mentioned Jammu and Kashmir 69 times and barely mentioned Pakistan. The prime minister's speech on Kashmir had stark differences when compared to his earlier speeches.

# From Hero To Zero: India's Move To Bifurcate Kashmir Leaves Pakistan PM Imran Khan Clutching At Straws

Until recently, Pakistani PM Imran Khan was being hailed as a hero at home for having convinced the US president that Kashmir was a 'flashpoint' in urgent need of ministrations. But India's Kashmir moves put Pakistan in a spot.



It's the one yardstick by which all Pakistani politicians and military leaders are judged. Every Pakistani leader worth his vaulting rhetoric must successfully handle the Kashmir "dispute" with India in public, so crucial an indicator it is of political fortunes and longevity. Faring well vis-a-vis the 'hostile' eastern neighbour in this crucial area, especially before an international audience, is a must. Under rising pressure and fierce criticism from his political opponents at home in the wake of India's decision to scrap Article 370 and bifurcate the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Imran Khan on August 7 responded by expelling the Indian high commissioner in Islamabad, Ajay Besaria, and decided to withhold the new Pakistani high commissioner to Delhi. The Pakistani PM, who chaired a high-level meeting during the day that was attended by senior members of the civilian government as well as the military

establishment, also took a series of steps to downgrade relations with India—bilateral trade was to stop and the Wagah-Attari border closed.

Clearly, the aim of the Pakistani leadership is to ratchet up tensions with India to a level that would grab focus of the international community and pave the way for the United States or the United Nations to intervene and force India to return to the talks table with Pakistan. The Pakistani response to a large extent was on expected lines. Until recently, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan was being hailed as a hero for having convinced the US president that Kashmir was a 'flashpoint' in urgent need of ministrations, leading Donald Trump to offer to mediate between the two South Asian nuclear neighbours—manna for Pakistan, as it had always been keen in internationalising the 'dispute'. But India's decision to abrogate

Article 370 and the bifurcation of the state into two Union territories put Pakistan in a spot. There was mounting pressure, too, from the Opp-os-ition on Imran for his inability to anticipate the Indian move.

"Was the offer to mediate a trap that you walked into and gloated over, or did you, as usual, had no clue about what was being planned by the enemy?" Pakistan Muslim League leader and former PM Nawaz Sharif's daughter, Maryam Sharif, asked in a terse tweet. "You have wreaked irreversible damage not only to the country but to Kashmiris who needed a strong Pakistan to support them," she added, setting the tone for other criticism. Maryam used her August 6 rally in Sargodha to highlight the plight of Kashmiris and to keep up pressure on Imran, prompting other opposition leaders like Pakistan People's Party's Bilawal Bhutto to demand immediate action. Clearly, the harried opposition leaders in Pakistan, cowering thus far under the government's charges of corruption, eagerly latched on to the Kashmir issue to put Imran on the back foot. Islamabad's decision to expel the Indian envoy and stop trade was an attempt to stanch the flow of attacks on Imran's PTI government.

It is not so much the dilution of Article 370 that is anathema to Pakistan, as that of its subset, Article 35A, that no longer prevents non-Kashmiris from buying land in the Valley. The

decision to bifurcate the state into two separate Union territories—Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh—also rankles. The fact that cross-border terrorism was cited as a key reason for the bifurcation so that the government can now deal more effectively with the menace also puts the blame on Pakistan, although without naming it. Pressure has since been mounting on Imran from his detractors to come clean on whether he had been caught totally unawares by India or had struck a sec-ret deal with Trump on Kashmir.

For his part, the PM first responded by aiming for maximum wattage—calling the Indian decision "racist" and warning that the situation is likely to worsen further, including more "Pulwama-like incidents", as Kashmiris were going to retaliate to Delhi's "illegal" measures. He told the National Assembly: "Jinnah knew that RSS wants India only for Hindus and any Muslim there would be treated as second-class citizens. He was the first to see through their agenda."

Most diplomats feel that so far India has managed to outflank Pakistan. The decision on Kashmir has been smoothly slotted away by the Indian establishment as an "internal matter".

To ensure that its decision on Article 370 does not spark a major misunderstanding among key international players, India has begun a diplomatic contact

programme. On August 6, Indian foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale and other senior MEA officials briefed envoys of the 'permanent five' of the UN Security Council countries and others on the logic behind the Indian decision. The decision to scrap the article that gave special status to J&K, they argued, would lead to good governance, social justice and economic development in the state.

China has been the only country to strongly criticise the Indian move; it also repeated the old homily of asking India and Pakistan to resolve their disputes through dialogue. But China's reaction can be linked to two issues—one, its close friendship with Pakistan, which had gifted it a portion of Kashmir territory under its control and two, to ensure that Aksai Chin, a territory in the Ladakh sector of the unresolved Sino-India boundary that is under Chinese control but claimed by India, is not jeopardised. While India wouldn't want to precipitate a crisis with China, it did tell Beijing that India does not comment on internal matters of its neighbours and expected China to follow the principle. Barring China, all other countries seemed to have accepted the Indian argument, showing reluctance to open a front with India on Kashmir. Inasmuch as the centrality of Kashmir in its policy towards India, Pakistan's other responses in the coming weeks will be keenly watched by all.

## Mexico cartel hangs bodies from city bridge in grisly show of force

this week's slaughter was clearly intended to intimidate rival criminal groups, the families of their members, as well as Mexican authorities. Ernst said the bloodbath was partly about the struggle for control of Uruapan's local drug trade. But a more important motivation was the fight for the region's billion-dollar avocado industry. "The big magnet here is avocados," he said. Ernst said at least three armed groups were currently battling for control of the city of Uruapan - the CJNG, the

Knights Templar cartel and Las Viagras, which is part of a larger organization called the Nueva Familia Michoacana. Stomach-churning displays of criminal might are not unusual in Mexico, which last year suffered a record 35,964 murders. But the CJNG has become particularly notorious for its willingness to confront Mexican authorities with brazen public shows of brute force and firepower. In May video footage emerged showing heavily armed cartel

members parading through Zamora, another city in Michoacán, in cars marked with their group's insignia. The cartel was blamed for a battle with local police that day that reportedly left at least four officers dead. Uruapan boasts an unenviable place in Mexican drug trafficking lore. It was here, in 2006, that five severed heads were rolled on to a nightclub dancefloor by gangsters - a ghoulish attack that made global headlines and helped trigger then president Felipe Calderón's

catastrophic six-year war on drugs. That failed offensive against the cartels resulted in an unprecedented period of bloodletting, with murder rates soaring across the country almost ever since. Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who became Mexico's president last December, swept to power promising to rethink his country's fight against crime. He created a new security force called the national guard and vowed to tackle the social roots of crime by offering scholarships to disadvantaged

teenagers. But eight months into López Obrador's presidency there is no sign of improvement. Official figures show there were at least 17,608 murders in the first half of the year. La Voz de Michoacán, a local newspaper, said that this year, as armed groups battled for supremacy there, Michoacán state had found itself at the eye of the storm with 963 killings since January. Even Mexico City - long seen as a island of relative calm from the conflict - has seen a surge in crime this year.

# A \$5 Trillion Economy By 2025?

## Why Kashmir Can Be The Apple Of India's Eye

**Economist Haseeb A Drabu highlights the immense potential of the apple production in Kashmir. Orchard transformation and logistics management can increase production and earnings manifold**

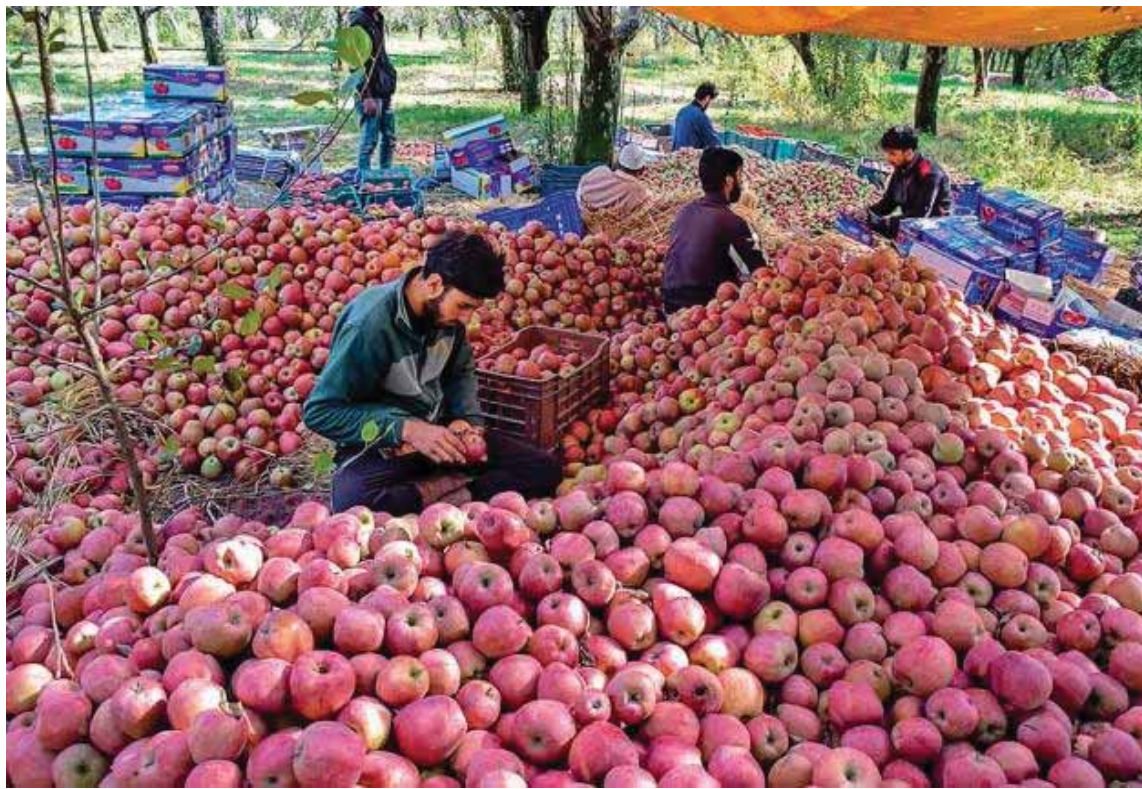
The prime minister's target of a US \$5 trillion economy is ambitious, not audacious. The seeds of this thought were planted in the PM's mind by B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, the chief secretary of Jammu and Kashmir. So said the PM at a meeting in Srinagar on February 3, 2019. Apparently, it was in Davos that he told the PM that India will be a \$3 trillion economy in 2020 and should aspire to be a "\$5T" economy by 2024-25. It clicked. And the rest, as they say, will become history. If it is played right.

Normally, neither politicians nor policy-makers see state economies as principal actors in the gross domestic product (GDP) growth process. With GDP being a national macroeconomic statistic, the states and their contributions get subsumed. The fact is that the country's GDP is—and is estimated as—an aggregation of the state domestic product (SDP). Yet, when the GDP target and policies to achieve it are finalised, the potential of individual state economies is not really discussed. Indeed, states and state actors have to be the principal players, indeed drivers, in the \$5T game. The Centre can provide the enabling conditions.

To give an example of how much one state can contribute let us look at the state which is not on the radar of growth and development of either economic policy-makers or the political leadership or even the public: Jammu and Kashmir. All that needs to be done in the state is to pick the low-hanging fruit, literally!

### Among The Top 5

India is the fifth largest producer of apples in the world, even though its share in global apple production is just 3 per cent. More than two thirds of the national apple production comes from the Valley of Kashmir. Out of the 2.5 million metric tonnes



grown nationally, about 2 million metric tonnes are grown in the Valley. Of the 0.31 million hectares under apple cultivation in the country, 0.16 million hectares are in the Kashmir Valley. Even though the Valley is less than 0.5 per cent of the total geographical area, it contributes 50 per cent of the country's area under apple cultivation. Comparisons are even more striking. The tiny 2,400 sq km Valley of Kashmir has more area under apple cultivation than the world's second largest producer of apples, the US, a 3,800,000 square km country.

The complete concentration of production and area under apple cultivation is matched only by a complete absence of infrastructure; only 0.3 per cent of national storage capacity is in the state. There are just 36 cold storages in J&K out of the 6,000 in the country. In addition to this, there is no logistics infrastructure. The move to set up a dry port, announced with much fanfare in the presence of the PM in Dubai in 2018, is still caught in some inexplicable bureaucratic maze. Despite such government apathy, for

purposes of potential and policy, Kashmir Valley on its own, based on local entrepreneurial acumen, is the sixth largest producer of apples in the world.

J&K's apple yield of 11 metric tonnes per hectare is marginally higher than the national average of eight, but abysmally lower than the global yield of 60 metric tonnes per hectare. On a unit basis, one metric tonne generates an annual income of about \$1,100. With the current apple yield, this works out to around \$12,000 a hectare.

So much about output. What about employment? As a rule of thumb, a one-hectare apple orchard generates 400 man-days of employment. At the current level of spread and production, the apple sector contributes 150 million man-days a year.

**From Millions To Billions** J&K apple production contributes 10 per cent to the total state income of \$20 billion. How does one grow the \$2 billion apple economy to a \$8 billion one by 2025? Rather simple: Increase the yield to global levels through orchard transformation and logistics management. The

former will increase the quantity and the latter will improve the price realisation.

The idea is to ramp up and accelerate the high-density- and technology-intensive orchards plantation initiative envisaged in 2016. By converting a very conservative 10 per cent of the area of two million hectares from traditional to high-density orchards every year, half the total area under apple plantation will be under high density in five years. These 100,000 hectares of high-density orchards will produce four million tonnes, assuming an average yield per hectare of 40 metric tonnes. This will more than double the total apple production to 6 million metric tonnes. Presto! India becomes the world's second-largest apple producer. The additional gains come from improvement in quality, reduced input (fertiliser, pesticides, and manpower) costs and low wastage. The decreased water usage by a factor of five is a huge gain for sustainable economic growth.

All these push the top line, making the apple economy far more profitable than ever before. With 93 per

cent of the orchards being less than one hectare, income distribution is axi-omatically addressed. With nearly five lakh families engaged in this activity, the increase in incremental income is spread over nearly 25 lakh people.

For this environmentally-sustainable and equity-oriented growth model, the investment required per hectare is around \$70,000 or less than \$10,000 per canal of land. On this investment, the returns, in investment banking terminology, will be a multi-bagger with a seven to eight fold increase in the returns on investment. The state government had initiated the transformation by allocating \$300,000 in the state budget of 2016-17. This can be increased five-fold without any real stress in expenditure management. It can come from marginal savings of other objectives. Alternatively, a 50:50 scheme with the orchardist's contribution, as was done, should be expanded. It could even be converted into a central scheme.

As a consequence, the state domestic product originating from horticulture will increase to \$6.5 billion. With an estimated income multiplier of 1.5, in five years, the size of the apple economy will be \$10 billion. This should power the total SDP of J&K from \$18 billion today to 0.1 trillion in 2025. Today, J&K contributes 0.6 per cent of the national income; then it will contribute two per cent. In the \$100 billion horticulture economy of India, the apple model can be easily replicated for fruits across states to increase it to from the current levels of \$60 billion of marketable surplus to over \$300 billion over five years, making the \$5 trillion journey a rather fruitful one.

# Pakistan Runs Out of Options as India Tightens Grip on Kashmir



NEW DELHI — The dispute over Kashmir has long been a flash point between India and Pakistan, with each nuclear-armed country holding the threat of retaliation over the other. But when India stripped the Indian-controlled region of Kashmir of its autonomy this week, Pakistan's reaction appeared to be limited to high-level hand-wringing.

As Pakistan marks its independence day next week, it increasingly feels like a nation with its back against the wall, with few options to protect its existential interests. Its economy is teetering on the brink of collapse, and its international allies have either stayed silent over Kashmir or defected in

support of India.

A conventional military reaction is probably too costly as Pakistan seeks to shore up its finances. And one of the most effective strategies Pakistan has traditionally employed — using an array of militant groups as proxies to keep neighbors in check — has become a liability, amid the threat of international sanctions. (Pakistan has denied that it uses militant groups to achieve its foreign policy objectives.)

“The economy is hindering Pakistan's options. As they head to a recession, can they really afford a war right now?” said Arif Rafiq, the president of Vizier Consulting, a consulting firm on South Asian political and security

issues. “Their capacity to bear the cost of a full-fledged conflict with India over Kashmir, whether via insurgent networks or conventionally — there just are not a lot of options Pakistan has.”

Last year, in an effort to end its global isolation, Pakistan agreed to help the United States end its war in Afghanistan by delivering the Taliban leadership to the table for peace talks. In doing so, Pakistan employed one of its greatest sources of leverage with the United States. Those talks are now nearing a conclusion, with American negotiators sitting across the table from their Taliban counterparts and aiming to reach a settlement soon.

In recent days, several

Pakistani government officials have demanded that their country end its cooperation in the peace talks to protest American silence over India's elimination of Kashmir's autonomy. But the Taliban on Thursday issued a forceful statement warning against any meddling.

“Linking the issue of Kashmir with that of Afghanistan by some parties will not aid in improving the crisis at hand because the issue of Afghanistan is not related, nor should Afghanistan be turned into the theater of competition between other countries,” the Taliban statement read.

The outcome of the peace talks and Pakistan's role in them will likely influence whether the country finds itself blacklisted internationally over its continued support of terrorist organizations, a move that could save or break its faltering economy. The Paris-based group that monitors terrorism financing, the Financial Action Task Force, will vote in October on whether Pakistan has done enough to crack down on militant networks at home.

Pakistan hopes to make the case that it has moved against militant groups and should be

taken off the gray list on which the watchdog placed it last year. Pakistan deeply fears it could be blacklisted and denied access to international financial markets at a time when it desperately needs loans to stay afloat. If Pakistan is blacklisted, that could tip its economy into recession.

Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan seemed worried about the lack of options to force India to renounce its new Kashmir policy.

Meeting with Pakistani journalists on Thursday, Mr. Khan dismissed using “jihadi organizations” against India in Kashmir. “There are more disadvantages than advantages,” Mr. Khan said, according to Amber Rahim Shamsi, a reporter for Samaa TV who attended the meeting.

The possibility of international sanctions also seemed to weigh on Mr. Khan.

“Pakistan has taken every step to get itself out of the baggage of the past,” the prime minister told the group of journalists, according to a second account of the meeting.

He said the government had undertaken “a complete cleansing operation” against terrorist groups. “My government has ensured there is a

complete and sincere effort to bring Pakistan out of FATF,” Mr. Khan added, referring to the Financial Action Task Force.

Pakistan's foreign minister has said he would raise the issue of Kashmir to the United Nations Security Council for a vote. But so far, the country's closest allies have remained silent on the matter.

Muslim nations have usually supported Pakistan's claims on Kashmir. But with their own economic and political troubles at home, many have tilted toward India, looking to secure lucrative deals with the ascending economic power.

The biggest blow came from the influential United Arab Emirates, which stated that Kashmir was an internal matter for India, withdrawing any support to raise the issue internationally.

India has long maintained that Kashmir is an internal issue; the disputed territory chose to join India rather than Pakistan during partition in 1947, based on assurances that its autonomy would be maintained. Pakistani forces invaded part of Kashmir and now control that part of the territory.

When Pakistan agreed after the September 11, 2001 attacks to help the United States fight terrorist groups, it asked for a favor in return — American help mediating on Kashmir and pressing India to make concessions. When the United States refused, Pakistan felt betrayed.

Just last month Pakistanis felt more upbeat about their country's prospects. Mr. Khan had returned from a visit to the White House where he met with Mr. Trump, who promised to intervene on Kashmir. But India's swift action days later to strip Kashmir of its autonomy plunged Pakistan back into isolation.

“The U.S. has again let us down, and those who were starry-eyed about the American trip have got a wake-up call,” Senator Mushahid Hussain said in a speech this week.

## Narendra Modi tells India that “a new era has begun” after Kashmir power grab

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made his first public comments since his government's risky power grab in Kashmir this week, and it's clear he regrets nothing — even though the move could potentially spark a war with Pakistan.

Kashmir, a majority-Muslim region in both India and Pakistan's north, has been partitioned between the two countries since 1947. It's been a major source of tension ever since, with both sides disputing one another's control over the region; the two countries have already gone to war over it twice.

This week, Modi's Hindu nationalist government exacerbated the situation by revoking Article 370 of India's Constitution, which had for decades afforded the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) — India's side of Kashmir — substantial autonomy

over its affairs.

Importantly, another article — 35a — also barred people outside the state from buying property there to prevent India's majority-Hindu population from moving into Jammu and Kashmir and displacing the Muslims who live there. That, too, was revoked.

By revoking the articles, the Indian government in New Delhi will now have far more control over Jammu and Kashmir, and outsiders will be allowed to buy property there. That has sparked fears of “ethnic cleansing”: that Hindus will flock to the region to push out the Muslims once and for all.

Despite criticism from many around the world, most notably from Pakistani leaders who consider themselves protectors of Kashmir's Muslim population and the true governors of India-administered Kashmir, Modi's roughly 40-minute speech left no

doubt he believes the article abrogations were a good move.

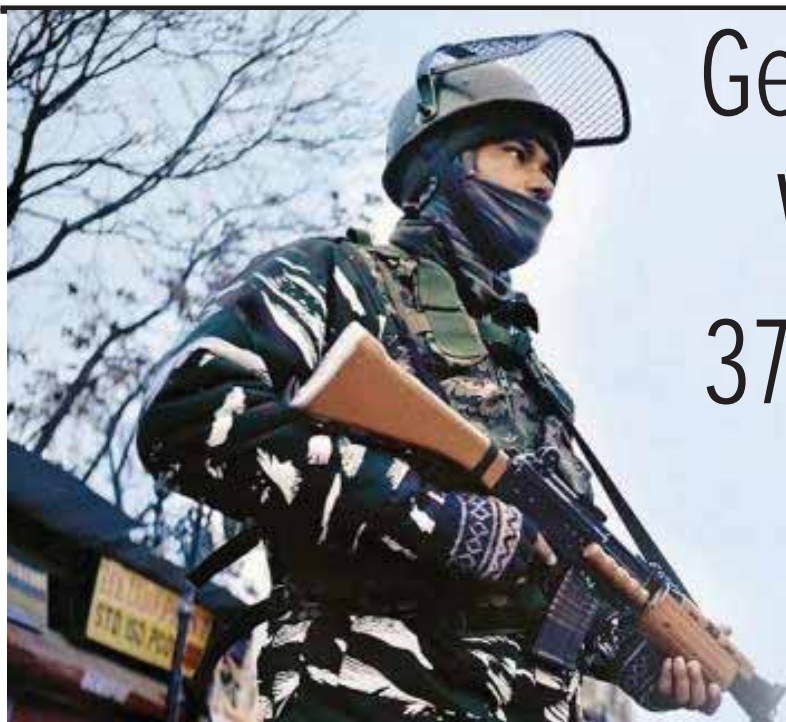
In a rare address to the nation on Thursday, Modi defended the decision. “We have taken this decision as a family. A new era has begun,” he said. “Article 370 was a hurdle for development of Kashmir,” adding that it only “gave only separatism, nepotism, and corruption to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.”

That last line is particularly important, as it underscores the main argument Modi and his supporters make for why revoking the articles were necessary: that an autonomous Jammu and Kashmir has caused too much separation between its Muslim population and India's Hindu-majority populations, left the area less economically developed, and led to violence. Indeed, an insurgency on India's side of Kashmir has killed thousands of people over three

decades, bloodshed that New Delhi claims Islamabad helps fuel.

Still, Modi tried to quell concerns that the central government will perpetually rule Jammu and Kashmir. “You will get the opportunity to elect your representatives soon,” he said to the area's residents. “I want to tell the people of Jammu and Kashmir that your representatives will come from among you.”

It's unlikely that Modi's words will do much to calm the current tensions. Indian forces in Kashmir — sent there to curb any unrest — reportedly detained 500 people on Thursday in nighttime raids. There are also some rumblings that protestors in Jammu and Kashmir have thrown rocks at Indian security forces, prompting them to fire back. It's believed some demonstrators have been killed, although there's no direct confirmation of that.



# Geography Becomes History: Will Abrogation of Article 370 Bring Peace to Kashmir?

*A Home ministry document on the future ahead for Kashmir foresees a long and bloody struggle, one that the people of India must go through for the integration of Kashmir*

No bugles pierced the silence in Srinagar perhaps, but the symbolism carried all the awe and solemnity of a world-historic transfer of power. A little after 7 pm on August 6, 2019, when Parliament passed the resolution that turned Article 370 into a dead letter, the office of Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik quietly removed the red state flag from his table, leaving the tricolour as the lone sentinel. It will be the same everywhere else in the two newly anointed Union territories—Jammu and Kashmir (a physically truncated, and staturally diminished version of the state that adomed geography textbooks) and Ladakh. If things go according to one plan—if the ground can be kept calm—a grander, more triumphal and full-size re-enactment may be expected on August 15, with Union home minister Amit Shah doing the honours right there on Lal Chowk. That there exists a healthy quantum of doubt on that -sequence of events, at least as we go to press, speaks of the other side of reality. The red flags that represented the 'special identity' of the erstwhile state may have been rolled up and removed, but it will probably be a long while before the tricolour can be unfurled without the presence of thousands of security personnel anywhere in the state—sorry, make that Union territory, a phrase that has gained a new depth of meaning in the last week. Over one lakh troops -patrol Kashmir (unofficial estimates peg it at much more.) As you read this, tanks are out in the streets of Srinagar, and columns of heavily armed personnel file by in breathless streets. Section 144 is in place—so no assembly of five or more people. Schools are shut. Internet, mobile services, cable TV services, landlines: blocked. State political leaders: under house arrest. Even by Kashmir's chequered and trauma-filled past, this looks to be a new chapter—and a long haul.

There's no timeline, as of now, for this total-shutdown. Out on the LoC, Bofors guns are in readiness.

The momentous changes wrought by the government—steered by Amit Shah through Parliament—have starkly different technical and practical aspects. The virtual annulling of Article 370, the state reorganisation... all this has fructified on paper, but it has to pass other challenges. Experts feel its legal tenability may be suspect (see), and hard scrutiny may ask some very serious questions of it. There is the small matter of international reactions—China has made bristling noises, and Pakistan, besides -expelling India's high commissioner Ajay Bisaria on August 7, promises to approach the UN (see To Cash in on Kashmir). Over and above that looms the aspect that Shah will be keenly following: local acceptability, or want of it, and how that gets articulated. An internal MHA document titled 'The Future Ahead of Kashmir', accessed by Outlook, foresees a "long and bloody struggle", comparing the situation to the US civil war! It says the people of India must go through such a "struggle" for the "integration of Kashmir", seeking to invoke a kind of moral mandate, but in no way

blind to the fact that the path will be conflictual. "There will be violence instigated... when the nation takes recourse to such action, but that cannot, and must not, deter the State from preserving the right to equality, -enshrined in the Constitution," the document says. "If it leads to a long and bloody struggle to preserve the basic character of the Constitution... we, the people of India, must go through with such struggle. We must remember that in the USA, the North went to war with the South over the issue of human rights and Abraham Lincoln won the day. For the good of the people of India and for the -residents of J&K, Articles 370 and 35A must be repealed forthwith as it will pave the way for the development of the state and its total integration with the Union."

In the first instance, the anticipation of mass protests led to the massive reinforcement of troops and what the New York Times called "an information black hole". Sources say National Security Advisor Ajit Doval was closely involved in the process, visiting the Valley in the run-up and then again to take stock. "The precautions were taken based on his assessment. The -government didn't want to take any

chances," a top security official reveals.

How long the bandobast and the iron curtain will stay is unclear. A "volcano" is bubbling under the surface, says the official, waiting to erupt at the first sign of a crack... the moment security is eased, the Valley will go up in flames. "Shah intends to fulfil all promises about developing Kashmir, promoting tourism, setting up industries, modern infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and universities, and creating jobs. The new UT awaits the investors' summit later this year as a litmus test to see how much interest businessmen and industrialists show in the wounded -region. But bringing peace and prosperity to Kashmir is not an easy promise to keep," he says.

Local acceptance would seem like a chimera at this point—what with mass anger having peaked the way it did since Burhan Wani's killing three years ago. Politics of Kashmir has in recent years been largely set in the street; even the separatist pantheon in the Hurriyat appeared to be led by popular sentiment, rather than leading it. But the initial -signals of a potential thaw and dialogue, just a few weeks ago, have encountered a sudden death—with

Shah pooh-poohing the very idea. Forget the nuances about the moderate/hardline split in the Hurriyat, even mainstream political leaders—those traditionally seen as "pro-India" in the Valley—now seem to be persona non grata and redundant in New Delhi's scheme of things. A leader like Mehbooba Mufti, who was CM in coalition with the BJP just a year ago, having to be put in house arrest means the whole formal political sector in Kashmir—the PDP and the National Conference—has been painted into a corner that they'll share with the separatists, and beyond them, the militants.

Insurgency in Kashmir, of course, isn't dead. A spike in militant killings was matched of late by an unusual surge in local recruitment into their ranks after years. There's also the churning within that space, with elements espousing loyalty to the Caliphate-spouting ISIS bringing a new, disturbing colour to the palette of violent resistance. The spectre of global Islamist terror hovers close—Sri Lanka wasn't too long back, and al-Qaeda supremo Ayman al-Zawahiri had made a direct pitch to Kashmiri mujahideen just last month. It was dismissed as rhetoric, but any quietus won't be for want of precipitating circumstances now. A military flare-up, mercifully, is only a remote possibility, with Pakistan tied up on its own western front. But quiet frontiers are not to be taken for granted in the best of times; intelligence agencies have reports of Pakistan military contemplating a series of actions. And the UNGA in September will be a parallel theatre of war. Besides Pakistan, China has real stakes in the goings-on and is unh-appy with the alteration of Ladakh's status. Remember the Daulat Beg Oldi incident of 2013: that was on the edge of the 38,000-sq-km swathe of Aksai Chin. When it was pointed out that the new UTs seemed to omit



PoK and Aksai Chin, Shah made a forceful rebuttal in Parliament, saying he would “lay down his life” for those territories. “(But) now is the time for some diplomacy,” says an intelligence official. “The government is not just dealing with 10 districts of Kashmir but with three countries—Pakistan, China and the US. The euphoria isn’t going to last too long. It’s good the first step to integrate Kashmir has been taken but there’s no point in -making jingoistic statements on PoK and Aksai Chin. Indian leaders need to temper their statements,” he adds. The dramatic set of moves—some called them the most momentous since the Emergency—has also created zones of great elation. The

mass populist -appeal apart, one political sector has long worked and argued for the abrogation of Article 370. Among those for whom it was a life-long article of faith is senior BJP leader Murlu Manohar Joshi, the first one to unfurl the tricolour in Srinagar’s Lal Chowk back in 1992, when militancy was at its peak—Modi, strikingly, was part of his retinue then. Often critical of Modi and Shah in -recent times, Joshi calls these “historic and bold” decisions. “We have always held the Constituent Assembly decision to formulate Article 370 was wrong. My personal view is Nehru was somehow manipulated by the British to give special status to Kashmir without taking Patel into

confidence. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was convinced there was a conspiracy,” Joshi tells Outlook. “The decision needs to be accepted by all and implemented with a positive and futuristic vision,” says Joshi, adding “we couldn’t do it when Vajpayee was PM only because we didn’t have the numbers in Parliament”.

Joshi also waves away concerns about Kashmir’s demographic profile being altered. “It cannot remain an exclusive region. Kashmiriyat will be restored only when Kashmiri Pandits can go back there, when others can settle there. Migrations happen in all parts of the country. It’s now the Centre’s responsibility to create harmony,

bring development and establish law and order there so people can go and settle,” he says. That call goes right to the heart of the most cherished dream for another segment of humanity: the Kashmiri Pandits, who have spent three decades in a long exile. Activist Sushil Pandit says he definitely wants to return to “my land, my home, my temple...my pilgrimage.” The Modi government has joined them in their fight to reclaim their land, he says. “For 30 years, we had even lost hope. Now we see hope. No matter how much time it takes—even one more generation, or more—we shall win this battle, and go and live on our land,” he tells Outlook. This “epoch-changing

decision...completely rev-erses our response to the challenges in Kashmir,” says Pandit, embittered and angry by the years of despair, and fairly representative of how his community views the whole imbroglio. “Till now, the response was placatory, offering concessions and sops to our tormentors. We gave them autonomy, and understated the problem as some kind of ali-enation and disaffection. We lived in denial, while a war was declared on us. They expelled Kashmiri Hindus and we called them misled, angry boys. The country’s leaders would negotiate with them, invite them for breakfast and hug them,” says Pandit.

## The ICE raids aren’t just wrong - they’re expensive

**Does it make sense to spend \$50,000 locking up someone for supporting her family?**

This week, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raided seven Mississippi food processing plants and arrested 680 workers for immigration violations. The moral cost of these raids to our shared humanity is apparent in stories like that of a tearful 13-year-old boy waving goodbye to his mother or an 11-year old girl pleading for her father’s release. But some people might feel differently, believing such scenes are just the cost of enforcing our immigration laws. If that’s you, I urge you to weigh another cost instead: the sheer financial expense of such cruelty.

First, there’s lost income. ICE was created in 2003 to “protect national security and public safety after 9/11,” but this week’s raids were not about security or safety or terrorism. They targeted immigrants while they worked to support their families and our economy.

Many of the arrested individuals now leave behind jobs that won’t be filled and children and spouses who now live without a family member and their associated income. Their communities and local businesses will suffer down the line. And state and local governments will lose the associated tax revenues; undocumented workers pay an estimated \$12 billion a year in taxes.

Then there are the costs of enforcement and detention. ICE Acting Director Matt Albence admitted that the raids required a yearlong investigation and 600 agents to execute. The 680 arrested individuals now languish in detention facilities. According to ICE, the average daily cost of detaining one person is \$134. Some estimates place the cost at closer to \$200 per day. Given this administration’s immigration policies, from family separation to zero tolerance to

mass raids, the number of immigrants in detention is rapidly expanding, not retracting. For every person who leaves detention, another replaces them, if not two. Even using ICE’s conservative figure of \$134, the cost of keeping one immigrant in detention is almost \$50,000 per year. The detention expense alone for the group detained on Wednesday is approximately \$100,000 a day, \$3 million per month, and \$36 million a year. Given that more raids are coming, these costs are only going to go up.

There is yet another cost: Raids add to the immigration court backlog. According to Syracuse University, the number of cases pending in immigration courts is close to 1 million and ballooning by the day. Under the Trump administration, this number has nearly doubled in just 2½ years, and the average wait for an immigration hearing is now

more than two years. Detention centers holding people awaiting their time in immigration court have exceeded their capacity, which necessitates the use of private prisons, whose owners made record campaign donations in the past election cycle. Last year alone, taxpayers paid almost \$1 billion to the private prison complex for immigration detention. Meanwhile, private prisons have minimal oversight and harsh conditions that resemble slave labor. The result is an increasing number of immigrants caught up in the detention system, a larger immigration court backlog, a financial incentive to keep immigrants in detention longer, and correspondingly higher cost to taxpayers.

The truth is that no government has unlimited resources. When choosing how to spend public funds, we need to weigh costs and benefits. This administration has decided to

spend countless time and money arresting nonviolent workers who take care of their families and their communities while spending little or nothing on combating domestic terrorism and white nationalism. CNN reported this week that the Department of Homeland Security sought to increase its focus on domestic terrorism but was rebuffed by the White House. Meanwhile, two gunmen killed 31 people in Dayton and El Paso last weekend — yet another cost of this administration’s immigration policies. ICE officials are boasting that the workplace raids in Mississippi were the largest in over a decade. That is nothing to brag about. Beyond the countless families and lives torn apart in these operations and mass arrests, the time and financial resources necessary to execute them are wasteful and unnecessary. These raids are merely a show to fire up an anti-immigrant base — and a costly show at that.



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PRESENTS

# Sikh Games

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17<sup>th</sup> August (9am-8pm), 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2019 (8am-8pm)

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## Jet Airways chief Naresh Goyal moves High Court to withdraw plea against bar on visit abroad

**Naresh Goyal, in a fresh application, said the investigation by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) in an alleged fraud case of Rs 18,000 crore was commenced and he was extending full cooperation and not pressing for the petition at this stage.**

Naresh Goyal, the founder of the now-grounded Jet Airways, approached the Delhi High Court on Thursday to withdraw his petition seeking permission to travel abroad.

Naresh Goyal, in a fresh application, said the investigation by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) in an alleged fraud case of Rs 18,000 crore was commenced and he was extending full cooperation and not pressing for the petition at this stage.

The plea is likely to come up for hearing in the court on Friday.

Besides permission to travel outside India, he has also challenged a lookout circular (LOC) issued against him on the

ground that as on May 25, when he was de-boarded from a flight to Dubai, no ECIR/FIR was registered against him.

Naresh Goyal has said he came to know of the LOC on May 25 when he and his wife Anita were off-loaded from a flight to Dubai with an onward connection to London.

In the fresh application, he said when he had filed the petition in July, he was in an urgent need to travel abroad and thereafter, he received a summons from SFIO for a recording of statement regarding the investigation which has been initiated.

"The petitioner (Goyal) is participating and fully cooperating in the investigation and has

appeared before the authorities on three occasions.

"As the investigation has commenced and since the petitioner is extending full cooperation, he is not pressing the present writ petition at this stage for permission to travel outside India," it said, adding that he be given liberty to avail appropriate remedies in future.

The court had earlier orally observed that if Goyal wanted to go abroad, he should first deposit as guarantee Rs 18,000 crore his company owes to lenders. It had refused to allow him to go abroad but sought the Centre's reply on his petition.

The court was informed by the Centre that it was a serious fraud



involving Rs 18,000 crore and the investigation was being carried out by the SFIO.

He has sought quashing of the LOC as well as several office memorandums which lay down the guidelines for issuing the travel ban.

According to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, the LOC was issued after an inspection by the ministry found large-scale irregularities in Jet Airways,

which shut its operations in April due to acute cash crunch. The ministry has ordered a probe by SFIO into the affairs of Jet Airways. Naresh and Anita Goyal had resigned from the board of Jet Airways, which the former founded 26 years ago, in March following a debt restructuring plan. He had also resigned as the airline's chairman. Jet Airways is undergoing insolvency proceedings.

## Court Allows Class Action Against Facebook Over Use Of Facial Recognition Tech



A federal appeals court ruled Thursday that a group of Facebook users can move forward with their class action lawsuit challenging the company's use of facial recognition technology.

In a 3-0 decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit in San Francisco, a panel of judges rejected Facebook's attempt to stop a class action from Illinois plaintiffs who claim the company unlawfully gathers

**The lawsuit says the social media platform unlawfully stores people's biometric data, pointing to its "tag suggestions" feature for photos.**

and stores users' biometric data without their consent.

Three Illinois Facebook users sued the company under a state law that says a private company can't collect and store people's biometric facial information without written consent.

Specifically, the case points to Facebook's "tag suggestions" feature, which allows Facebook to use facial recognition technology to determine if users' Facebook "friends" are in photos they posted. It scans photos and then compares faces in a given image to those in its database

of users' "face templates" (or facial features previously matched to a user's profile), per an explanation in the ruling.

In the opinion, Judge Sandra Ikuta wrote that "the development of a face template using facial-recognition technology without consent (as alleged in this case) invades an individual's private affairs."

"This decision is a strong recognition of the dangers of unfettered use of face surveillance technology," American Civil Liberties Union

attorney Nathan Freed Wessler said in a news release. "The capability to instantaneously identify and track people based on their faces raises chilling potential for privacy violations at an unprecedented scale."

A Facebook spokesperson told HuffPost that the company plans to "seek further review of the decision," adding that it has "always disclosed our use of face recognition technology and that people can turn it on or off at any time."

## Uber Loses Over \$5 Billion, Its Largest Quarterly Loss Ever

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A Facebook spokesperson told HuffPost that the company plans to "seek further review of the decision," adding that it has "always disclosed our use of face recognition technology and that people can turn it on or off at any time." Facebook has come under scrutiny in recent years for its privacy practices. Last year, CEO Mark Zuckerberg testified before

Congress about a breach in which data from up to 87 million users may have been improperly shared with Cambridge Analytica, a political research firm that worked with Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. Following an investigation, federal regulators last month fined Facebook a record \$5 billion for privacy violations. Lawmakers have also been taking a closer look at the risks of private companies and government agencies using facial recognition technology.

# Bin Laden heir dead: A blow to al-Qaeda?



Despite Hamza's increasing public profile there is no evidence to suggest that he played a successful operational role in al Qaeda organizing terrorist attacks around the world. Indeed, there hasn't been a lethal attack by al Qaeda in the West since a terrorist operation in London that killed 52 commuters on the London transportation system in 2005. Hamza bin Laden, fortunately, did nothing to reverse this. The night that Osama bin Laden was killed on May 2, 2011, in Abbottabad Pakistan, the US Navy SEAL operators who carried out the mission were carrying cards with the names and descriptions of who was likely to be in the compound that night. Among them was Hamza bin Laden. Hamza, however, was not there that night so he survived, unlike another of bin Laden's sons, Khalid, who was

killed during the operation. For much of the decade after 9/11, Hamza lived under a form of house arrest in Iran until he was released by the Iranian regime in 2010. From Iran, Hamza made his way to the tribal areas of Waziristan in Pakistan on the border with Afghanistan, an al Qaeda stronghold. The tribal areas have long been in the crosshairs of the CIA, which has launched more than four hundred strikes in the region, according to a count by New America, a research institution. At bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad the SEALs recovered thousands of documents, including letters from bin Laden that showed that al Qaeda's leader had been communicating with Hamza. Nelly Lahoud, a fellow at New America, has examined all of the documents recovered from the

Abbottabad compound for a book she is writing. Lahoud says that Hamza wrote to his father that he was eager to receive military training after which he planned to go and fight in Afghanistan against "God's enemies." In one of the recovered letters bin Laden fretted to an aide about the possibility of a CIA drone strike killing his son, writing, "Make sure to tell Hamza that I am of the opinion he should get out of Waziristan." Hamza should decamp for the Persian Gulf kingdom of Qatar, bin Laden advised. It seems quite likely that Hamza never followed this advice and remained in Pakistan's tribal regions where he was likely picked off by a CIA drone strike. There have been a total of 13 drone strikes in Pakistan during the Trump administration, according to New America's count.

(News Agencies)- A US official confirmed to CNN that Hamza bin Laden, Osama bin Laden's son, is believed dead and that the United States had a role in his death. Cathy Scott-Clark, a British journalist who has written extensively about the bin Ladens and is in touch with the family, confirmed Hamza's death to me. Hamza, believed to be 30, was being groomed to be a next-generation leader of al Qaeda.

Hamza had appeared in al Qaeda propaganda videos since he was a child. In recent years, he also had started releasing statements that positioned himself as one of al Qaeda's ideologues -- for instance, Hamza released an audio statement in 2016 calling for unity among the jihadist militants fighting in Syria. Earlier this year the US State Department announced a \$1 million reward for information about Hamza.

## Trump praises New York Times headline that sparked uproar after shootings

(News Agencies)- Donald Trump has criticised the New York Times after the newspaper was forced to change its front-page headline amid an intense backlash over its sympathetic portrayal of the president's statement on the mass shootings in Texas and Ohio that left 31 people dead. The headline, which first splashed across page the front page in the New York Times print edition Tuesday, read "Trump urges unity vs racism". The headline was changed to "Assailing hate but not guns", in the paper's second edition, but the change failed to quell the uproar.

Many readers complained that the wording fed Trump's claims that those who criticised his persistent anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric - some of which was repeated in the El Paso gunman's alleged manifesto - were playing politics. Trump blamed "the glorification of violence" in a speech that identified video games, the internet and mental illness - but not guns - as the cause of the slaughter that left at least 31 dead and 53 injured in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, in less than 24 hours over the weekend. He did not address the criticisms of his own divisive rhetoric. On Wednesday Trump praised the

initial headline in a tweet, saying it "was the correct description... by the Failing New York Times". He said the paper was forced to change the description because "Radical Left Democrats went absolutely CRAZY! Fake News - That's what we're up against..." Trump is expected to face a backlash when he visits El Paso and Dayton on Wednesday, to meet with officials, first responders and members of the community. Authorities are investigating the El Paso shooting as domestic terrorism, while the Dayton shooting is being treated as homicide. The executive editor of the New York Times accepted responsibility



after the paper changed its headline. The headline appeared in the print edition of the New York Times, which Dean Baquet said has become less of a focus for the paper's leadership, known

as the masthead within the industry. "The print hub is not right in the middle of the news desk anymore," Baquet told the Columbia Journalism Review (CJR). "I don't lay out the page.

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# US will be 'on doorstep' ready to sign UK trade deal after Brexit, says Pompeo



(News Agencies)- The secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, has said that the US will be "on the doorstep, pen in hand", ready to sign a new trade deal with the UK as soon as possible after Brexit. Pompeo was speaking alongside Dominic Raab, who was making his first trip to Washington as UK foreign secretary. Raab restated the British government's determination to leave the EU at the end of October, and claimed that Donald Trump, whom he met at the White House on Tuesday evening, "was effusive in his warmth for the United Kingdom".

"It was amazing to hear an American president talk about our country in such warm terms," the foreign secretary said, adding that

there was "huge appetite on both sides" for achieving a deal. "Of course, America is our single largest bilateral trading partner," Raab said. "President Trump has made clear again that he wants an ambitious free trade agreement with UK. So I hope we can make that happen as soon as possible after we leave the EU on 31 October." After meeting with Raab on Wednesday at the state department, Pompeo said: "We support the United Kingdom's sovereign choice, however Brexit ultimately shakes out. And the we'll be at the doorstep, pen in hand, ready to sign a new free trade agreement at the earliest possible time." He said he was confident

that the manner of the UK's departure from the EU would safeguard the principles of the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland. A no-deal Brexit without any resolution to what would happen to the border between the two Irelands is likely to jeopardise the 1998 peace agreement,

which relies on the unrestricted flow of people and goods. Any US trade deal with the UK would have to be approved by Congress and the Democratic leadership. It would also need approval from the Irish American Republicans in the House of Representatives who have warned that they

would block a deal if Brexit affects the Irish border, and therefore the Good Friday peace agreement. In the Senate, 45 Republicans have signed a letter pledging unconditional support for a US-UK trade deal, but that falls short of a majority the administration will need to get an agreement through the

upper chamber. Pompeo thanked the UK for its decision to join a US-led maritime protection force in the strait of Hormuz, to defend oil tankers following the Iranian seizure of a British-flagged vessel, the Stena Impero. "This is a victory for meaningful, effective multilateralism," he added.

## Wanda Vázquez: Puerto Rico swears in new governor after ousting predecessor

(News Agencies)- Puerto Rico's supreme court on Wednesday overturned the swearing-in of Pedro Pierluisi as the island's governor less than a week ago, clearing the way for the justice secretary, Wanda Vázquez, to take up the post after weeks of turmoil. Vázquez took the oath of office in the early evening at the supreme court before leaving without making any public comment. She became just the second woman to hold the office. "I will continue to focus on helping our people regain their way in an orderly and peaceful fashion," she said



in a statement in which she promised to assume the position with "humility and commitment". The high court's unanimous decision, which could not be appealed, settled the dispute over who will lead the US territory after its political establishment was

knocked off balance by big street protests spawned by anger over corruption, mismanagement of funds and a leaked obscenity-laced chat that forced the previous governor and several top aides to resign. But it was also expected to unleash a new wave

of demonstrations because many Puerto Ricans have said they don't want Vázquez as governor. Pierluisi said that he had stepped forward to help islanders "in the best good faith and desire to contribute to the future of our homeland", but that he would respect the court's ruling. Pierluisi was appointed secretary of state by the then governor, Ricardo Rosselló, while legislators were in recess, and only the house approved his nomination. Pierluisi was then sworn in as governor on Friday after Rosselló formally resigned in response to angry street protests.

# Pakistan expels Indian envoy, suspends trade over Kashmir

*The Imran Khan government had been under pressure to respond to India's decision as Kashmir remains a key issue for all political parties..*

Pakistan on Wednesday announced a slew of retaliatory actions in response to India's decision to strip Jammu and Kashmir of its special status, including the expulsion of the Indian envoy, suspension of bilateral trade and review of bilateral arrangements. The development marked yet another downturn in bilateral ties following India's move on August 5 to revoke Kashmir's special status and to split the state into two union territories. The Imran Khan government had been under pressure to respond to India's decision as Kashmir remains a key issue for all political parties. The retaliatory actions were decided during a meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC) chaired by Prime Minister Khan and attended by foreign

minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, top military officials including army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa and Inter-Services Intelligence chief Lt Gen Faiz Hameed. A statement from the Foreign Office said the Indian government had been "told to withdraw its high commissioner to Pakistan" in line with the NSC's decision to downgrade diplomatic relations. "The Indian government has also been informed that Pakistan will not be sending its high commissioner-designate to India," the statement added. There was no immediate response from the Indian government, and it wasn't clear whether New Delhi would take retaliatory actions of its own. After discussing the situation arising from India's "unilateral

and illegal actions" and the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, the NSC decided to downgrade diplomatic relations with India, suspend bilateral trade, review bilateral arrangements, and take the Kashmir issue to the UN, including the Security Council, said an official statement. The NSC also decided to observe Pakistan's Independence Day on August 14 as a day of solidarity with Kashmiris and their struggle for the right of self-determination, and India's Independence Day on August 15 as a "black day". Khan said all diplomatic channels should be activated to "expose brutal Indian racist regime, design and human rights violations", and directed the armed forces to "continue vigilance", the statement said.



Addressing Parliament after the NSC meeting, foreign minister Qureshi outlined the retaliatory actions and said: "Pakistan is immediately downgrading our diplomatic relations with India...The different bilateral arrangements will be reviewed one by one by (an official) committee." Qureshi said India had always talked about handling all issues and differences with Pakistan bilaterally, including when US President Donald Trump recently

raised the issue of mediating on the Kashmir dispute. "The unilateral action of August 5 has damaged the spirit of the Simla Agreement, which states both sides will handle issues bilaterally," he said. Pakistan's retaliatory measures are unlikely to have a significant impact, with the two sides not having had any formal or sustained dialogue on their differences for more than a decade since the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

# Hordes of tardigrades, Earth's toughest creatures, may now be living on Moon

**Tardigrades can withstand extreme radiation, sizzling heat, the coldest temperatures of the universe, and decades without food.**

There might be life on the Moon after all: thousands of virtually indestructible creatures that can withstand extreme radiation, sizzling heat, the coldest temperatures of the universe, and decades without food. These terrifying-sounding beings aren't aliens but instead microscopic Earthlings known as tardigrades, who likely made it out alive following a crash landing on the lunar surface by Israel's Beresheet probe in April, the US-based organization responsible for their trip said Tuesday. Based on an analysis of the spacecraft's trajectory and the composition of the device the micro-animals were stored in, "we believe the chances of survival for the tardigrades... are extremely high," Nova Spivack, co-founder and chairman of the

Arch Mission Foundation, told AFP. The non-profit is dedicated to spreading backups of human knowledge and Earth's biology throughout the Solar System, a quest it likens to the creation of an "Encyclopedia Galactica" first evoked by sci-fi writer Isaac Asimov. "Tardigrades are ideal to include because they are microscopic, multicellular, and one of the most durable forms of life on planet Earth," said Spivack. He added that the diminutive creatures, which are under a millimeter (0.04 inches) in size, had been dehydrated to place them in suspended animation, then "encased in an epoxy of Artificial Amber, and should be revivable in the future." The tardigrades were stored inside a "Lunar

Library," a nanotechnology device that resembles a DVD and contains a 30-million-page archive of human history viewable under microscopes, as well as human DNA. Spivack is confident this too survived impact -- but it doesn't represent the first genetic code or life forms to be deposited on the barren celestial body. That distinction belongs to the DNA and microbes contained in the almost 100 bags of feces and urine left behind by American astronauts during the Apollo lunar landings from 1969-1972.

No rescue mission Also known as water bears or moss piglets, tardigrades can live in water or on land, and are capable of surviving temperatures as high as 150 degrees Celsius (302 degrees



Fahrenheit) and as low as minus 272 degrees Celsius (-458 Fahrenheit), albeit for a few minutes.

The grub-like, eight-legged animals can come back from being dried out to a lifeless husk for decades, withstand near-zero pressure in outer space and the crushing depths of the Mariana Trench.

If they did not burn up in an explosion, they could in theory survive the tiny pressure on the lunar surface, and the extremes of temperature, William

Miller, a tardigrades expert at Baker University, told AFP. "But to become active, to grow, eat, and reproduce they would need water, air and food," so it would not be possible for them to multiply and form a colony, he added. NASA astrobiologist Cassie Conley said that their exact survival time would depend on the condition of the impact site and the temperatures to which they are exposed. "If they don't get too hot, it's possible they could survive

for quite a long time (many years)," she told AFP. "I'd be more concerned that the animals would be affected by toxic chemicals from the epoxy or glue" used to store them, as opposed to conditions in space, she added. Even if the creatures lived on for several years, there is no crewed mission to the Moon planned until NASA's Artemis program in 2024 at the south pole -- far from Beresheet's crash site on the Sea of Serenity, so they probably won't make it home.

## Curiosity rover makes new discoveries on Mars



NASA's Curiosity rover has been acting as our detective on Mars this summer and investigating an area once full of streams and lakes on the red planet. The rover landed on Mars seven years ago and since then, it's sent back thousands of images, roamed 13 miles and climbed 1,207 feet to its current home on the side of Mount Sharp. This feature is located inside of Gale Crater, where streams and lakes could once be found

billions of years ago. Gale Crater is a vast and dry ancient lake bed with a 16,404-foot-tall mountain at its center. Mount Sharp's peak is taller than the rim of the crater. A panorama of Teal Ridge on Mount Sharp Now, Curiosity is investigating the clay minerals left behind after the water disappeared. It has drilled 22 samples of the surface. "This area is one of the reasons we came to Gale

Crater," said Kristen Bennett of the US Geological Survey. "We've been studying orbiter images of this area for 10 years, and we're finally able to take a look up close." During its mission, Curiosity has encountered the most amount of clay minerals on Mount Sharp. The minerals were first detected by the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter years before Curiosity launched. Now that Curiosity can conduct

investigations on the ground, it's found more clay minerals, which is causing mission scientists to question why some were apparent to the Orbiter and others weren't. Over the summer, Curiosity has passed through a "pebble parking lot" and studied other unique geologic features on Mars. Recently, the rover's camera captured a panorama of the Teal Ridge outcrop and Strathdon, a rock comprised of wavy sediment layers that could have been sculpted by wind, water or both. We're seeing an evolution in the ancient lake environment recorded in these rocks," said Valerie Fox, co-lead for the clay campaign at the California Institute of Technology. "It wasn't just a static lake. It's helping us move from a simplistic view of Mars going from wet to dry. Instead of a linear process, the history of water was more complicated."

## Chandrayaan-2 continues flying towards Moon, heads away from Earth



Fifth Earth-bound orbit raising manoeuvre for Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft was performed today on Tuesday. The fifth and final orbit-raising manoeuvre was planned to be carried out on August 6 and the Earth-bound orbit raising manoeuvre for Chandrayaan-2 was performed as planned. The fifth Earth-bound orbit raising manoeuvre for Chandrayaan-2 was performed using the onboard propulsion system for a firing duration of 1,041 seconds. The orbit achieved is

276x142975 km, the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) said. "All spacecraft parameters are normal. The next manoeuvre is Trans Lunar Insertion (TLI), which is scheduled on August 14, 2019," the Isro said on its website. "Five done and flying forward," the Isro wrote on Twitter. Chandrayaan-2 is India's second mission to the Moon. On August 4, Chandrayaan-2 released a set of images of the Earth captured by Chandrayaan-2 Vikram Lander.

# Draft Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill 2019: Arming state to undermine rights and wellbeing of tribals

*It seeks to empower forest bureaucracy to use fire arms with AFSPA-like immunity from prosecution and acquire land for undefined "public purpose" using the now defunct Land Acquisition Act of 1894, the purpose of which is a big mystery.*



The draft Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill of 2019, circulated in March this year, aims at re-establishing state power over forests at the cost of rights granted to the forest dwelling tribals and other forest dwellers under the Forest Rights Act of 2006 (FRA).

It seeks to empower the very forest bureaucracy whose highhandedness provoked the latest round of Left-wing insurgency originating from Chhattisgarh's Bastar region and undermine the FRA brought to soothe tribals' ire and undo "historic injustices" in denying them their traditional rights.

Through this the central government seeks to arm itself with far greater power over forest resources than the colonial masters who brought in the Indian Forest Act of 1927 (IFA). This draft Bill seeks to replace the IFA.

Reclaiming role of forest bureaucracy

The draft bill brings in forest bureaucracy to manage "village forests" through joint forest management committee (JFMC). Though the concept of village forest exists in the original IFA, the FRA overrides all existing laws in recognising and vesting rights over forest land and resources with forest dwelling communities, including in conservation and management of forests through their Gram Sabha, thus making JFMC defunct or redundant.

It says that even when a village forest belongs to tribal community, use of timber and other forest produce, pasture rights and protections and management of these forests would be "in consultation with the forest department" (clause 22). Further, it empowers forest bureaucracy to record forest rights and gives it extraordinary

power to take away ("commute") individual and community rights for declaring "reserve forest" by paying compensation. Clause 26 provides that in case of fire in a reserved forest or theft of forest produce or grazing by cattle, all rights of pasture or to forest-produce would be suspended.

Taken together, these provisions give a veto to forest bureaucracy and tantamount to extinction of forest rights. Arming and indemnifying forest bureaucracy The draft bill introduces a new provision (clause 66) to allow forest bureaucracy to use fire arms and enter and search any premises on mere suspicion, just by informing Gram Sabha, to check forest offence.

Worse, it introduces immunity from prosecution for their excesses or wrongdoings in line

with the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958 applicable in "disturbed areas" to the armed forces. No prosecution can be started against forest officials without prior sanction of state, which would be conditional to an inquiry by an executive magistrate. The draft explains the immunity is being given "to prevent the forest offence" and would be in addition to the immunity granted under section 197 of the CrPC to certain kind of public servants such as judges and armed force personnel. Power to acquire land under defunct 1894 law

Clause 11 (3) empowers Forest Settlement Officer to act as "deemed as Collector proceeding under the Land Acquisition Act of 1894" for acquiring forest land. Further, clause 84 explains that such acquisition would be "deemed to be needed for a public purpose". What this public purpose is not defined anywhere. This is inexplicable since the British era Land Acquisition Act of 1894 was repealed and replaced with the Right to Fair Compensation

and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act of 2013, making it mandatory to seek prior consent of tribal community (Gram Sabha) to acquire their land.

Tribals made more vulnerable Clause 66 treats a forest offender like terrorist, shifting the burden of proving innocence to the accused - existing criminal jurisprudence for the rest puts the onus of proving guilt on prosecution.

It also seeks to criminalise an entire community for mistakes of an individual by defining a

"person" to include "a forest dwelling community" or any organisation registered under the prevalent laws in a state but gives no explanation for this change. It even denies state government the power (forest was shifted to the concurrent list in 1976) to withdraw registered cases. The power would vest with only the central government. The draft explains that states withdraw cases for political mileages, which must be "curbed with a heavy hand because the result are disastrous" and that such "porosity is the cause of destruction of forest area".



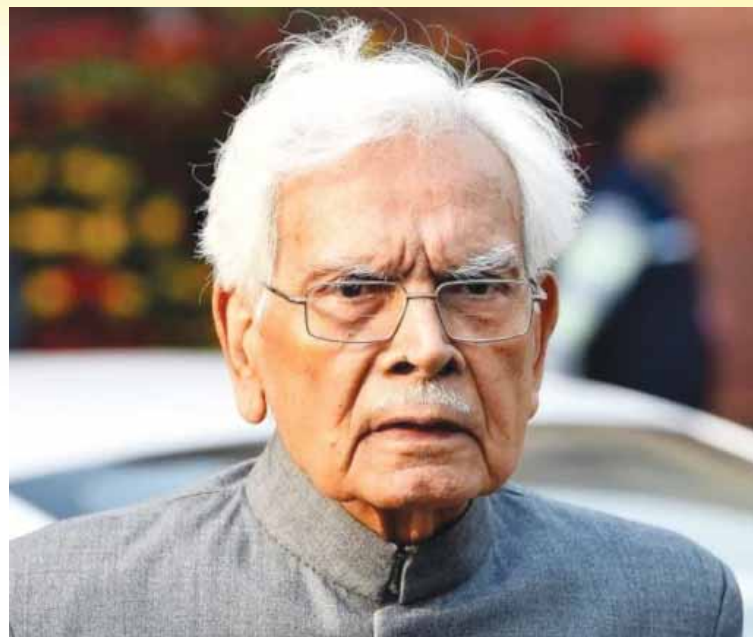
## Kashmir issue has no solution: Natwar Singh

*Speaking at the launch of the book "Indo-Pak Relations: Beyond Pulwama and Balakot" by UV Singh here on Thursday, the former Union Minister said the future of both countries lies in the past as they carry lot of baggage, finding it almost impossible to jettison.*

Former External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh has said the Kashmir issue has no solution as the relation between India and Pakistan is accident-prone.

Speaking at the launch of the book "Indo-Pak Relations: Beyond Pulwama and Balakot" by UV Singh here on Thursday, the former Union Minister said the future of both countries lies in the past as they carry lot of baggage, finding it almost impossible to jettison.

He said one country's victory will be another's fall. "Pakistan is suffering from chronic inferiority complex when it comes to India," Singh



said. Giving the example of International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgment in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case, Singh said the verdict was

favourable to India (15:1) but Pakistan Foreign Minister said that it was favourable to them.

"They are not ready to concede anything in favour of India and this shows the mentality of 'I don't agree'," he said.

He said India is not obsessed with Pakistan but Pakistan is obsessed with India.

The former Minister also said any decision of the Pakistani government needs an approval or disapproval of the Pakistani army. Besides the army in Pakistan, Singh said the other factor was the ISI that needs to be consulted on every issue.

# The deal that broke: Article 370 had to go when Donald Trump met Imran Khan. What follows now?

*Pakistan likely agreed to help the US in Afghanistan for US help on Kashmir. But the Modi-Shah masterstroke upset that scenario. So, is the Afghanistan deal off too?*



The objections of the Left to the abrogation of Article 370 are irrelevant - even if some of them are thoughtful and correct.

They have been rendered irrelevant though by developments outside the purview of the Government of India.

By now, it should be clear to all that Donald Trump is no fool. So why would he offer to mediate on Kashmir, just as Pakistan is sweating and about to fall to its

knees because of a financial crisis brought about by American pressure, its long-running operations in Kashmir on the verge of total collapse?

Why would he then repeat it after India refused and his administration fell over itself to backtrack?

Clearly, it means that Pakistan has cried uncle and agreed after 18 years to facilitate - instead of obstructing - whatever withdrawal or long-term presence arrangements the Americans

want.

To my mind, Pakistan paid this price in exchange for Kashmir.

The Pakistani Army was stopped from conducting its operations in Kashmir by 9/11 and has been keeping separatism at a simmer, counting the days till when it was free to turn up the wick again.

Now Pakistan was staring at complete and permanent defeat in Kashmir. If Pakistan didn't come to the rescue now, it was game over for Kashmiri separatists - and they were

starting to believe that Pakistan wasn't coming because it couldn't.

Pakistan, to save its reason for existence, the Kashmir Jihad, thus made the only deal it could. Americans can have what they want in Afghanistan - if Pakistan gets a resolution of Kashmir or the freedom to look after Kashmir itself.

Is it selfish of Donald Trump to want to take the deal at the cost of India? No.

If the US has no standing on the Kashmir issue, then it cannot be under any obligation to concern itself with Kashmir when dealing with Pakistan. Since India is determined to look after Kashmir itself, it must now do so and no

longer depend on US actions for peace.

This means that the day that Pakistan has been waiting for since 9/11 - indeed, since its humiliation in Kargil - has arrived. It's now or never for Pakistan, and the US has left the two neighbours to sort it out amongst themselves since India wants no mediation.

The Kashmir Jihad is coming again.

The Indian government, for once, has taken this seriously and taken pre-emptive action, rather than run around putting out the fires that Pakistan starts, the situation never getting in hand.

## Our forever war: how the white male hegemony uses violence to cling to power

We were never not at war. By we I mean the colonizers of this continent, who waged war first against Native North America's original occupants and then entered into a state of war to keep kidnapped Africans subjugated in slavery. After the official Indian wars ended, we found other means to keep Native people confined and disempowered. After slavery officially ended, we found other means to keep black people impoverished and disempowered. Those means were forms of war. We launched a war to steal Mexico's northern half, a project completed in 1848 with the acquisition of what is now California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona (minus the Gadsden purchase), part of Colorado,

and New Mexico. Texas had already been seized by dubious means, in part because its Yankee settlers refused to accept Mexican law banning slavery. Then we treated Latinx people, even those who had been here before "here" was the USA, as invaders. There's a long history of massacres in response to slave uprisings and Native resistance, and the police killings of black people and white male killing of Native women might as well be called war by other means. The US began with a declaration that "all men are created equal" that left out all women, and since then its history has too often been devoted to perpetrating inequality. Recent mass shootings driven

by racism and misogyny are a more extreme means of enforcing an oppression built into our economic and legal systems, and may be the result of a panic that those systems are not containing others well enough. "War" might as well describe the domestic violence so epidemic that "on average, 24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States", according to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, with an average of four domestic violence deaths a day. Of course the majority of perpetrators are men; the majority of victims are women.

We are a country at war, but who that "we" is - in a nation where so many have been so



disenfranchised - should be central to the conversation. There are more guns in the US than people, and the rhetoric of gun rights has been used to defend the rights of these killing machines to spread everywhere - classrooms, Walmarts, public places, homes

where children have access to them. And the people most likely to own guns are those who have been the aggressors in these wars: men, particularly white men, who commit almost all the mass shootings in this country.

## On World Diabetes Day, we tell you the connection between breakfast and diabetes

Another study highlighted that a high-energy intake breakfast of around 700 kcals (vs a low energy breakfast of 200 kcals) decreased the overall high

blood sugar (hyperglycaemia) in T2D patients over the entire day. It has been established that better management of blood sugar has been associated with preventing complications of diabetes. Regular consumption of breakfast is potentially important for preventing T2D. A recent study tested 17 healthy adults on three separate days: Once when they skipped breakfast, when they had three regular meals and once when they

skipped dinner. Skipping breakfast led to higher glucose concentrations after lunch than skipping dinner. The key to a healthy morning meal is to choose a variety of foods to get a balance of carbohydrates, proteins, fats and other nutrients like vitamins and minerals - along with the much-needed fibre that helps manage blood-sugar levels. Here are some options to consider: Whole grains: Oatmeal, muesli with no added sugar, wheat flakes with added bran, whole-wheat daliya/chapati/khakhra/paratha/bread, whole grain millet (ragi, jowar, bajra) preparations. Whole grains are a good source

of carbohydrates (including fibre), vitamins and minerals. Dairy: Use non-fat or low-fat milk instead of whole milk. If you don't drink milk, try non-dairy milk alternatives like soy, almond, coconut milk, etc. Choose plain rather than sweetened versions. Fruits and vegetables: Fresh fruit is a great addition to any breakfast given that they provide fibre, vitamins and minerals. However, limit fruit juice. Vegetables (like carrot, French beans, capsicum, leafy greens like palak, methi, etc.) can be added to all the traditional breakfast foods. Lean protein: Protein foods may help control hunger, manage blood sugar and maintain lean body mass; so include protein at breakfast.

You have heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Breakfast, as the name implies, is to break the fast between dinner and lunch.

It is well-established that starting the day with a wholesome breakfast can benefit everyone. If you have type 2 diabetes (T2D), breakfast is necessary and it can have real benefits.

Do you think that skipping breakfast can help manage your blood glucose better?

Researchers say the opposite is true. In a study, 22 people who controlled their T2D with diet alone or diet plus metformin were studied on two different days. On one, they ate three identical meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner. On the other, they ate only lunch and dinner. On the days they skipped breakfast, their peak blood glucose was 36.8% higher after lunch and 26.6% higher after dinner than on the days they ate breakfast.

## New cell phone-based tool to detect HIV

Scientists have designed a portable and low-cost diagnostic tool, utilising a cell phone and nanotechnology, which can detect HIV and monitor its management in resource-limited regions.

Management of human immunodeficiency virus 1 (HIV), a disorder that cripples the immune system by attacking healthy cells, remains a major global health challenge in developing countries that lack infrastructure and trained medical professionals.

"Early detection of HIV is critical to prevent disease progression and transmission, and it requires long-term monitoring, which can be a burden for families that have to travel to reach a clinic or hospital," said Hadi Shafiee from Brigham and Women's Hospital in the US.

"This rapid and low-cost cell phone system represents a new method for detecting acute infection, which would reduce the risk of virus transmission and could also be used to detect early

treatment failure," Shafiee said.

Traditional virus monitoring methods for HIV are expensive, requiring the use of polymerase chain reaction (PCR), according to the study published in the journal Nature Communications. Shafiee and his colleagues designed an affordable, simple tool that makes HIV testing and monitoring possible for individuals in developing countries with less access to medical care.

Utilising nanotechnology, a microchip, a cellphone and a 3D-



printed phone attachment, the researchers created a platform that can detect the RNA nucleic acids of the virus from a single drop of blood.

The device detects the amplified HIV nucleic acids through on-phone monitoring of the motion of DNA-engineered beads without using bulky or expensive equipment.

The detection precision was evaluated for specificity and sensitivity.

Researchers found that the platform allowed the detection of HIV with 99.1 per cent specificity and 94.6 per cent sensitivity at a clinically relevant threshold value of 1,000 virus particles/millilitres, with results within one hour.

## Plant-based foods are better for heart health than animal-based foods, says study

**"Those who ate the most plant-based foods overall had a 16 per cent lower risk of having a cardiovascular disease such as heart attacks, stroke, heart failure and other conditions," says study.**



Eating more plant-based foods and fewer animal-based foods may be linked to better heart health and a lower risk of dying from cardiovascular diseases, a new study suggests.

"Eating a larger proportion of plant-based foods and a smaller proportion of animal-based foods may help reduce your risk of having a heart attack, stroke or other types of cardiovascular disease," said study lead researcher, Casey M Rebholz, Assistant Professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the US.

Plant-based foods eaters have a lower risk of cardiovascular disease Published in the Journal

of the American Heart Association, the researchers reviewed a database of food intake information from more than 10,000 middle-aged US adults who were monitored from 1987 through 2016 and did not have cardiovascular disease at the start of the study.

Those who ate the most plant-based foods overall had a 16 per cent lower risk of having a cardiovascular disease such as heart attacks, stroke, heart failure and other conditions; 32 per cent lower risk of dying from a cardiovascular disease and 25 per cent lower risk of dying from any cause compared to those who ate the least amount of plant-based foods.

# Step aside Chanel: North Korea's domestic 'raccoon eye makers' get state support

**Promoting home-grown beauty has been a political strategy since the days of state founder Kim Il Sung, but has become more focused under his foreign-educated grandson, Kim Jong Un.**

North Korea is beauty trend - innovative encouraging its beauty-conscious middle class women to choose domestic cosmetics over foreign brands in an effort to boost self-reliance as international sanctions deepen. Promoting home-grown beauty has been a political strategy since the days of state founder Kim Il Sung, but has become



more focused under his foreign-educated grandson, Kim Jong Un.

The international popularity in recent years of South Korea's K-

cosmetic products with natural ingredients such as ginseng and snail slime - has added momentum, say defectors who fled the North and experts who study the isolated state.

But North Korea's push has yet to translate to a winning formula, marred by quality issues and constraints in obtaining foreign

ingredients due to sanctions over its nuclear programme.

Leader Kim Jong Un was once dismissive of domestic beauty products.

"Foreign eye liners or mascaras stay on even after get into water, but domestic products make raccoon eyes even with just a yawn," Kim said during his visit to a Pyongyang cosmetics factory in 2015, according to the Japan-based Choson Sinbo newspaper.

But Kim has since visited cosmetics factories several times with his wife to promote the products.

Earlier this year, North Korea's state-run television KRT aired a video about Pyongyang Cosmetics Factory showing a woman replacing Chanel products with domestic products instead.

"Lots of foreign customers living in the state visit our shop. Sheet mask, lipstick and cleansing products are best sellers," Yang Su Jong, a sales assistant at Pyongyang Cosmetics Factory, told Reuters on a rare visit to the capital last year.

Chanel, in response to Reuters' questions, said it did not export products to North Korea and any items on sale there were likely



counterfeits or diverted products. FIRST LADY AND GIRL BAND North Korea has long regulated its citizens' appearance. Hair dyeing, blue jeans and clothes with writing in English were banned under Kim's father, Kim Jong Il, as the reclusive country tried to keep western influences out.

But that has changed since Kim came to power in 2011 and began making public appearances with first lady Ri Sol Ju, a former member of a pop orchestra.

Nam Sung-wook, a professor of North Korean studies at Korea

University, said the young first lady's short haircut and colourful suits appealed to a desire for self-expression within the constraints of North Korea's society.

"There was no role for the first lady in Kim Jong Il's era," Nam said. "But the Kim Jong Un era gave rise to first lady Ri Sol Ju, who furthered the regime's interest in cosmetics."

Kang Na-ra is one North Korean defector who said she used to buy South Korean cosmetics at private markets known as jangmadang that are the backbone of the North's informal market economy.

# Something fishy bout Mayu bags

**Mayu claims to be a cruelty free, sustainable fashion brand, that makes its product out of fish skin waste.**

Mayura Davda-Shah, 27, was pursuing her graduate degree in Boston, USA, where she lived for the better part of a decade, when she took a trip to Iceland in November 2015 with her friends. Little did she know that her experience would lead her to build a start-up venture that boasts of its eco-friendly nature. "Passing the local markets of Reykjavik, I came across these beautiful small leather goods and I was intrigued by the way they looked and felt. When I inquired, I learnt it was made from fish skin and salmon leather," says Mayura. She adds, "In the Nordic region, the concept of using fish leather to keep warm or make shoes is about 5,000 years old. Fish skin waste is a

byproduct of the fishing industry," says Mayura. Born and brought up in Solapur, Maharashtra, a place known for its abundant fresh catch, Mayura took her piscatorial fascination to creating wallets and clutches out of fish skin waste in her brand - Mayu. But what is it? Mayura explains, "Fish is caught and sent to fish processing houses, but before the filets are cut and packaged, the skin needs to be descaled in most cases. Salmon is one such fish. That is what gets converted into leather in tanneries in Iceland and Germany. The fish processing unit and the tannery operate side by side so as to further minimise waste." Inspired to bring this exotic, yet sustainable look to fashion, she decided to

bring this concept to India. However, her ambition was met with a rude halt. "When I visited places in India that are known for leather manufacturing, I realised the waste water that comes out of the industry, the affluent system and the working conditions of employees were not pleasant, to say the least. I had to decide between putting up a tannery and beginning operations from level zero or just sticking with designing products and outsourcing the material. I chose the latter," she says. The benefits of designing, she adds, also had higher margins and value addition to the fashion label. Mayura's specialty lies in her claim that in the entire process of making her ethical statement, no fish is ever



killed in the making of these products. "This is a green product because we are not killing fish for the skin," she affirms, adding, "We are using parts that would go into the bin. The high-end, ultra-luxury brands of today use hide of animals that may be endangered, which we are not doing." Their current line of products uses salmon and wolfish, because "visually the skins looked the best". She adds, "The kind of look people

demand from a water snake skin or python is what salmon skin closely resembles. Wolfish has spots and just like our fingerprints, no two fish skins are alike," she adds. And so, with the fish leather being imported from tanneries in Germany and Iceland, she began manufacturing the finished goods in a "zero waste" facility in Chennai. Keeping 'sustainability' in check, Mayura claims to not exceed 1,000 wallets and clutches, in terms of output.



## Hobbs & Shaw movie review

### Dwayne Johnson, Jason Statham derail the Fast & Furious franchise. 2 stars

**Hobbs & Shaw movie review: Despite the always slick Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson's best efforts, the first Fast & Furious spin-off can't save a rusty franchise from driving off a cliff. Rating: 2/5.**

Fast & Furious: Hobbs & Shaw  
Director - David Leitch

Cast - Dwayne Johnson, Jason Statham, Idris Elba, Vanessa Kirby, Cliff Curtis, Helen Mirren  
Rating - 2/5

Unfolding like the most ridiculously chest-thumping vanity project in years, the elaborately named Fast & Furious: Hobbs & Shaw is a film so macho, that any woman watching it will inadvertently initiate her transition to masculinity, and will immediately be issued a membership card to the boys club.

At one point, Dwayne Johnson leaps off a building, and instead of living up to his name and falling like a Rock, he flies. Towards the end of the film - and this moment has been unsportingly spoiled by the trailer - he pulls an airborne

helicopter with his bare biceps. And in one scene alone, I counted at least half-a-dozen fist bumps - the preferred communication tactic for testosterone-fuelled gents.

Hobbs & Shaw is the sort of movie in which the plot takes a backseat in favour of quips and hijinks. In all honesty, the film's best moments are not the ones in which The Rock and Jason Statham hurl office furniture at each other, but insults instead. The chemistry of our follically challenged heroes is intact, but director David Leitch is clearly in two minds about the tone he wants. Confused about whether to embrace the cartoonish action that has been driving the Fast & Furious franchise of late, or to pitch Hobbs & Shaw more as a buddy comedy along the lines of the Jump Street movies, Leitch manages to do neither.

This is rather unfortunate, because with only a handful of movies under his belt, Leitch has displayed an instantly recognisable style - a rarity in this age of committee-driven studio filmmaking. His work on the first John Wick helped spark off the unlikeliest of franchises; he filmed one of the greatest action scenes of the last decade in Atomic Blonde, and he even managed to inject some of his signature style into the second Deadpool movie.

Hobbs & Shaw is, remarkably, the first film in Leitch's career that feels compromised; not to meet the standards of an established franchise - that would've been understandable - but to suit the demands of its star.

While there are more than a few moments of genuine humour - thanks mostly to a couple of unexpected cameos that I will



not spoil here - and the action is certainly more refined than it ever has been in this series, Hobbs & Shaw never really amounts to more than the sum of its parts. I'm avoiding discussing the plot because it's honestly quite ordinary, and needlessly convoluted. Hobbs & Shaw, the famous baby rescuers from The Fate of the Furious, are recruited to track down an evil villain known as Brixton. Played by a bland Idris Elba, Brixton announces himself as 'the bad guy' when we first see him, and later as 'black Superman' when he fully displays the extent of his genetically

modified powers. Brixton is after Shaw's sister, Hattie, whose body houses a dangerous virus that if released into the world, will cause massive death and destruction. Hattie is, despite what they keep saying about her being a supremely powerful new character, essentially the film's MacGuffin - an object necessary to the plot and the motivation of the characters, but insignificant, unimportant, or irrelevant in itself. Like most movies, Hobbs & Shaw is also under the incorrect assumption that the greatest evidence of power is physical strength.

## Khandaani Shafakhana movie review

### In case you'd forgotten, Sonakshi Sinha is no Ayushmann Khurrana



Khandaani Shafakhana  
Director: Shilpi Dasgupta

Cast: Sonakshi Sinha, Badshah, Varun Sharma  
Rating: 2 stars

Sexual dysfunctions in India are grouped under the title 'Gupt Rog' - which has the unfortunate effect of making patients sound traumatised by the knowledge of Kajol being the killer - and it is indeed peculiar that we continue to assign such shame and secrecy to any sexual problem. With few people going to actual sexologists, phrases used by practitioners of sex clinics (as

well as hucksters on the street) sound weirdly astrological as opposed to medical: those with very low motility are said to suffer from Nil Shukranu, for instance. Several Indian patients are therefore routinely treated on the sly, by Unani hakims - doctors working in the Hellenic tradition - and Shilpi Dasgupta's debut film Khandaani Shafakhana is about a clinic run by a revered old doctor called Mamaji, played by the venerable Kulbhushan Kharbanda, who has spent decades fixing problems that people won't publicly speak of.

**Khandaani Shafakhana movie review: Sonakshi Sinha and Badshah's film has its heart in the place but suffers for playing sexual problems for jokes and unnecessary melodrama.**

One day, this Mamaji is killed by a former patient who couldn't deal with his overactive sex-drive: he kills the old man for having made him too virile.

The reading of his will leads to a Maalamaal-like setup where the clinic is bequeathed to Mamaji's niece but on the condition that she actively runs the place for six months, since Mamaji doesn't want his patients to feel abandoned. It's a standard setup and the film's intent is clear: to get people talking about their problems instead of being beset by shame, and often trusting in snake-oil salesmen when they require help from qualified professionals.

So far so straightforward. The problem arises when a film like this tries to play sexual troubles for laughs - making jokes of a wrestler with a broken penis, or a popular musician suffering from erectile disorder - and while

Khandaani Shafakhana tries to eventually reach out with empathy, the initial attempts at humour rise mostly from the heroine's disgust.

The other problem comes from the film's unnecessary attempts at melodrama, but these are both redundant and half-baked. In one scene, for instance, a mother is evicted from her house and ends up giving an evocative speech about pride and loss of face, but then we never see her living elsewhere. It's as if the filmmakers were instructed to amp up the drama to increase the storytelling stakes - I keep picturing producers and executives asking for more conflict, the way characters in this film want more ghee on their parathas - and that hurts this film's simple, good-natured spirit. A big positive comes from the rapper Badshah. As a larger-than-life popstar called Gabru

Ghatak - to rhyme with attack - he plays a man with erectile disorder who bawls about his problem moments after he first emerges from an SUV, covered in fur and bling like a silvery teddybear. He later refuses to help out the Shafakhana because, as he says, "Image is everything." It's a bold role for the musician to take, one that is aware of the connotations, as other characters in the film call him "a homo pop star" because his equipment doesn't work. Again, the joke is on them and not him - but who is the audience laughing at? Still, big ups to the rapper to take on this persona. He's a man who likes spirit, and the character tells us that in as many words: "I respect jazba," he says, wearing a jacket that is somehow equal parts Sgt Peppers and Shiv Sena.

# Taapsee Pannu won't apologise for 'honest opinion' on Kangana Ranaut

Tapsee pannu has said that she will not apologise for her "double filter" comment about , for which she has faced flak from the latter's sister and spokesperson Rangoli Chandel. The whole argument started when Kangana's sister Rangoli Chandel attacked Taapsee on Twitter.

"Kuch log Kangana ko copy kar ke he apni dukaan chalate hain, magar pls note, they never acknowledge her, not even a mention of her name in praising the trailer. Last I heard, Taapsee ji said Kangana needs a double filter, and Tapsee ji you need to stop being a sasti copy," Rangoli tweeted.

"Seriously, I will not apologies for my honest opinion. I did not know that she has a patent on curly hair because I born with curly hair, and my parents are responsible for that. So, I cannot apologies for that either. Rest, I do not know what else I have copied," said Taapsee, adding: "However, if I am a copy of



a good actress like her (Kangana) — and I always maintain that she is a good actress — I take it as a compliment. I am also called 'sasti' (cheap). Yes, I am not the highest-paid actress, so that way you can call me 'sasti'."Taapsee also said, "I did not reply to that individual because they do not matter in my scheme of things. Why should I pay attention to people who do not matter to me? They are taking time out to say things to me, meaning I matter to them. Everyone knows how to bully, and even I know how to answer back.

*Taapsee Pannu has reacted to Rangoli Chandel calling her Kangana Ranaut's sasti copy. She said that her comments don't matter to her.*

*'Didn't know she has patent on curly hair'*



## Shah Rukh Khan joins special kids on stage

Actor Shah Rukh Khan, who is currently in Australia to attend the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne as the chief guest, was a sport at the event and joined kids on stage, grooving to Ranveer Singh's hit number from Gully Boy, Apna Time Aayega. The 10th edition of the festival opened on August 8.



Special kids suffering with Down Syndrome were performing to the song when the Bollywood star decided to join them on

stage and went on to dance and twerk with them. He also gave them the warmest hugs after the performance ended. In videos that have surfaced online, SRK can be seen dressed in black. Speaking on the sidelines of the festival, Shah Rukh said, "I have done films only when I felt like doing, right now I don't feel like doing it for some time, but yeah I'll be back.

# Priyanka Chopra, Sophie Turner's favourite seats for a family pic are husbands Nick Jonas, Joe Jonas' laps

*Priyanka Chopra can be seated with entire Jonas family as they celebrate the beginning of Jonas Brothers' Happiness Begins Tour. Priyanka can be seen with Nick Jonas, Sophie Turner and brother Siddharth, among others.*

Actors Priyanka Chopra and Sophie Turner are accompanying their respective husbands Nick and Joe Jonas on their Happiness Begins Tour which kick-started with a houseful concert in Miami on Wednesday. And the pictures shared by Priyanka prove it's all about the Jonas family. After doing a live on Instagram, Priyanka shared a few pictures of the Jonas family on Instagram as they celebrated the success of Jonas Brothers' first concert

One of the pictures is the most special of them all as it shows all from Nick's parents Denise and Paul Kevin Jonas to Priyanka's mother Madhu Chopra and brother Siddharth Chopra. While Sophie can be seen sitting on husband Joe's lap, Priyanka is sitting on Nick's lap in the picture. Nick's mom Denise can be seen standing with Madhu (both in black tees) and Siddharth on the right whereas Paul Kevin is on the left. The eldest of the Jonas brothers Kevin and his wife

Danielle are however, missing in the frame. The other two pictures shared by Priyanka show her, Sophie and Kevin Jonas' wife Danielle Jonas posing together for the camera. The trio calls themselves Jonas sisters and were seen cheering for the Jonas Brothers at the concert. One of them shows them posing with Danielle's two daughters: Valentina and Alena, both dressed in similar red dresses. The actor captioned it, "The #jsisters for life #alenajonas #valentinajonas @sophiet



@daniellejonas." The other their first single Sucker after picture went with the their union. The song caption, "#wivesontour acquired the top slot on @ d a n i e l l e j o n a s Billboard Hot 100. It was followed by a few more @sophiet."The entire Jonas family had cheered for the numbers Cool and a bilingual Jonas Brothers who released number Runaway.

# Lauren Pope displays her toned figure in a blue snakeskin bikini as she shares a smooch with her millionaire beau Tony Keterman on Barbados break



They're rarely seen together since confirming their romance in January. And Lauren Pope was putting

Barbados. The reality star displayed her tanned physique in a blue snakeskin bikini as she enjoyed a steamy smooch with her beau in the sunshine. As she strolled along the beach with her beau, Lauren ensured her amazing figure took centre stage in a skimpy pale blue bikini with a snakeskin print. The ex-TOWIE star - who quit the reality series earlier this year - hid her wavy tresses under a Yankees-themed baseball cap. Lauren could barely keep her hands off boyfriend Tony as they strolled along the sea together. In January, Lauren confirmed her new romance by sharing a sweet snap of her kissing a hunky man, who was revealed to be foreign exchange investor Tony. Replying to a fan who asked if she was single, the beauty entrepreneur shared a picture of her packing on the PDA with her beau and wrote: 'Nope' alongside a smiling emoji. Tony, who is the Chief Executive of a foreign exchange trading firm, Hamilton Court FX, sparked up his romance with Lauren by sliding into her DMs. A source told The Sun: 'They hit it off

straight away. They're head over heels and have just had a really romantic time in Thailand. 'He's a millionaire, and not interested in being famous. He's really into Lauren and this relationship feels different to previous relationships for her as he's in his thirties and isn't into drama.' He's a really nice guy and

loves being around her. They just clicked from the start and his friends can't wait to meet her.' Tony is no stranger to a high-profile romance - in October he was snapped passionately kissing Imogen Thomas, 36, six months after her split from long-term partner Adam Horsley.



## Disney to remake 'Home Alone' for its streaming service

Merry Christmas, ya filthy animal -- a Disney remake of "Home Alone" is on its way. In a conference call with investors, Disney CEO Bob Iger said the company would be "reimagining" the 1990s Christmas classic film for its long-awaited streaming service, Disney+, along with "Night at the Museum," "Cheaper by the Dozen" and "Diary of a Wimpy Kid." In March, Disney acquired most 21st Century Fox assets following a \$71 billion deal -- including several film franchises.



"Home Alone," which was released in 1990 and starred Macaulay Culkin, has an audience rating of 80% on Rotten

Tomatoes and a 7.5 rating on IMDb. Disney has provided no details about how or when the film will

be remade, or who will be cast.

"We are also focused on leveraging Fox's vast library of great titles to further enrich the content mix on our... platforms -- for example, reimagining 'Home Alone,' 'Night at the Museum,' 'Cheaper by the Dozen' and 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid' for a new generation on Disney+," Iger told investors on Tuesday. In April, the company unveiled its Disney+ streaming service, which will launch in North America in November.

The service will be the exclusive home of Marvel, "Star Wars," Disney Animation and Pixar and will cost \$6.99 a month - about half the price of a standard Netflix subscription.

## After Hobbs & Shaw, a definitive ranking of the Fast & Furious films



The Fast and the Furious franchise is, in many ways, like a soap opera. It didn't start this way, but it most certainly has transformed into one. It's the rare film franchise that we're willing to forgive for its stupidity. And as anyone who has witnessed the sight of parachuting cars can tell you, it is dazzlingly dumb. This is quite the achievement, because we all know how easy it is to nitpick. For instance, while we break out our pitchforks every time Salman Khan arrives on screen with his bracelet dangling from his wrist, deliberately mocking the idea of what is real and what isn't, we look the other way when Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson insists on wearing his beloved

Under Armor, regardless of what film he is in, or what character he is playing. We're willing to accept bonkers leaps in logic, such as a man racing a nuclear submarine; a guy flying without the help of any special suit; or even pulling an airborne chopper with his arms and nothing else. We're willing to forgive Jason Statham for killing the greatest character in the history of film - the potato chip connoisseur Han - and totally fine with him being introduced as a hero in the very next film. And most tellingly, we're absolutely OK with a character who had died in the most violent fashion - Letty - being resurrected just in time for the gang to get back together.

# Sushma Swaraj cremated with state honours. PM Modi, other leaders pay tribute



(News Agencies) - Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj was cremated with full state honours at Delhi's Lodhi crematorium on Wednesday. Known

as one of the most accessible ministers in Narendra Modi's first government, Swaraj died of a cardiac arrest late Tuesday night at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi. She was 67. Swaraj's body was

brought to her residence on Jantar Mantar Road on Wednesday morning. Around 11 am, it was taken to the BJP head office on Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg in central Delhi. She was

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## Article 370 is out, Kashmir is in: Why all eyes are now on Pakistan



(News Agencies) - A bold and historic decision has been taken by the government to scrap Articles 370 and 35-A, separate Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir and make both Union territories. Removing these two articles was entrenched in BJP's political thinking and the party's agenda since long, and bifurcation/trifurcation of the state have been envisaged as possibilities. But it remained unclear when the government might implement its agenda and, indeed, whether it would have the political courage to eventually take this momentous decision in view of its many repercussions.

Article of division

Just as we conducted our nuclear tests within a few days of Atal Bihari Vajpayee becoming Prime Minister, the Modi government has taken this epoch-making decision a few weeks into its second term.

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## Mexico cartel hangs bodies from city bridge in grisly show of force



(News Agencies) -The merciless dogfight between Mexican drug cartels has produced its latest macabre spectacle with the discovery of 19 mutilated corpses - nine of them hung semi-naked from a bridge - in a city to the west of the capital. The massacre, in Uruapan 250 miles from Mexico City, was claimed by the increasingly dominant Jalisco New Generation cartel which posted a large white banner beside the dangling bodies of its victims.

"Lovely people, carry on with your routines," it read, beneath the group's capitalised red

initials, CJNG. At least 10 other dismembered and bullet-riddled bodies were reportedly found dumped in two nearby locations. Michoacán state's attorney general, Adrián López Solís, blamed the killings on a clash between rival cartels battling for control of the region's drug trade. Troops were being mobilized to investigate the crimes and catch the killers, he said.

Falko Ernst, an International Crisis Group researcher who studies Mexico's cartels, said

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## Trump administration authorizes 'cyanide bombs' to kill wild animals



(News Agencies) - The Trump administration has reauthorized government officials to use controversial poison devices - dubbed "cyanide bombs" by critics - to kill coyotes, foxes and other animals across the US.

The spring-loaded traps, called M-44s, are filled with sodium cyanide and are most frequently deployed by Wildlife Services, a federal agency in the US Department of Agriculture that kills vast numbers of wild animals each year, primarily for the benefit of private farmers and ranchers.

In 2018, Wildlife Services reported that its agents had dispatched more than 1.5 million native animals, from beavers to black bears, wolves,

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## Kashmir issue: From PM Modi's healing touch to Pakistan's 'no-samjhauta' in 10 points



(News Agencies) -As restrictions imposed in the wake of scrapping Article 370 continued for another day in Kashmir, high drama unfolded throughout Thursday. While the day ended on a good note with PM Modi's speech, declaring a new era of development in Jammu and Kashmir, it saw heightened hostility from Pakistan leaders, who have opposed the abrogation of Article 370 that grants special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan stopped Samjhauta Express before it crossed the Wagah border and asked India to send its own crew

to escort the passengers across the international border. Meanwhile, there were also reports that over 500 political workers and leaders were detained in Kashmir in the wake of the restrictions. Here are 10 top developments that unfolded throughout the day: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation in a 40-minute televised address, explaining the reason behind the government's Article 370 move. Modi said the scrapping of Article 370 will usher a new era of development in Jammu and

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