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The War in Afghanistan Was Doomed From the Start

The main culprit ? Corruption.



*(President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan in Kabul.
Credit...Rahmat Gul/Agence France-
Presse — Getty Images)*

**Story on
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US completes implementation of H-1B electronic registration process for 2021 season

Under this new process, employers seeking H-1B workers subject to the cap, or their authorized representatives, will complete a registration process that requires only basic information about their company and each requested worker.

News Agencies process will dramatically streamline processing by reducing paperwork and data exchange, and will provide an overall cost savings to petitioning employers," the USCIS said Friday. Under this new process, employers seeking H-1B workers subject to the cap, or their authorized representatives, will complete a registration process that requires only basic information about their company and each requested worker. The USCIS will open an initial registration period from March 1 through

March 20, 2020. The H-1B random selection process, if needed, will then be run on those electronic registrations. Only those with selected registrations will be eligible to file H-1B cap-subject petitions, a media release said. "By streamlining the H-1B cap selection process with a new electronic registration system, USCIS is creating cost savings and efficiencies for petitioners and the agency, as only those selected will now be required to submit a full petition," said USCIS Deputy Director Mark Koumans.

The USCIS will open an initial registration period from March 1 through



"The agency completed a successful pilot testing phase, which included sessions with industry representatives, and implementation of the registration system will further the goal of modernizing USCIS from a paper-based to an online-filing agency," he said. USCIS will post step-by-

step instructions informing registrants how to complete the registration process on its website along with key dates and timelines as the initial registration period nears. The federal agency will also conduct public engagements and other outreach activities to ensure registrants and

interested parties are familiar with the new registration system, it said. The USCIS may determine if it is necessary to continue accepting registrations, or open an additional registration period, if it does not receive enough registrations and subsequent petitions projected to reach the numerical allocations, it added.

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An Indian-Origin Doctor In London Mised Patients For Breast, Vaginal Examinations



News Agencies - An Indian-origin doctor, who exploited women's cancer fears to carry out invasive intimate

examinations, was found guilty of sexually assaulting multiple women by a UK court on Tuesday.

Manish Shah, a general practitioner or GP, was convicted of 25 counts of sexual assault and assault by penetration on six women at the Old Bailey court in London.

The trial heard how Shah used a news story during consultation with one patient about Hollywood star Angelina Jolie having a preventative mastectomy, before asking if she would like him to examine her breasts.

"He took advantage of his position to persuade women to have invasive vaginal examinations, breast examinations and rectal examinations when there was absolutely no medical need for them to be conducted," prosecutor Kate Bex told the jury. "Fear is an incredible motivator and few health concerns are scarier than cancer. Shah exploited that and used it for his own personal gratification," she said.

Over five years, between May 2009 and June 2013, the 50-year-old doctor assaulted six patients

of the Mawney Medical Centre in east London, including some as young as 11.

The jury, which acquitted him of five other charges, was told that he had already been convicted of similar allegations relating to 17 other women, bringing the total number to 23.

Judge Anne Molyneux adjourned sentencing for the latest offences until February 7, 2020.

Shah had denied any wrongdoing and his barrister, Zoe Johnson, told jurors he was a "cautious, insecure, perhaps at times

incompetent GP".

But the prosecution's case highlighted Shah's generally "sexualised" behaviour and also his tendency to flout state-funded National Health Service or NHS guidelines on examinations. He would reportedly give patients hugs and kisses, singling some out as "special" and his "star", saying he had a soft spot for them. Shah was suspended from the medical practice in 2013 when complaints came to light, resulting in a police investigation.

Indian businessman extradited to US admits to drug smuggling charges

Jeetendra Harish Belani, 37, of Nagpur made the admission in the Pittsburgh federal court before Chief Federal District Judge Mark Hornak on Monday, federal prosecutor Scott Brady said.

News Agencies - An Indian businessman extradited to the US from the Czech Republic has admitted in a federal court that he illegally imported to the US pharmaceutical drugs with a tendency to create addiction problems, according to officials. Jeetendra Harish Belani, 37, of Nagpur made the admission in the Pittsburgh federal court before Chief Federal District Judge Mark Hornak on Monday, federal prosecutor Scott Brady said.

Belani admitted that to evade detection he falsified customs declarations for the medicines

that can only be sold with a doctor's prescription and had them sent to different addresses in small quantities, the prosecutor said.

He was arrested in the Czech Republic in early June and extradited to the US where he was charged later that month with drug and money laundering offences, according to officials. According to Brady, Belani admitted that the drugs were imported to the US through his India-based company, LeeHPL Ventures, between 2015 and 2019 and maintained a website for it. The medicines smuggled

included Tapentadol, a Schedule II drug, as well as Tramadol, Carisoprodol, and Modafinil, which are Schedule IV controlled substances, officials said.

According to the Drug Enforcement Agency, Schedule II drugs "have a high potential for abuse which may lead to severe psychological or physical dependence" while Schedule IV drugs "have a low potential for abuse relative to substances". Belani also admitted that he conspired with two others, William Kulakevich and Julia Fees, between 2015 and mid-2017 to smuggle a drug known



as Etizolam for re-sale by the two through a website, Brady said.

Etizolam is "part of a class of drugs similar to benzodiazepines, which are often used to treat insomnia and anxiety and carry a potential for abuse and overdose," according to officials. Belani also admitted to having

money sent to his accounts in India and other countries leading to the money laundering charge, Brady said. Persons facing charges admitting their guilt in court is known as pleading guilty and is often done in return for leniency as prosecutors can avoid a costly court case.

'Want to see America work with 'incredible allies' like India': Donald Trump Jr

Donald Trump Jr, the eldest son of US President Donald Trump, addressed members of the Indian-American community during a special event in Long Island, New York, on Thursday.
WORLD Updated: Dec 14, 2019 10:02 IST

News Agencies - Donald Trump Jr, the eldest son of US President Donald Trump, said he wants America to work with "its incredible allies" like India to make the world a safer place and use democracy as a shining beacon of light for everyone to learn from. Trump Jr, along with Senior Advisor to Trump's 2020 Presidential Campaign and former Fox News host Kimberly Guilfoyle, addressed members of the Indian-American community during a special event in Long Island here on Thursday.

Trump Jr, who has authored 'Triggered: How the Left

Thrives on Hate and Wants to Silence Us', spoke about his book, his father and ties with India at the event. He later signed copies of his book and took pictures with members of the Indian-American audience. He said that his father has fought for American values, culture and beliefs.

"And he's done that for all Americans, a rising tide lifts all ships" and the results are there for all to see, 41-year-old Trump Jr said. "To see what he's been able to do and I imagine, in this community full of business leaders, you've seen those

results yourself. But they're not just benefits for you. They are benefits for everyone around--the employees that you hire, the businesses who are your suppliers, the beneficiaries. Everyone's winning because of this. "And that's why I've been such an advocate for this (Donald Trump's vision) because I want to see that winning continue.

"I want to see America maintain its rightful place as the leader of the free world. I want to see them be able to work with their incredible allies, like India to make the world a safer place. To use democracy as a shining



beacon of light for everyone to be able to learn from," he said. The event was organised by AI Mason, expert on global real estate investments and education institutions, and hosted by businessman Shudh Parkash Singh. Trump Jr said it is a "great honour" for him to be

with the "incredible" Indian-American community. Underscoring the business ties that the Trump Organization has in India, the US president's eldest son said "my background with India and even Indian-Americans goes back quite far."

In the Northeast, BJP makes a U-turn *Democrats Agree on One Thing: They're Very, Very Nervous*

The tribal states of the Northeast have been promised Inner Line Permit (ILP) protection from the fallout of the CAB-NRC process. To explain what this means, I need to do some storytelling. One very special privilege of holding a most distant outpost in difficult times is how much attention, time and affection you can get from people who'd be way above your station in "normal" times.

One of my many blessings of my three-year stint in the Northeast as The Indian Express correspondent based in Shillong (1981-83), therefore, was how some brilliant, old, and eminent people dropped by, mostly unannounced, at our tiny "Assam Type" cottage home in a quaintly named neighbourhood, Kench's Trace. One such, on a brilliant and fortuitous afternoon, was NK? "Nari" Rustomji, a doyen of what used to be called the Indian Frontier Administrative Service (IFAS). It was designed to manage India's most sensitive northeastern border (essentially tribal) states. It consisted of a tiny, elite of the elite, set of officers, hand-picked by Jawaharlal Nehru and his tribal affairs adviser (especially for the Northeast), anthropologist Verrier Elwin.

Rustomji, an Indian Civil Service officer of the 1942 batch, had been a favourite of both. He had held the most important positions in those difficult and dangerous decades, including as prime minister (PM) to the Chogyal of Sikkim. Long after retiring, he had become a writer and was a devastating raconteur. He was spending time in Shillong because he was working on a new book: *Imperilled Frontiers*. He had earned much fame already with an earlier one called *Enchanted Frontiers*.

In the early 80s, the Northeast had four active insurgencies (Naga, Mizo, Manipuri and Tripura tribals) and a mass movement in Assam so popular it had blocked off the flow of crude from its oil fields to mainland India's refineries. That's why the book's title, *Imperilled Frontiers*.

One theme recurring through his book drafts was "hastening slowly". He said this was the innovative plan Nehru and Elwin had devised for the Northeast's tribal regions. They wanted change to come to these distant, sparsely populated, tribal and sensitive regions eventually, but at a pace that these fragile communities and geographies could absorb.

Elwin, by the way, was a self-taught anthropologist who fell in love with Indian tribes, became a friend of Nehru and, in 1954, became the first Briton to be given Indian citizenship. It is only then that he was appointed the adviser to the PM on tribal affairs, especially in the North Eastern Frontier Agency or NEFA as Arunachal Pradesh was then called. In 1957, he published his *Philosophy for NEFA*. You can find more details in Ramachandra Guha's biography of Elwin. The essential pillar of the philosophy was that "people should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them". This rested on the idea of controlling and carefully calibrating the interaction between these communities and "outsiders". ILP restrictions on outsiders from the rest of India freely travelling to these states was the instrument to implement this. Nagaland, Arunachal (NEFA) and later Mizoram came to be thus "protected" with ILP.

Not everybody agreed. Least of all the Right-nationalists of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (the parent of the Bharatiya Janata Party). It saw the usual Nehruvian woolly-headedness here, and sometimes, even a diabolical Western conspiracy. Even at their most charitable, they compared these ILP areas with the Reservations the Americans had built for their natives. Why should we quarantine our fellow Indians into the wild, only so missionaries could go and convert them at will?

The Hindu Right was joined in its fears by socialist Ram Manohar Lohia. He made two visits to NEFA to break through ILP restrictions, was arrested, and returned.

After the 1962 debacle, these voices strengthened. Under pressure, a broken Nehru conceded the demand from the Jana Sangh — articulated by young Atal Bihari Vajpayee — that India resettle one lakh "sturdy" Punjabis, especially Sikh ex-servicemen in NEFA. Elwin fought back. The Jana Sangh, however, said the state which the Chinese had just invaded, had a Muslim chief secretary, Parsi adviser (Rustomji), and a Christian chief anthropologist (Elwin). It was unacceptable. Guha's biography mentions how Elwin visited the home ministry on February 21, 1964, and was told by another Northeast specialist officer, Rashid Yousuf Ali, that the decision to resettle Punjabis and lift all restrictions was final. He had the file on his desk. The next day Elwin met friend Nehru. He died the day after, at 62. Three months later, Nehru died too.

Time-travel now quickly to today. Nehru, under his "British" friend's influence, bought into the idea of ILP. Vajpayee and Lohia wanted it out. Over the following six decades, successive Indian governments allowed restrictions to weaken, and the result was welcome integration, hastening slowly.

Now, Vajpayee and the Jana Sangh's children haven't just re-strengthened the ILP restrictions, but extended them to an entirely new state, Manipur, and also added to it Nagaland's Dimapur, a bustling cosmopolitan town in the plains.

Postscript: For all the talk of his Christian influence, Elwin had ceased to be a Christian years ago. He was cremated according to Buddhist rites in Shillong.

The past three years have not been easy for the political fortunes or the emotional health of America's Democrats. To the extent they feel optimistic about anything, they have been waiting for the 2020 election in the way inhabitants of a storm-ravaged city might look toward the end of hurricane season — as an opportunity to restore order not just to their fractured physical world, but to their battered psyches.

Why, then, even with the potential catharsis of impeachment proceedings against President Trump underway, do so many feel so awful?

"My big fear is that we are not coalescing around one candidate, and I don't know in the end if there's enough people who will come out and vote," said Mac Macnair, a Democrat who lives in a deep-red county in rural Georgia. "Four years is as long as I can go, but eight years — we won't even have an America left."

Ms. Macnair, a former teacher in her late 50s, was in Greenwood a few weeks ago to listen to her preferred candidate, former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., speak in a college gym. She was excited to hear what he had to say. But she was still fretting about the state of the party, and the state of the nation, at the end of 2019. On the one hand, of course, there is Mr. Trump, who set up camp in the deep corners of the American psyche three years ago and has remained there ever since, a larger-than-life-presence for supporters and detractors alike, the invisible guest whose existence can ruin a holiday meal as quickly as your cousin can utter the word "Ukraine."

On the other hand there is the vast field of bickering Democratic candidates, so many candidates that it can be hard to keep them straight, so many candidates that they seem at risk of canceling each other out and failing at the one job they are theoretically meant to do: win the election. Meanwhile, impeachment itself serves as nothing more than a Rorschach test of worry set to Robert's Rules of Order. "If they're not going to get along, they need to keep quiet," said Beverly Hall, 63, another Biden supporter at the Greenwood event. But beyond being happy about her candidate, she has watched and read a lot about the election, she said, and she does not feel great. "This guy who's on the commercials — Jim, what's his name?" she said, referring to Tom Steyer. "I like what he's saying. I like the issues he's bringing up. But why are you spending \$3 million on TV when you could be giving the money to Joe?"

Some people are suffering from general political angst. Others have specific qualms: a concern that their favorite candidate lacks that essential quality, electability; a worry that fellow Democrats will become disillusioned if their chosen candidate fails to get the nomination and will vote for a third-party candidate, or for Mr. Trump, or for no one at all — the "Bernie or Nobody" scenario. A sampling of interviews with Democrats in different parts of the country reveals that worry comes in many forms. From Jobetta Hedelman-Beaver, 39, of Kennewick, Wash.: "I'm anxious about Trump. I'm super-anxious about him. I blame him for my high blood pressure." From Katie Matlin, 40, in Northbrook, Ill.: "My husband has major anxiety around the election. We actually cannot watch news coverage in our house because any news about Donald Trump triggers his anxiety."



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The CAB's discriminatory spirit undermines justice

As a matter of principle, the bill discriminates - and in the critical domain of citizenship at that. It cannot stand

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, appears destined to become law in the near future. The primary criticism is that it discriminates on religious grounds by treating persons belonging to six religions differently from all others, while carving out an exception and effectively allowing them to escape "illegal status" and gain citizenship. The critics have got it all wrong, respond proponents of the bill. The law leaves Muslims out of its beneficial embrace only because they don't face the same problems as the six religious groups listed in

the bill, since the neighbouring countries in question are Islamic. Of course, this defence amounts to attacking a straw man. The larger underpinning of opposition to the bill, evidently, is that it effectively treats India as the natural home for the majority (Hindu) community and less so for others, and thereby violates the secular character of the Indian Constitution. It is also well established that there are many in India's immediate neighbourhood, including Muslims, who would otherwise have benefited from such a law but have been conspicuously

omitted. Tamils from Sri Lanka, for example; Rohingyas from Myanmar. And even if one limits oneself to the three countries the bill concerns itself with, communities such as the Ahmadis in Pakistan have a long and well documented history of religious persecution.

But forget all of this for the moment, and take the government's position at face value. Can Parliament not attack the most prominent manifestation of a problem, without addressing each specific illustration? In legislation of a certain character (economic,

taxation, regulatory and others of similar nature), courts in India and abroad have appreciated that the perfect ought not to be the enemy of the good, and, therefore, adopted a fairly deferential standard of "rational basis" review that might make legal defence of even such patently skewed legislation feasible. The problem - for the government and those that would defend it - is that such deferential judicial review is never appropriate in the context of laws that impinge upon basic fundamental freedoms or treat particular communities unequally. The idea

is simple but powerful, and deeply ingrained in legal jurisprudence throughout the world: Laws that discriminate or that would skew the even-handedness of the political process, must necessarily be reviewed on a far more exacting standard.

While it has universal appeal, a version of this principle is thought to have first emerged in a footnote in the *Carolene Products* case in the United States Supreme Court (often referenced as the most famous footnote in constitutional law). Here, in the context of upholding a piece of regulatory legislation, the court observed that cases involving "prejudice against discrete and insular minorities", or which restrict "political processes ordinarily to be relied upon", might require "more searching judicial inquiry". This germ of an idea has taken deep root in legal jurisdictions across the globe, and in India too. The experimentalism and incremental progress inevitable in regulatory or other similar economic legislation, and thus viewed benignly by the judicial system, is entirely out of place in the context of basic human rights. Some decades ago, in a striking defence of religious liberty and individual conscience, the Indian Supreme Court set aside the expulsion of students of the Jehovah's Witnesses faith for their refusal to join in the singing of the national anthem at school, on account of their sincere belief that their religious faith forbade it.

It is time to review India's reservations architecture

Dalits and tribals must continue to get representation. But the system is broken

The decision to extend reservations to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Parliament and state assemblies is both a welcome move and on expected lines. When the Constitution was drafted, the provision was meant for a limited period of time. But this has persisted for two reasons. One, SCs and STs remain India's most marginalised communities. Atrocities persist. They remain underrepresented in the mainstream. Reserved seats ensure their voice is heard. Two, no party in India

can be seen as acting against Dalit and tribal interests, for fear of losing their votes. But while this extension is both understandable and necessary, it is time to review India's entire architecture of reservations. The implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations saw the extension of reservations in government positions to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). This, too, could be understood in the context of their underrepresentation. But over the past three decades, reservations have been granted to a range of

other groups. With the expansion of reservations to economically backward segments among general groups, the 50% limit set by the Supreme Court has been breached.

There are two issues. The first is conceptual. Reservation was a tool meant to address historical injustice, and create a level playing field. But it has come to be seen as a route to upward economic mobility, and even as an exercise in asserting power. The second issue is how the dreams of the founders, in which individual



rights would become the primary marker of citizenship, remains unfulfilled. And group rights and collective identities end up reigning supreme. Even

as the representation of Dalits and tribals in Parliament is assured, it is time to debate the rationale and record of ever-expanding reservations.



India's neighbours have persecuted minorities. It is time to give them justice

With the Lok Sabha passing the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, and the Rajya Sabha scheduled to debate it on Wednesday, some basic facts are being obscured in the ensuing din. It is a well-known and widely accepted fact that Bharat (a term the Constitution recognises to refer to India), is a natural habitat for Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Buddhist and other religious minorities from our neighbouring countries. The three neighbouring countries - Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan - have Muslim majorities. And so, by their very nature, they are Islamic. When our country was partitioned

in the name of religion in 1947, both Bharat and Pakistan had agreed to respect and protect their minorities. In 1947, a big chunk of Muslims who rejected the two-nation theory, propagated by the Muslim League based on the sentiments expressed by Sir Syed Ahmad in his speech in 1863, chose to stay on in Bharat. Similarly, a large number of Hindus, Sikhs and other religious minorities remained in Pakistan, and later, in Bangladesh. According to various official reports and census data, the estimated number of minorities - Hindus and Sikhs - was around 12.9% in Pakistan at the time of Partition. It has been reduced to

less than 1% today. The Hindus who constituted around 31% of the population in Bangladesh at the time of its creation have come down to only 8% today. A valid question to be asked to these countries is: Where are their 'missing' Hindus and other religious minorities? The answer is clear. These minorities have either been converted, killed or have left these countries for safer places - mostly India. The persecution of these communities, which has, at times, taken the form of pogroms, has continued almost relentlessly in these countries. The political and social leadership of Bharat has been justifiably

worried about this, and this cuts across party lines.

In 1947, there was extensive migration. Around 14 to 16 million Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were forced to leave their homes and flee to safety zones. In the same period, over 600,000 of them were killed. The manner of killing was brutal.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel wrote to then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on September 2, 1947, "From morning till night these days, my time is here fully occupied with the talks of woes and atrocities which reach me through Hindu and Sikh refugees from all over western Pakistan."

Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan have a record of mistreating minorities. The CAB? will end their suffering

After the killings, the proportion of Hindu holding properties in Pakistan fell to 12.7%. Nearly 90% of the Hindu citizens of Dhaka migrated to Bharat. This was also the case with the student population of Dhaka. In 1971, the Pakistan military started a genocide in what was then Dacca. Hindus were particularly targeted. The then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi told the Lok Sabha on May 24, 1971, "So massive a migration, in so short a time, is unprecedented in recorded history. About three and a half million people have come into India from Bangladesh during the last eight weeks." Unfortunately, the situation didn't change much even after Bangladesh was formed. This persecution persisted both to India's east and west. Eduardo Falerio, minister of state for external affairs, told the Rajya Sabha on July 28, 1987, "Reports emanating from Pakistan in May-June 1987 indicate that there have been attacks on Hindu temples as well as shops and properties belonging to the Hindu community in Sindh".

Unsettling the Northeast

The CAB jeopardises the emerging stability in the region

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, has faced its most fierce backlash in the Northeast. This is not a surprise, for it is the Northeast which has witnessed the intersection of debates around ethnicity, religion, citizenship, migration and cross-border flow of people most intensely. In Assam, the anti-immigrant sentiment led to a mass movement, culminating in the exercise to update the National Register of Citizens. Tensions between Bengali speakers, who mostly migrated from what is now Bangladesh, and indigenous people, have persisted in Tripura. Nagaland is home to Asia's longest insurgency, seeking its distinct identity and geography. Manipur has witnessed insurgencies, and conflicts between both the dominant Meitei community with "outsiders", and between Meiteis

and tribes. And it is in all these states - and Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh - where there is a cross-cutting resentment against immigrants. To allay fears that CAB would mean an influx of immigrants, the Centre made three decisions. The cut-off date for religious minorities seeking expedited citizenship was fixed for December 31, 2014. Those availing CAB provisions would not be able to settle in states requiring an Inner Line Permit (ILP) - Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh - and sixth schedule areas, which include parts of Assam, almost all of Meghalaya, parts of Tripura. For good measure, ILP was extended to Manipur.

This has helped the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) win the support of some of its allies in the region. It has also managed



to get its local units to fall in line. But as the protests show, there remains anger. This newspaper has argued the CAB and the idea of a nationwide National Register of Citizens is flawed and dangerous for it undermines India's constitutional values and will burden citizens. It also has

the potential to unsettle the fragile peace, as the Northeast shows. Ironically, for a party which emphasises the idea of "one nation", the BJP has reinforced and even created almost an entirely distinct exception for the Northeast from CAB. Equally ironic that a government which

speaks of making the Northeast the lynchpin of its Act East policy has introduced a move which can usher in instability. And for the Centre, which, to its credit, has ensured peace in the Northeast, a move that revives old wounds could be a political and security threat.

To govern smart cities, data is no more than a tool

Data helps. But to pin all hopes on technological solutions, as the smart city project is doing, is not wise

What does it mean to be a smart city? While priorities, projects, and methods might change, the smart city has come to mean widespread use of information and communications technologies (ICT) in urban governance and the promotion of economic growth. Further, smart cities promote the extensive collection and analysis of data in order to make cities more efficient and, purportedly, more equitable. At a more ideological level, smart cities seek to "depoliticise" urban governance, arguing that a more scientific approach - using data and digital technologies - can achieve this.

Since its launch in 2015, India's Smart Cities Mission (SCM) has shifted gears. It began by looking at different aspects of urban development, but it is now more focused on the collection and analysis of city-level data.

The mission guidelines are

ambiguous. Instead of offering a definition for smart cities, or details on what the SCM aims to achieve, the guidelines state: "there is no universally accepted definition of a Smart City...The conceptualization...varies from city to city and country to country, depending on the level of development, willingness to change and reform, resources and aspirations of the city residents." The guidelines also say that smart cities should develop the "entire urban ecosystem", including, "institutional, physical, social and economic infrastructure".

The "smart solutions" and "smart city features" recommended by the guidelines suggest a fairly broad approach to building smart cities. These interventions include wastewater treatment, e-governance, affordable housing, mixed land-use, and using renewable energy. The SCM's ambit, thus, included more

traditional interventions, building on previous policies. A simple word search reveals that "data" is mentioned in the guidelines only thrice. All three mentions replicate the same sentence: "Application of Smart Solutions will enable cities to use technology, information and data to improve infrastructure and services." The guidelines do not expand on what kind of data will be collected, or how.

In 2018, the ministry of housing and urban affairs (MoHUA) published two documents focusing exclusively on city data. One is a strategy document titled, DataSmart Cities: Empowering Cities Through Data, and the other is the Data Maturity Assessment Framework (DMAF). The DataSmart strategy underscores the need to collect city-level data and "sense" the city through sensors and other digital infrastructure - as if the purpose of building a



"smart city" is to collect and use data, rather than the other way around.

Whereas the SCM guidelines considered different avenues to achieve urban smartness, the DataSmart strategy seems to argue that the only way for a city to achieve smartness, no matter the area of urban policy, is by collecting and using data. In other words, being a smart city necessarily means being a "data smart" city. Such an approach reduces the autonomy offered to cities to determine what smart means within their own context. An indicator for this reduced

autonomy is the DMAF. This framework emerges from the DataSmart strategy. Its "objective is to help cities emerge as 'Digital Leaders' in a paradigm of data-driven governance".

Do keep in mind that these discussions about the collection and use of data are taking place in the absence of a data privacy law. The draft bill does not offer adequate protections from government surveillance.

In his book, *The Smart Enough City*, Ben Green warns against "overemphasizing the power and importance of technology".

The making of an urban tragedy

The city has thousands of layouts, known locally as unauthorised colonies, with a sub-category, known as "regularised unauthorised colonies".



The horrendous tragedy at Anaj Mandi in the early hours of Sunday, December 8th, that killed 43 poor migrants in a fire mishap, deafeningly signals a systemic failure to cope with urbanisation. Yet, this perspective still remains largely ignored. This is probably because one of the most surprising, and ironically banal, facts about the national capital is that an overwhelming number of buildings here are illegal. The city has thousands of layouts, known locally as unauthorised colonies, with a sub-category, known as "regularised unauthorised colonies". There are also the major illegal redevelopments in

existing localities in violation of land-use norms and are beyond the allowable Floor Area Ratios (FARs). The whole Anaj Mandi area falls within this last criteria. But what makes such rampant culture of impunity which brands law-breaking almost a norm in the national capital? To begin with, systemic weaknesses must be understood. The first relates to the dysfunctional governance structure in Delhi. Democratic countries, in particular federal ones, have difficulty in balancing between representative local government and the particular needs of the federal government. The citizens of Washington DC were given

voting rights for US Presidential elections only in the 1960s, but they have no elected representative in the US Congress with voting rights. The Chief Minister of Australian Capital Territory (ACT) of Canberra has very limited powers, far less than the Chief Minister of Delhi, and Acts passed by the City's legislature, can be overruled by the National Parliament. Even in non-federal France and Great Britain, the Mayors of Paris and London have very little to do independently. Thus, what complicates the situation in Delhi, and this goes back decades, is the multiplicity of authorities and their confusing jurisdictions. Even when there was no territory-wide elected government, the Home Ministry controlled the New Delhi Municipal Council/ Corporation (NDMC) and the Municipal Council of Delhi (MCD) while the Delhi Development Authority (DAA) worked under the Urban Development Ministry. In fact, when Delhi was made into a Chief Commissioner's province (equivalent to Union Territory) by

the British, the Central Government retained control over law & order, land and services (bureaucracy), not passing it onto the Chief Commissioner, their own ICS appointee. We also have a situation where the State Public Works Department maintains some roads, the NDMC/ MCDs others, while the DDA does so in areas that it develops. Similarly, many different entities are charged with marinating drainage and sewage systems. The result is that when flooding happens after even normal rainfall, it becomes extremely difficult to fix responsibility and sort the mess. However, what actually makes the situation much worse is our attitude towards urbanisation and city governance. We still largely cling to the universally discarded concept of single-use designated areas - housing, commercial, institutional, green etc. Under a misguided perception that going upward would be un-Gandhian, we kept the FARs extremely low, forcing up land prices. To make matters worse, the DDA effectively monopolised housing

and commercial development. Since demand always outstripped supply, this led to the development of unauthorised colonies promoted by the unholy mix of land sharks, local political heavyweights and public servants drawn from the police, MCD, DDA and all land-related agencies. The population residing in unauthorised colonies far outstrips those residing in DDA housing projects. Similarly, for reasons of economy, housing unit became shops, a prime example of which is Lajpat Nagar. On the other hand, town planners decided that manufacturing and urbanisation did not go together, despite the common knowledge that availability of skilled manpower and good infrastructure draws industries. To be fair, industrial estates were constructed, but they failed to meet the demand and were lacking in facilities. Over time, the premium on land meant that larger units migrated elsewhere and what replaced them were thousands of tiny manufacturers primarily serving the local market.

The wisdom in CJI Bobde's words

Vengeance can lead to pre-institutional disarray, fixing over due process, haste over efficiency

Wisdom does not call for a discussion, nor honesty for an essay. Philosophic truths are for absorption, not analysis. When a statement is made from the depths of knowing, it acquires the pith and form of a saying - it becomes an aphorism. One does not look for the whys and wherefores of an aphorism. One does not ask where it is coming from, or where it is headed. It is just there, to be observed, experienced, reflected upon. As one might, say, a sunrise or a shooting star. Chief Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde's observation on Saturday that "justice should not be revenge" belongs to that category of statements. It needed no paraphrasing. But he went on to give one - one that was as masterful as the original aphoristic statement, "I believe", he added, "justice loses its character as justice if it becomes revenge."

Reports of this statement of the Chief Justice of India at an event in Rajasthan linked it expectedly enough to the tragic-beyond-belief rape and murder in Hyderabad of a young woman; the calls for quick, instant, retribution; and the bloody aftermath 10 days later. This was the nature of reportage, even its duty. But as one who found completeness, repleteness and a kind of absolution in the statement, I found that contextualisation unnecessary, and in fact, unwanted. I did not want to think of what may have been the trigger for the statement. I just wanted to take its wisdom, its power and its moral force in - for its own sake. And as I did that, I saw with the same sense of gratitude, more coming from the same aquifer of insight. "Justice", he continued "ought never to be instant". It has been a long while since one heard a high functionary in India say

something that is not a cliché, is not clever, not intended to strike awe, stoke fear or sell an idea that has no takers outside the world of the awed, fearful or gullible. It has been a long, and barren, while. And so this shaft of truth comes as both a revelation and a relief.

Aphorisms do not, I said, call for analysis, only experiencing. And it is precisely as the latter - experiencing the force and gravity of Justice Bobde's remarks - that the following thoughts came to me.

We, as a people, have traditionally been enamoured of the imagined gutsiness in *ent ka javab pathhar se* (to a brick hurled I will return a flying stone). We have admired *javab* (reply, rebuttal, retort, repulsion) over the considering of an issue in the manner suggested by the great Mahavira in his theory of *anekantavada* (not oneness). We have, from the times of the



Mahabharata, been traditionally inclined to settling scores by combat. But the surface density of these flying missiles in our society, in our politics and, in fact, in all departments of life, has now broken all previous records of retaliation. The snails pace of judicial proceedings has, without a doubt, led to impatience now exploding all around us, a fact that Justice Bobde alluded to in his lecture. The pulse of vengeance beats faster and stronger now than it ever has. And the garland of admiration is reserved now, not for the thinking mind or the probing intellect, but for

the swinging arm, the swaggering foot. The logical end of this is a reversion to pre-institutional disarray, an atavistic recoil to medieval bedlam. The danger in this is not just an erosion of coda, of canons of law in the world of crime and punishment alone, but the valorisation of "fixing" over due process, of the specious claim of "quick action" over sound working. In other words, of haste over efficiency.

Ours has become an "instant culture", quick to slight, quicker to be slighted. Swift to injure, swifter to be injured. Fast

to pronounce verdicts, faster to counter-pronounce refutations. Our legislatures have little time to ponder issues. Our governors, and even the highest functionary in the land, our esteemed president, are obliged to consider proposed enactments in the eye of storms. A state can become two union territories, a legislature put to sleep, a government sacked and another sworn in, in one fleeting instant. And all this, as our electronic media, being time-kept to the second, "breaks" this news 24*7, with the jerks and jolts of cardiac arrhythmia.

Anaj Mandi must not happen again

Create a single licensing and regulatory authority for safety



The massive fire that killed at least 43 people in an industrial unit in Delhi has raised disturbing, but all-too-familiar, questions. The capital has witnessed several fire tragedies in

recent years. But each time, a predictable script plays out. There is shock on the first day. There is a subsequent blame game between different agencies, and the state and the Central

government, given the unique power sharing arrangement between the two. The story eventually fades. And it is business as usual, till the next tragedy strikes.

The Anaj Mandi fire has

shaken Delhi's citizens. Poor migrant workers, in search of livelihoods, cramped in a small space, after a week of rigorous work, suddenly found themselves choking to death. Their final calls to family members reveal their vulnerability, and bring home the grief that has struck the families. But at a larger level, it reflects the crisis and failure of urban governance. The factory unit was illegal since it was operating in an area where commercial operations (shops) were only allowed on the ground floor. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) knew of its

existence, and had even inspected it last week, but it did not seal the unit. The unit also did not have a clearance from the Delhi Fire Service. Predictably, the Central government has blamed the Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government for allowing it to operate without a fire clearance and blamed it for delaying area redevelopment plans, while the Delhi government has asked why the MCD did not take action when it could. The fact that the Delhi assembly elections are approaching makes the politics around the tragedy even more competitive.

But if Delhi has to avert such accidents in the future, it is time to go back to the drawing board. Every administrator, and citizen, knows that the core of the problem is the multiplicity of agencies. It is time to have a single regulatory and licensing authority. This authority must be mandated with the power to assess proposals, give licences to legal entities, enforce compliance with all regulations, and crack down when any unit is found to be in violation of rules or safety norms. Anaj Mandi must never happen again.

Israel is in crisis. This time, it has no one else to blame

Benjamin Netanyahu faces a crisis of political legitimacy, as popular faith in democracy gets eroded in the country

Democracy is in crisis in Israel today. Benjamin Netanyahu, the country's longest serving prime minister and the globally known face of Israel for more than a decade, has been indicted for corruption and the breach of trust. He was under investigation for corruption charges in three cases since 2016. Legally, he does not have to resign, and he feels that, morally, he is not bound to do so, as he is innocent. This sentiment is shared by the wider Likud party, which he leads.

Another crisis has been brought on by the failure of the political parties to reach the majority mark (61 out of 120 total seats in the Knesset, Israeli parliament) after two consecutive national elections this year. The country has never had two elections in a single year till 2019, but now, even a third might

be in the offing. It is going to be a serious test of the faith of Israel's citizens in the ballot box. Last week, around 68% of the people said they are not optimistic about the future of Israeli democracy, as measured by the latest Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) Israeli Voice Index Survey.

While greeting late Indian foreign minister Sushma Swaraj, during an official visit to Israel in January 2016, Netanyahu said, "The Middle East's only democracy welcomes the Foreign Minister of the world's greatest democracy." Despite these grand words, many critical questions can be raised about the procedural nature of democracy in Israel today. From the start, Israel has been attempting to negotiate the contradictions between a theological state and

the principles of democracy. It finally chose to be the nation-State of the Jewish people, first and foremost, as declared in the nationality bill passed in 2018. All non-Jews have lesser political rights/value in Israel now.

The tipping point has come today due to unprecedented circumstances in Israeli politics. An indicted prime minister has got into a battle with the State itself on the grounds that the long process of prosecution was a conspiracy and coup by the police and the office of the attorney general, Avichai Mandelblit, who was Netanyahu's cabinet secretary for three years until 2016. Also known as 'King Bibi' in Israel after Time magazine put him on its cover in 2012, the PM is one of Israel's most successful politicians. In the last ten years



in the top job, he achieved not only security (an extremely important priority for the Israelis) and stability, but also big diplomatic victories. He single-handedly ensured that the conflict with the Palestinians did not hurt Israel as much economically as had in the past; got the Iranian nuclear deal nullified; convinced the United States that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and that the Golan Heights, captured territories of Syria, belonged to Israel. For those who consider national interest in terms of the power and realpolitik, Netanyahu

doesn't disappoint. With these and many more perceived successes, he was able to secure the trust of the Israeli majority repeatedly.

However, Netanyahu's time in politics has led to some adverse fallouts like the centralisation of power, erosion of rule of law, deepening of social-cultural divisions, radicalisation of religion in the Israeli polity, fear-mongering against the minority of Israeli Arabs, and the complete breakdown of the peace process with the Palestinians. He is going to leave behind a controversial political legacy.

The legal process is long and arduous. But it is essential to provide justice

The ends may justify the means for many. But it opens up the door for vigilante justice and can harm innocents



The rape and murder of the young veterinarian professional on November 27 shook the conscience of the people and triggered outrage across the country. The investigation was almost instantaneously underway and four suspects were arrested by the police on November 29 and produced before a magistrate by the next day. The police has claimed that when, on December 6 at 3 am, it took the accused to the crime site for reconstructing the events of the rape-murder,

they tried to overpower the police and flee the site, firing at the police party. In retaliation, the police fired back at them in self-defence and killed all four accused. This killing of the four accused persons has evoked sharp reactions from the public, one praising the police action and the other condemning it. Is the end of justice met?

In a modern civilised society, justice entails protecting rights and punishing wrongs by following the due process of law. The Constitution of India is the

fundamental law from where all such legal processes emanate. Article 21 of the Constitution provides that a person cannot be deprived of his life or liberty, except by the procedure established by law. Capital punishment has been prescribed for certain offences under the Indian Penal Code and some other statutes for various heinous crimes. However, before adjudicating on a death penalty, exhaustive procedures have to be followed to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the crime

has in fact been committed by the person being deprived his or her life.

Admittedly the prescribed criminal procedure is long and process-driven. It requires a detailed police investigation followed by an elaborate trial before the court. Sentencing comes only after a person is found guilty by the court. In rarest of rare cases, capital punishment is imposed by the courts as retribution against the convict, and as a deterrent so that citizens in the future do not commit a similar crime. Is it then for the better, or in fact, for the worse, that the Hyderabad rape-murder and encounter case skipped all these steps?

The case was at a nascent stage of the investigation when the encounter took place. There was no firm factual finding, pointing towards the perpetration of the heinous crime by these persons. Even if it is assumed that the police had evidence in its possession proving guilt of these persons, could they have been deprived of the procedure established by law before they were shot dead? The plea of self-defence propounded by the

police appears over stretched as there appears to be no attempt to overpower these accused persons before fatally wounding them. Even without doubting the veracity of this police account, it is clear that disproportionate force was used by the police. The police could have and should have employed only proportionate force which would have resulted in an opportunity to the accused to face the full trial. Use of such fatal force by the police, though applauded as a heroic act on the part of the police rendering so-called instantaneous justice, has numerous grave ramifications. One, it encourages extra-judicial and spot delivery of "justice" as per the subjective satisfaction of the person in-charge, which is comparable to a mob-lynching. Second, it gives leeway to unscrupulous police personnel to cover up their inefficiency to prevent occurrence of such incidents and effectively resolve a crime by colouring their action as the instant delivery of "justice". The pressure of quick resolution of crime often leads to the police to act irrationally and use its force in a manner contrary to the established legal rules.

Tejashwi Yadav not the automatic choice for CM face for RJD allies in Bihar

(News Agencies)- A day after RJD unanimously declared Tejashwi Yadav as the party's CM face, its allies refused him an automatic approval as the grand alliance's chief ministerial candidate for the assembly elections next year. Partners lost no time to dub Yadav's choice as premature.

Apart from projecting Tejashwi, the open session of RJD national council had also named Lalu Prasad party's national president for the 11th consecutive term on Tuesday.

Congress, the second major alliance partner in the five-party grouping, said Tejashwi's elevation was RJD's internal matter and the party high command will take a decision on such "policy matters" at an appropriate time.

Party leader and MLC Prem Chandra Mishra said "every party has a right to make decisions in their best interest. Though we are a part of the grand alliance, any matter involving a policy issue has to be vetted by the Congress high command." A sizeable section in the grand old party is also divided over continuing the collaboration with the RJD. Another RJD ally, Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) spokesperson Danish Rizwan said



Tejashwi can be RJD's CM candidate but the alliance's CM candidate will be decided during the meeting of the partners. HAM chief and former CM Jitan Ram Manjhi had cast doubt over Tejashwi's leadership qualities after the alliance was routed in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and had floated his own name for the chief ministerial position should the alliance win next year. The RJD had unilaterally announced four candidates for the five-seat assembly by-polls in October upsetting HAM, VIP (Vikasshil Insaan Party) and RLSP (Rashtriya Lok Samata Party) resulting in HAM and VIP putting up their own rival candidates and the RLSP staying away from the by-polls. The poll results, however, re-established RJD as the primary opposition force in Bihar, making Tejashwi's projection as Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's challenger easier. "Congress, HAM and other partners should support the young leader," said RJD MLA Vijay Prakash. This insistence, combined with the efforts to expand the scope of the grand alliance by roping in the Left parties, is likely to make the job of presenting a united face all the more difficult, said a leader in the NDA camp.

'No concrete evidence': 6 men accused of lynching 24-yr-old freed on bail

(News Agencies)- The there was no direct evidence available against them to show that they assaulted the victim." Parveen said that she was shocked to learn that the six have been given bail. "This should not happen. There is video footage available in the case showing how my husband was brutally beaten



The six-Bhimsen Mandal, Chamu Nayak, Mahesh Mahali, Satyanarayan Nayak, Madan Nayak and Vikram Mandal have been in jail since June 25. The court said that it found no concrete evidence indicating their complicity in the crime while granting them bail on Tuesday. Advocate AK Shahni, who represented the six, said that his clients were not named in the First Information Report (FIR) Ansari's widow, Sahishta Parveen, has lodged in the case. "They were also not named as accomplices by any of the witnesses. Moreover

up. I did not name the accused in the FIR because at that time, I did not know their names," she said. "In rape cases, government agencies are killing the accused in encounters but in my case, which was also a heinous crime, the accused are getting bail," she added, referring to the killing of the accused in the rape and murder of a Hyderabad veterinarian

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नहीं बाग आ रह पकिस्तान, तीसरे दिन भी की गोलीबारी, भारत ने दिया कराटा जवाब

भारतीय-अमेरिकन कम्युनिटी द्वारा घोर निंदा
अमेरिका ने एंटी देने से किया इंकार

Citizenship bill debate



(News Agencies)- Home Minister Amit Shah waited for six hours - the time allotted by Rajya Sabha Chairman for the debate on citizenship bill - to reply to the Opposition charges. When his turn came, he listed the questions put forward by the Opposition on the bill and started answering them.

1. On objection to his statement that Partition happened on religious lines: I would like to

quote from the April 8, 1950 Nehru-Liaquat agreement (known as Delhi declaration), which said the religious minorities will be given equal rights in both the countries (India and Pakistan) to be part of the government and practice their own religions. These are the claims made by the Prime Ministers of both the countries to their respective religious minorities.

2. On question that why only

three neighbouring countries have been chosen: This is not happening for the first time in India. India has given citizenship to people coming from other countries, like Sri Lanka, Uganda etc. Can I ask why Bangladeshis or Pakistanis were left out? The laws at that time addressed the situations in these countries, the law we are planning to bring is focussed on these countries. I know the law in Pakistan. There are many restrictions. India has followed the principles enunciated in the Nehru-Liaquat pact - we have seen people from minority communities at high positions like the CJI, CEC, even Presidents and Vice-President. But has this happened in Pakistan or any of the three neighbouring countries? Hence, this law is needed.

3. On comment that government

Point-by-point rebuttal of Opposition charges by Amit Shah

does not have any record on details of minorities in the country: If there is no law, everyone will say he/she is the citizen of the country. That is why we are proposing to bring this law.

4. On comment that this move is to deflect attention of the country from other issues: We don't have to do this. We brought this bill in 2015, it went to joint committee but wasn't passed by the Rajya Sabha. There was no need to deflect attention in 2015, we fight and win elections on our own strength and popularity.

5. On question as to why aren't Muslims included in the purview of the bill: I am surprised that we included people from six religions, but there is no appreciation. All they (Opposition) care about it why aren't Muslims included? The reason why we haven't included

Muslims is because they are not in minority in the three countries we have focussed on - Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The citizenship bill talks about persecution of religious minorities. But our law also has a provision that those people can also apply for Indian citizenship. We have given citizenship to more than 566 Muslims from these countries who feel persecuted.

6. On charges that the citizenship bill violates Article 14 of the Constitution: Article 14 doesn't stop Parliament from making laws which are based on reasonable classification. And reasonable classification is there in this case. We are not taking into consideration one religion from these countries, but all the minorities. It's a class, which is being persecuted in those countries.

Curfew clamped in Guwahati after day-long clashes over citizenship bill

Protesters against the Citizenship Amendment Bill fought pitched battles with the police at several places in Guwahati on Wednesday.

(News Agencies) - Authorities clamped curfew in Guwahati Wednesday evening after daylong clashes between the police and protesters opposed to the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) and also called in the army.

"Curfew has been imposed in Guwahati. We have also called in the army," Assam's Additional Director General of Police Mukesh Agarwal said. The

curfew will remain in force indefinitely, he said.

The announcement of the curfew came on the heels of the administration announcing that it was suspending mobile internet services for 24 hours in 10 districts including Kamrup Metropolitan district of which Guwahati is the headquarter.

Much of Guwahati had turned into a battlefield on Wednesday with protesters clashing with security

forces at various locations in the city, including the state secretariat and the arterial Guwahati-Shillong Road.

Protesters made bonfires at several locations as opposition to the CAB remained unabated. The protests against the CAB and clashes with the police have been unprecedented since the six-year movement by students against illegal immigrants that began in the late 1970s and



ended in 1985 with the signing of the Assam accord.

The CAB which has already been approved by Lok Sabha, and proposes to give citizenship to

Hindus, Christians, Parsis, Jains, Budhists and Sikhs facing religion persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

'Are headmasters of your Hindutva school': Shiv Sena to BJP over CAB

(News Agencies) - The Shiv Sena amped up its pitch against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in the Rajya Sabha during the debate on the citizenship bill, starting with a strong rebuttal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reported comment that some parties were speaking in the same language as Pakistan.

Senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut told the Rajya Sabha that the citizenship bill that creates a special dispensation for non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan should be looked at from the

prism of humanity, not religion. Raut's brief speech - his party was allotted three minutes and his microphone was switched off when he exceeded six - did not criticise the provisions of the bill. It is true, he said, that minorities were being harassed in India's neighbourhood and asked parties to ensure there was no politics around it.

Instead, he kept his focus on the statements from the BJP, underlined his party's Hindutva credentials and launched a sharp attack at its former ally and PM Modi.

Raut also referred to reports of

PM Modi's remarks at the meeting of the BJP parliamentary party MPs earlier in the morning. "It is being said that those who oppose this bill are traitors and those who support patriots.... The family of 2 jawans, both muslims, who died in Kashmir are opposed to this bill.... But the families of martyrs can't be traitors," he said.

"We are also citizens of this country. People voted for all of us. This is not Pakistan's assembly.... If you don't like Pakistan's language, we have such a strong government, why



don't you then finish it off (Pakistan ko khatam karo)," he said. Raut also stressed that people who are opposing this bill in the northeast were also

citizens. "So nobody needs to give us a certificate of patriotism. It is known how hardline hindus we are... we don't need your certificate," he said.

India's record on internet shutdown gets bleaker; now blocked in 2 NE states

India reported over 100 internet shutdown in 2018, according to an annual study of Freedom House, a US-based non-profit research organization



(News Agencies)- The internet shutdown on Tuesday in Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura amid spiraling protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in the Northeast is the latest in a series of such shutdowns across India, which topped the list of countries that resorted to such measures in 2018.

shutdown in 2018, according to an annual study of Freedom House, a US-based non-profit research organization. The study on the internet and digital media freedom was conducted in over 65 countries, which cover 87% of the world's internet users. Police and administrative authorities have cited protests and other security reasons to

routinely snap the internet in India.

The Centre promulgated the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017, under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, in August 2017 for legal sanction to the shutdowns.

As per the rules, Union home

ministry secretary or secretaries of state home departments can order temporary suspension of the internet. An internet suspension order has to be taken up for review within five days.

Prior to 2017, authorities could shut down the internet under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which empowers an executive magistrate to prohibit an assembly of over four people. Section 5 (2) of the Telegraph Act, 1855, allowed the government to prevent transmission of any telegraphic message during a public emergency or in the interest of public safety.

The Kashmir Valley has remained under an internet shutdown since August 4. The shutdown was imposed hours ahead of the nullification of the Constitution's Article 370 that gave Jammu and Kashmir special status.

Internet and phone lines were snapped ahead of Republic Day celebrations in 2010 in one of the first reported shutdowns in the Valley. Kashmir also holds the record for the longest shutdown when the internet was snapped

for 133 days after the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen militant Burhan Wani in July 2016. The current shutdown, with 122 days and counting, is the second-longest.

The 100-day blackout in Darjeeling during the Gorkha agitation in 2016 is the third-longest internet shutdown in India.

Ahead of the verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit last month, the internet was shut down in parts of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The internet was shut down for three days in Gujarat during the agitation for a quota in jobs and educational institutes for the Patidar community in 2015.

As per the Software Freedom Law Centre, which provides free legal services to protect Free and Open Source Software, the total number of shutdowns in Indian since 2012 is more than 359. As per the tracker -- internetshutdowns.in -- which records such instances from newspaper clippings -- there have been 89 internet shutdowns in 2019, 134 in 2018, and 79 in 2017.

Citizenship bill protests: Army in Tripura, no internet in 10 Assam districts



(News Agencies)- The civil administration has requisitioned three army columns to quell mass protests against the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Tripura and Assam and suspended mobile internet services in ten districts in Assam for 24 hours from 7 pm Wednesday. The Army said two columns have been deployed in Tripura -- in General Area Kanchanpur and in General Area Manu while a third column has been kept on standby for deployment at Bongaigaon in Assam. The approximate strength of one column is about

70 personnel. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill seeks to grant Indian citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim refugees who came from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan on or before December 31, 2014. In Assam, thousands of protesters against CAB appeared on the streets at different places and clashed with police as the state descended further into chaos, the scale of which has not been seen since the six-year movement by students against illegal immigration ended with the signing of the Assam accord.

In Shiv Sena's new line on citizenship bill, a phone call played a role

(News Agencies)- When Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday expressed apprehensions about Citizenship Bill, a day before its tabling in the Rajya Sabha, it hinted towards a u-turn. The Sena had supported the bill in the Lok Sabha, joining the list of parties which led to its clearance in the Lower House of Parliament. It has now emerged that change in Shiv Sena's stand came after Congress, its alliance partner in Maharashtra, expressed its discontent over the bill's passage in the Lok Sabha and reached out to Thackeray on Tuesday morning. In the afternoon, Thackeray came out with a statement which said his party will not back the bill in the Rajya Sabha unless the government gives "clarity" on questions the party has raised.

"We voted yesterday to absorb various people facing brutalities in other countries but we have asked many questions. Those questions we thought would be answered, ranging from national security to the rights of locals in various states of India. If these queries are not answered, we won't be supporting the CAB in

the Rajya Sabha. Every party supporting or opposing it is asking for clarity in the national interest. Clarity must be ensured," he said in Mumbai on Tuesday.

According to a top Congress leader, the party leadership reached out to its new ally in Maharashtra Shiv Sena on Tuesday to convey



that their stand in Lok Sabha over the bill was uncalled for. "Our senior leader and Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot was in Mumbai and he spoke to Thackeray over the issue. The dialogue came in the backdrop of the Rahul Gandhi's tweet in the afternoon. Thackeray, soon after the conversation gave reaction that it would oppose

the bill in Rajya Sabha if their concerns were not addressed," he said.

Rahul Gandhi had tweeted on Tuesday afternoon, "The #CAB is an attack on the Indian constitution. Anyone who supports it is attacking and attempting to destroy the foundation of our nation." Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) had supported Sena-led government in Maharashtra last month.

How to Fix Pakistan's Crashing Economy

To change course, the country's leaders must take on the moneyed elite and religious extremism.

(News Agencies)- If an airplane took off a dozen times only to come crashing down each time, the only logical conclusion would be that the aircraft requires a fundamental redesign. Pakistan's economy, like the airplane, has crashed 13 times in the last 60 years, each time requiring an International Monetary Fund bailout.

It wasn't always so. During the 1980s, in per capita terms Pakistan was richer than India, China and Bangladesh by 15, 38 and 46 percent. Today Pakistan is the poorest. Its most recent gross domestic product growth estimate was only 3.3 percent, barely sufficient to keep pace with population growth.

Pakistan's federal government is effectively bankrupt. Last year, the sum of interest payment due on the government's debt obligations and pension payments owed to retired employees was more than the federal government's net

revenue. The entire government machinery, including the military, is running on borrowed money.

The consequences of Pakistan's crashing economy have been devastating for its over 200 million people. They are instinctively aware of how far they have fallen behind and there is a clamor for change for a future where their children can live in dignity and comfort. It was this public desire for change that propelled Pakistan's most famous cricketer, Imran Khan, and his relatively new party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, into power in 2018. Prime Minister Khan promised change and a "naya" or new Pakistan to his people, but change is proving far more difficult than imagined.

The fundamental challenge in bringing change is that those who are benefiting the most from the dysfunctional economy and stand to lose the most from change would fight every attempt at reform and



attack the people trying to ensure reform.

Pakistan's leadership must muster the courage to take on two primary forces of the status quo that hold the country back. First, the moneyed elite who tip the scales of markets in their favor through unfair business practices, tax evasion and preferential access to power. They use their privilege to grab the fruits of other people's labor

rather than create something of value through their own enterprise.

The second force inhibiting Pakistan's progress is religious extremism. Decades of patronage by successive military and civilian governments for promoters of religious hate has created a culture of institutionalized intolerance. The result has been devastating for society.

Thousands have been killed, communities have been ripped apart and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced or forced to flee the country altogether. It is no wonder then that few want to invest in an environment afflicted with violence and intolerance. Many whose talents are sorely needed in Pakistan are forced to flee the country because of extremism.

Pakistan's Hafiz Saeed indicted on 'terror financing'

The founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba group and alleged mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks charged for 'illegal funding'.

(News Agencies)- A Pakistani court has indicted Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, founder of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) armed group and alleged mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, on terrorism financing charges, officials say.

The court ordered the government's prosecution team to summon its witnesses to pursue the case, according to a statement by prosecutor Abdur Rauf Wattoo issued following the hearing in the eastern city of Lahore on Wednesday. "The counterterrorism department had lodged a case against Hafiz Muhammad Saeed for illegal funding," Wattoo said.

Imran Gill, Saeed's lawyer, confirmed that his client had been



indicted, along with Zafar Iqbal, another official associated with Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), the humanitarian arm of LeT. The next hearing in the case will be held on Thursday. Saeed, who has a \$10m US government reward out for his capture, has been accused by India and the US of masterminding the 2008 attacks in the Indian city of Mumbai that killed more than 160 people. LeT routinely targets Indian security forces and government targets, mainly in the disputed region of Kashmir where an armed rebellion against Indian rule has been ongoing for decades.

Curbing financing of armed groups

Saeed and other JuD officials have faced a slew of legal cases pertaining to "terrorism financing" this year, as Pakistan has come under increasing pressure to crack down on the funding of armed groups by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). FATF, an inter-governmental body that monitors measures to curb financing of armed groups and money laundering, placed Pakistan on its "grey list" last year, requiring the country to take action to reform its regulatory framework or face isolation from the international financial system.

In October, FATF decided to maintain Pakistan's "grey list" classification but warned that unless concrete action was taken by February 2020, it would blacklist the country. In March, Pakistan formally banned Saeed's JuD and other associated organisations, after years of allowing them to operate freely across the country.

JuD and its Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation (FIF) operated a network of dozens of schools and hundreds of ambulances, providing humanitarian relief in all four Pakistani provinces.

The UN has long designated the JuD and FIF as fronts for the LeT.

Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif meet Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina



(News Agencies)- Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif met Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina recently. The two were in Bangladesh to perform at the inauguration ceremony of Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL). Salman took to Instagram to share a picture with Katrina and PM Sheikh Hasina. He wrote, "Katrina and I, with the Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.. it was a pleasure and honour to have met such a beautiful lady . . . @katrinakaif."

Salman and Katrina were last

seen together on the big screen in Bharat. The film was a massive success. Katrina, especially, was praised for her performance in the film. Salman is currently busy with the promotions of Dabangg 3. The film also stars Sonakshi Sinha in lead role. The film is directed by Prabhudeva. Salman took to Instagram to announce the promotions of Dabangg 3. He wrote, "Promotions chalu! #Dabangg3." Katrina, on the other hand, will be seen opposite Akshay Kumar in Sooryavanshi. The team recently wrapped up the shooting of the film.



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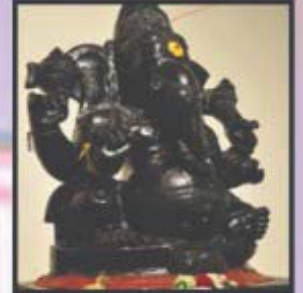
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Taliban claim suicide car bombing at Bagram military base, killing 2 and wounding over 70



(News Agencies)- A suicide bomber struck an under construction medical facility at Bagram, the largest U.S. military base in northern Afghanistan, Wednesday morning, with the Taliban claiming responsibility for the attack, Afghan and U.S. officials said.

Two car bombs were involved in the attack, which was followed

by a gun battle between the attackers and local security forces, killing two people and injuring over 70, according to the Afghan interior ministry. There were no casualties to U.S. and coalition forces, according to U.S. military officials.

A number of nearby civilian houses were destroyed in the bombing, according to a local member of parliament for Parwan

Province where Bagram base is located.

"Taliban fighters who remained after an unsuccessful attempt to breach Bagram airfield were killed in a series of airstrikes this evening," a Resolute Support spokesman said. "The fighters barricaded themselves inside the medical facility building they attacked early Wednesday morning."

"Coalition forces, in coordination with Afghan Security Forces, informed local residents and blocked off the area before conducting these airstrikes to ensure their safety," the spokesman said.

The explosion at the site of the medical facility was "huge," according to the Parwan police chief. The area has been cordoned off by the U.S. military. The medical facility was being built to help locals who live near the base.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo condemned the attack "in the strongest possible terms" Wednesday.

"The United States stands with the Afghan people, their special forces, and their desire to bring peace and security to Afghanistan," he said. "This is precisely the kind of activity that we're working to reduce through the efforts that were undertaken." Five military servicemen from the Georgian contingent "received minor injuries due to the terrorist attack," according to a statement

from the Georgian Ministry of Defense. None of the men injured required hospital treatment.

The U.S. recently announced that it had reopened negotiations with the Taliban after talks broke down in Doha, Qatar. President Trump had described the peace talks as "dead" in September.

The chief U.S. negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad, resumed discussions with the Taliban Saturday in Doha, Qatar -- the first time since President Trump called off talks after inviting the Taliban to Camp David and then rescinding the offer.

"The focus of discussion will be a reduction of violence that leads to intra-Afghan negotiations and a cease-fire," a State Department official told ABC News.

Trump visited Bagram air base in a surprise visit on Thanksgiving this year, his first trip to the country.

When asked if the U.S. had restarted peace talks with the Taliban, he replied with "yes," but did not offer more details.

Trouble brews in post-election Sri Lanka

(News Agencies)- Two weeks after the election of hardliner Gotabaya Rajapaksa in Sri Lanka, the prospects for justice and reconciliation between the different communities on the island lie in tatters. The victory of Gota, as he is commonly known, sent shockwaves across the Tamil-dominated northeast - where memories of his brother Mahinda Rajapaksa's brutal presidency, marked by mass atrocities and enforced disappearances, remain fresh.

Gota, who served as defence secretary between 2005 and 2015, stands accused of war crimes committed during Sri Lanka's civil war (1983-2009). The Tamil community were hoping for a victory of Sajith Premadasa, the deputy leader of the United National Party (UNP), who was seen by Tamils as the "lesser evil". While Premadasa also adopted nationalist rhetoric during his campaign, vowing to protect military chief Shavendra Silva from war crimes accusations and pledging to give prominence to Buddhism, minorities were terrified at the prospect of a return to the brutal

authoritarianism of the Rajapaksas.

Tamils and Tamil-speaking Muslims went to the polls in large numbers, with the vast majority of the northeastern vote going to Premadasa. But it was not enough for his victory. His opponent, Gota, swept the Sinhala south, winning the election with a whopping majority. After the vote, members of the Sinhalese majority levelled accusations of disloyalty and separatism against Tamils - once again exposing the deep fault lines running between the two major ethnic groups on the island.

The faint hopes for justice and reconciliation during the term of Gota's predecessor, Maithripala Sirisena, encouraged by over-enthusiastic Western governments and a Colombo-based elite, disconnected from ground realities and preoccupied with promoting superficial processes, are now gone. Sri Lanka is slipping back into chauvinistic politics which threatens to destabilise the country.

Rising fears

The new president wasted no time reaffirming his "strongman" credentials, immediately rallying

The hardline approach of the new president and a failed reconciliation process threaten to stir ethnic tensions.



his Sinhala Buddhist base after the election.

In his inaugural speech on November 18, he pledged to lead the government based on "Buddhist philosophy" and to support the Sinhalese culture and Buddhist heritage and highlighted his role in the civil war. The inauguration ceremony was held at a Buddhist temple in the northern city of Anuradhapura built by Sinhala ruler Dutugamunu, who defeated the Tamil Chola King Ellalan and united the entire island under Sinhala rule.

Gota also moved against those he saw as a threat to his government. He imposed a travel

ban on police officers involved in investigations of alleged crimes perpetrated by his family after one of them fled the country to Switzerland after the election. Following his escape, an employee of the Swiss visa section was detained and questioned, a worrying development which could endanger the work of foreign embassies on the island.

Tamil and Sinhala media have also faced increasing pressure since the vote. Several journalists were forced to hand their computers to the police over unsubstantiated accusations of spreading hate speech. Tamil activists have ramped up their

security protocols and some are reconsidering their continued presence in the country. Self-censorship has become the norm once again.

Meanwhile, hate speech, particularly against Tamils, has exploded on social media, with no action taken against those posting. In the centre of the country, Tamils were attacked by Sinhalese, who accused them of voting against Gota.

It is quite clear that under the new president, Sri Lanka will continue to embrace the persistent chauvinism that has dominated its political scene since independence from Britain in 1948.

U.S. panel eyes sanctions for Indian minister over citizenship curb for Muslims



The bill has prompted criticism at home and abroad, as it marks the first time India is weighing religion in granting citizenship, although it must first pass the upper house of parliament, where Modi's party lacks a majority. The measure goes against India's constitution, which guarantees legal equality to people of all faiths, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

said. "If the CAB passes in both houses of parliament, the United States government should consider sanctions against the Home Minister and other principal leadership," the panel said in a statement, referring to the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB). The panel is a bipartisan body that makes foreign policy recommendations to the U.S. leadership. India's foreign ministry called the panel's statement inaccurate, saying the bill sought to help persecuted religious minorities already in the country. "It seeks to address their current difficulties and meet their basic human rights," said ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar.

Hindus in Bangladesh, Christians in Pakistan and Sikhs in Afghanistan, all Muslim-majority nations, have faced violence in recent years, but India's opposition parties, minority groups and academics have said the bill discriminates against Muslims. During Monday's parliament debate, opposition politician Asaduddin Owaisi ripped up a copy of the bill, calling it a move by the Modi government to render Muslims "stateless". But Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which promised the measure in an election campaign that swept it to power in May, says the law is needed to help persecuted minority individuals in

its neighbors. "If minorities in our neighboring countries are being persecuted, then India cannot stay a silent spectator," Shah told parliament. The bill is the third key election promise Modi's government has delivered since August. The scrapping of autonomy for the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir and permission from India's top court for moves to build a Hindu temple at a disputed religious site have bolstered right-wing supporters, and diverted attention from a slowing economy. Now the BJP must win support from smaller regional groups to push the bill through the upper house of parliament this week.

Arctic May Have Crossed Key Threshold, Emitting Several Tons Of Carbon

The study paints an ominous picture of a region lurching to an entirely new and unfamiliar climate state.

Especially noteworthy is the report's conclusion that the Arctic may have already turned into a net emitter of planet-warming carbon emissions due to thawing permafrost, which would only accelerate global warming. Permafrost is the carbon-rich frozen soil that covers 24% of Northern Hemisphere land area, encompassing vast stretches of territory across Alaska, Canada, Siberia and Greenland. There has been concern throughout the scientific community that the approximately 1,460-1,600 billion metric tons of organic carbon stored in frozen Arctic soils, which amounts to nearly twice as much greenhouse gases than what is contained in the atmosphere, could be released as the permafrost melts.

Warming temperatures allow microbes within the soil to convert permafrost carbon into the greenhouse gases - carbon dioxide and methane - which can be released into the atmosphere and accelerate warming. Ted Schuur, a researcher at Northern Arizona University and author of the permafrost chapter, said the report "takes on a new stand on the issue" based on other published work, including a study in Nature Climate Change in November.

Taking advantage of the new studies - one on regional carbon emissions from permafrost in

Alaska during the warm season, and another on winter season emissions in the Arctic compared to how much carbon is absorbed by vegetation during the growing season - the report concludes that permafrost ecosystems could be releasing as much as 1.1 to 2.2 billion tons of carbon dioxide per year. This is almost as much as the annual emissions of Japan and Russia in 2018, respectively.

"These observations signify that the feedback to accelerating climate change may already be underway," the report concludes. "Each of the studies has some parts of the story. Together they really paint the picture of - we've turned this corner for Arctic carbon," said Schuur. "Together they complement each other nicely and really in my mind are a smoking gun for this change already taking place."

The report notes there is still considerable uncertainty about carbon emissions estimates given the relatively limited observational measurements. But it also warns that the Arctic region - which is warming at more than twice the rate of the rest of the world, may have already turned into the global warming accelerator long been feared.

The findings come just as U.N. climate negotiators meet in Madrid to address the need for more ambitious cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, and would mean that the world faces an even steeper challenge in meeting the targets outlined in the Paris Climate Agreement.

Schuur said that the carbon being emitted by the Arctic amounts to less than 10% of fossil fuel emissions each year. "So it's a small addition to what humans are already producing," he said. However, that number is likely to grow with time, as the Arctic continues to warm. "We've crossed the zero line," Schuur said. "We don't think the Arctic is going to admit so much more emissions that it will make fossil fuel emissions irrelevant," but any extra emissions complicate the already difficult task of slashing them to net zero by mid-century to limit global warming to no more than 1.5-degrees Celsius, he said.

Merritt Turetsky, an ecologist at the University of Guelph who was not involved in the Arctic Report Card, said three new discoveries support its conclusion.

New information on fall and winter carbon, as opposed to summer when plants are active in the far north, "shows much greater ecosystem losses of carbon to the atmosphere than we expected," she said in an email. "So our biosphere in the North is leakier than we thought because soils are remaining warm and respiring both carbon dioxide and methane." Methane is another powerful greenhouse gas. She said wildfires are pushing farther north into the boreal forests, and these also release carbon stored in ecosystems. And studies in the past few years have shown that permafrost can respond rapidly to warming and increased

rainfall.

"We know little about abrupt permafrost thaw, and it occurs at local scales so [it] is difficult to scale up. But our best estimate shows that abrupt thaw has the potential to double the climate impacts of traditional measurements of permafrost thaw," Turetsky said.

The broader Arctic Report Card shows the region is undergoing extensive changes in the marine environment as well as frozen lands. The Bering Sea, in particular, has seen "disquieting" shifts in the past two years, the report finds. What happens here is crucial for the U.S. economy, given that about 40% of the domestic fish and shellfish catch, worth more than \$1 billion, comes from this region every year. For the past two years, the maximum sea ice extent in the Bering Sea has been at record lows, at about 30% of the long-term mean from 1980 through 2010, the new report finds.

This is due to a few factors, including unusually mild, southerly winds during winter that pushed sea ice northward and transported warm, moist air into the Pacific portion of the Arctic. In addition, the late freeze-up of the bordering Chukchi Sea in the previous fall seasons helped to delay ice formation in the northern Bering Sea, and warm ocean temperatures from low sea ice conditions slowed the advance of new ice as air temperatures cooled. The wintertime ice retreat is crucial, since it causes ripple

effects on fisheries by governing the placement of frigid waters that sink near the bottom of the continental shelf. As ice retreats, taking this cold water with it, a mass migration of fish species is underway in the Bering Sea, with Arctic species such as Pacific cod and walleye pollock moving north, replaced by southern species such as northern rock sole.

In the southeastern Bering Sea, warming has accelerated to the point that the "cold pool" - the frigid, salty water that provides a barrier between its southern stretch from its northern, Arctic region - shrank from covering 56% in 2010 to 1.4% in 2018. It only inched up to 6.3% this year, and species such as Pacific cod surged north. "I don't think it was on anyone's radar that it could disappear," said Lyle Britt, who oversees the NOAA Fisheries Bering Sea bottom trawl survey. Britt said he and other researchers are still analyzing the area's fish to determine how many have migrated from southern waters. "This is a big change to the ecosystem," he said. "We have a lot of work to do with genetics just to make sure we know where the fish is coming from." According to Mellisa Johnson, an Inupiaq who is executive director of Bering Sea Elders Group, coastal Bering Sea communities are grappling with the loss of sea ice, which dramatically alters their ability to access food sources such as seals, walrus and bowhead whales.

The Runaway Husbands

passport law to the women, gave them a room with a computer, printer and fax machine, and told them if they would do the paperwork, he would sign it.

It's the women's best way of seeking justice from their far-away husbands, he says.

In the past year and a half, the women have managed to suspend more than 400 passports and revoke 67 others, Kabiraj says. In all, more than 5,000 women have filed abandonment complaints with India's Ministry of External Affairs.

The women in his office, Kabiraj says, "have created terror" in several foreign countries.

Indians living abroad aren't an easy group to take issue with.

They sent \$79 billion (61.6 billion pounds) in remittances to India in 2018, the most of any country in the world, according to World Bank data. They're expected to send \$82.2 billion in 2019.

They pay for new roads and the school fees of children whose families are too poor to pay themselves. They host community feasts. They send back pictures from Australia's beaches, return for visits with twangy English and iPhones.

They're known as non-resident Indians, or NRIs. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called NRIs the "brand ambassadors of India." But Indian government policy think tank Niti Aayog nicknamed them "non-reliable Indian grooms."

The wives say many of the men demand - and often get - tens of

thousands of dollars in dowry, despite the ancient practice being illegal. The husbands can use that money to establish themselves overseas and obtain permanent residency or a new passport, leaving their wives and children behind - and in limbo.

An abandoned woman has no status, says Shiwali Suman, who organises abandoned wives in New Delhi. "Are we divorced, single, widowed?" she asks. "What are we actually? We are not able to be categorized."

The men deny they have done anything wrong, saying they did their best but were taken advantage of by their wives. One says his life is "hell" now and he no longer trusts women.

The wives left behind don't see it that way. In recent months, city and rural women alike have begun staging protests.

One woman at a recent protest in Jalandhar, in Punjab state, said time was up for the runaway men: "There's a fire erupting in all of us."

THE VOLUNTEERS

Reena Mehla was 24 when she got married. Five years later, she says, her husband told her he was going to work extra police duty shifts elsewhere in India, and instead hired human smugglers to take him to the United States.

Rahul Kumar now lives in the Bronx. Reena wrote to India's Ministry of External Affairs, the U.S. Embassy, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, searched

Facebook, and eventually found him.

She scrolls through dozens of emails she sent to foreign officials and the letter showing his passport was revoked; according to the U.S. Justice Department immigration court hotline, his status in that country is pending. Then she pulls up one of their wedding pictures and kisses it.

When asked if she still loves him, Reena stretches her arms and grins. "Too much!"

Even though she has a master's degree in education, sometimes she seems more like a teenager than a 30-year-old. She keeps her smartphone in a Minnie Mouse case with floppy ears and giggles when anyone replies to her exaggerated hellos.

But she had the inner strength to leave her rural home and move on her own to Chandigarh, the regional capital, to volunteer in the passport office. She knows she's defying traditions back home, where married women don't leave the house without male relatives or have a separate identity.

"Even our soul is not allowed because a husband is everything. A husband is like God," she says.

She shares her flat with several women, including Amritpal Kaur. The surname Kaur, a common one in India, means "woman." Because most of the women in this story go by the name Kaur, Reuters is using their first names on second reference to ease confusion.

When Amritpal talks about her marriage, she keeps coming back to the money she spent on it: She says she forked over \$28,000 on the dowry and wedding; three days after they were married, she says, her husband told her to get \$14,000 more from her father. Her husband, Kulpreet Singh, said all the money she had earned working for two years in England also needed to come to him, she says.

Two weeks after the wedding, he left for Australia. For months afterward, he told her he had a surprise. She was so excited she ordered a \$3,500 diamond ring for him.

His surprise, she says, was divorce papers.

Rahul and Kulpreet did not respond to requests for comment.

Amritpal now shares a rented flat in Chandigarh with Reena and several other women. As a reminder of their mission, they've named the computer folder that holds their files "Mission Shakti," after the divine feminine force in Hindu belief.

"Shakti is women's spiritual power to fight against this," Amritpal says. "We don't want any other girls to be victims like us."

THE ACTIVIST

Every day, women with husband problems pile into Satwinder Kaur's family courtyard in a village surrounded by mustard fields that blaze like the sun.

Only a few thousand people live in Toosa, but her relationships

span the globe. She's helping nearly 400 women who've been abandoned by their men, she says, getting several of their runaway husbands deported from their adopted countries and jailed. Every few minutes her phone rings.

Satwinder's own husband left her in 2015. He now lives in Poland. In Toosa, women don't venture out at night and are rarely left home alone, even in walled family compounds.

Satwinder is slowly breaking through this - and in the process has become a symbol of a newfound willingness to fight back against a patriarchal system. She runs a WhatsApp group and Facebook page, and tells rural Punjabi women what paperwork they need to cancel their husbands' passports. She also organises protests.

In a fierce torrent of Punjabi punctuated with sharp hand movements, she holds up photographs of fantastically lavish weddings produced from plastic bags or passed around on mobile phones and shared on WhatsApp. From Facebook, there are other pictures: of the husbands' foreign girlfriends and children and anniversary cakes.

Even for Satwinder, who has filed 11 court cases against her husband, it's hard to be a middle-aged, childless woman whose husband has left her. Her ferocity is in constant battle with her fear. She sends her husband WhatsApp messages every day.

Greta Thunberg Is TIME's 2019 Person Of The Year



Greta Thunberg was given the title "for sounding the alarm about humanity's predatory relationship with the only home we have ... for showing us all what it might look like when a new generation leads," said Time Magazine's Editor-in-Chief Edward Felsenthal. Ms Thunberg was in Madrid attending the UN Climate Change Summit when the award was announced.

Every year since 1927, Time Magazine has awarded the "Person of the Year" title and features the individual(s) on its last cover of the year. In 2017, Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi shared the title along with several other persecuted journalists who

were dubbed as "guardians" of the truth.

This year's magazine cover -- subtitled "The Power of Youth" -- has a picture of Ms Thunberg standing on the shore in Lisbon, Portugal. We can't just continue living as if there was no tomorrow, because there is a tomorrow. That is all we are saying," Ms Thunberg told Time.

The Swedish activist shot to fame after her imperious speech at the United Nations in September shredding world leaders, accusing them of failing to tackle greenhouse gas emissions and repeatedly asking them "how dare you?" The speech became a milestone in

the climate movement and cemented her position as its spokesperson. In the following weeks, millions of young people around the world joined Ms Thunberg in climate strike on Fridays.

Since her speech at the UN, she has also taken on US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin who mocked and dismissed her plea. Her critics have called her several names, from 'alarmist' to 'that mentally ill Swedish girl', 'weird', 'brainwashed' and 'a puppet'. Earlier this year, she also was the bookies' favourite to win the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize which went to Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

New Delhi: Climate activist Greta Thunberg was named Time Magazine's person of the year 2019 on Wednesday. Over the past year, the teen activist has come a long way. What started as her solo protest on Fridays

against global warming outside the Swedish parliament last year, has unraveled into a global youth movement demanding policymakers around the world to take greater action on climate change.

The War in Afghanistan Was Doomed From the Start

The war in Afghanistan—18 years old and still raging, at a cost of nearly \$1 trillion, 2,300 U.S. troops killed, and more than 20,000 injured—has been a muddle from the beginning, steered by vague and wavering strategies, fueled by falsely rosy reports of progress from the battlefield, and almost certainly doomed to failure all along.

This is the inescapable conclusion of a secret U.S. government history of the war—consisting of 2,000 pages, based on interviews with more than 400 participants—obtained and published by the Washington Post on Monday after years of legal battles to declassify the documents.

Written by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, an agency created by Congress in 2008 to investigate waste and fraud, the report, titled “Lessons Learned,” is the most thorough official critique of an ongoing American war since the Vietnam War review commissioned in 1967 by then-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. (Daniel Ellsberg leaked what came to be known as the Pentagon Papers in 1971; though widely disseminated, they were officially declassified only in 2011.) The “Afghanistan Papers,” as the Post dubs the report, is narrower in scope than McNamara’s project; the latter delved into the entire history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and incorporated top-secret memos and other documents from throughout the national security bureaucracy. Still, the new report resonates with the same dread and melancholy about a war built on ignorance, lies, and counterproductive policies.

Central to the current war effort—and to its failure—was corruption. It was central because the Afghan government couldn’t defeat the Taliban insurgents, or win the support of its people, as long as it was corrupt from top to bottom. The United States failed because the billions of dollars we poured into the country only made Afghanistan’s corruption worse. Ryan Crocker, former ambassador to Afghanistan and Iraq, told the investigators in a 2016 interview, “You just cannot put those amounts of money into a very fragile state and society, and not have it fuel corruption.” He added that the same thing happened in Iraq, where corruption is “pandemic and deeply rooted” and where “it’s hard to see how a better political

order can ever be established.”

A big problem, Crocker said, was a perennial “American urge,” when intervening in a foreign conflict, to “start fixing everything as fast as we can.” We pour in billions of dollars, which wind up in the hands of the powerful—the report estimates that 40 percent of U.S. aid to Afghanistan was pocketed by officials, gangsters, or the insurgents themselves—who become more corrupt still.

The U.S. military dedicated enormous effort to training the Afghan special forces. Those forces “can clear an area” of insurgents, Crocker said. The problem is that they would then turn the area over to the Afghan police, who couldn’t hold on to it, “not because they’re outgunned or outmanned” but rather “because they are useless as a security force”—and they’re useless “because they are corrupt down to the patrol level.”

Sarah Chayes, who served as an adviser to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and who lived in Afghanistan for several years, told the investigators in 2015 that the problem was rooted in Washington. Fighting terrorism was the chief U.S. mission, and some officials understood that corruption is a cause of terrorism. But, Chayes said, the notion “hasn’t sunk in enough for the causal flip to happen”—i.e., for the officials to see that countering corruption had to be a key ingredient in countering terrorism. A major obstacle here, she said, was the “culture” in the State Department and the Pentagon, which focused on building relationships with their counterparts abroad. Since Afghan officials at all levels were corrupt, officials feared that going after corruption would endanger those relationships.

Chayes also said it was a big mistake to be “obsessed with chasing” the Taliban, to the point of neglecting the country’s political dynamics. We didn’t realize that many Afghans were “thrilled with the Taliban” for kicking corrupt warlords out of power. Instead, we aligned ourselves with the warlords, on the adage that “the enemy of our enemy is our friend”—and, as a result, further alienated the Afghan people and further enriched the corrupt powers, which in turn further inflamed the anti-government terrorists.

Christopher Kolenda, a retired U.S. Army colonel who was a strategic adviser to three

U.S. commanders in Afghanistan, told the investigators in 2016 that the problem was more deeply rooted still. He described the Afghan government as a “kleptocracy”—an entity whose main activity was looting. The vast mounds of American money, brought into the country by the military and aid agencies, only further enriched the kleptocracy, deepened its hold on power, and deepened the insurgency against it.

“It was through sheer naivete, and maybe carelessness, that we helped to create the system,” Kolenda said. He added, “Foreign aid is part of how” the Afghan kleptocrats “get rents to pay for the positions they purchased.”

What makes this syndrome all the more tragic is that it was recognized long ago, and even publicly discussed. In September 2009, as the Obama administration was debating a new policy toward the Afghanistan war, Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified at a Senate hearing that the main problem “is clearly the lack of legitimacy of the government” in Kabul.

Sen. Lindsey Graham

pushed the issue. “We could send a million troops, and that wouldn’t restore legitimacy in the government?” he asked.

“That is correct,” Mullen replied. The threat of corruption, he added, “is every bit as significant as the Taliban.”

Even so, the implications weren’t fully grasped. When his questioning time was up, Graham thanked Mullen for his service and said, “I believe we can win, and we must”—neglecting to ask what “win” might mean. Around this same time, during the closed-door National Security Council sessions, Mullen was urging President Barack Obama to send 40,000 more U.S. troops to fight the war and to create a counterinsurgency strategy based on helping the Afghan government win the hearts and minds of its people—not addressing how to do this, if the government lacked legitimacy. Almost all of Obama’s advisers sided with Mullen, a notable exception being Vice President Joe Biden, who thought counterinsurgency wouldn’t work (it didn’t) and instead advised sending just 10,000 more troops to help

further train the Afghan army

(which is what Obama wound up doing after first giving the troop surge a chance for 18 months).

When Gen. David Petraeus became commander of U.S. troops in Afghanistan in 2010, he appointed an anti-corruption task force. (Sarah Chayes was one of its members.) The task force concluded that corruption, from Kabul on down, was impeding the war effort and that the U.S. should cut off aid to the entire network of corruption. Petraeus sympathized with the findings, but he needed Afghan President Hamid Karzai’s cooperation to fight the war at all, and so he rejected the recommendation.

Petraeus had a point, but it only highlighted the war’s inherent futility. We were fighting terrorism, but, as Chayes put it, “corruption is creating the terrorists”—a fact that U.S. officials were “still not getting.”

The way we fight insurgents in countries with fragile states and societies tends to strengthen our enemy—and, to the people struggling to survive in those countries, we become the enemy. Until this is recognized and remedied, it’s better not to intervene in the first place.

In response to Afghanistan Papers, former president Karzai blames U.S. funding for fueling corruption

Former Afghan president Hamid Karzai on Tuesday blamed excessive U.S. spending in Afghanistan for widespread corruption there, after The Washington Post’s release of a collection of U.S. government documents that show U.S. officials knowingly misled the American public, hiding information on the war in Afghanistan and turning a blind eye to widespread fraud. “What could we do? It was U.S. money coming here and used by them and used for means that did not help Afghanistan,” Karzai, who served as president of Afghanistan from 2004 to 2014, told the Associated Press in an interview in Kabul.

The Post’s reporting is based on a trove of confidential government interviews obtained after a lengthy legal battle. The interviews, which took place between 2014 and 2018, were conducted by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, known as SIGAR. In the interviews, key actors in Afghanistan, including many U.S. officials, spoke at length about missteps in the now 18-year war. Some said the United States regularly allied with corrupt actors in Afghanistan and actively fueled widespread graft, providing cash to win over parties they saw as necessary allies, including Afghan warlords. Christopher Kolenda, a retired Army colonel and former adviser to multiple U.S. commanders in Afghanistan, told government interviewers in 2016 that by 2006, the Afghan

government “self-organized into a kleptocracy,” The Post reported this week. “The kleptocracy got stronger over time, to the point that the priority of the Afghan government became not good governance but sustaining this kleptocracy,” he said in the government interview. “It was through sheer naivete, and maybe carelessness, that we helped to create the system.” One unidentified former senior U.S. official told government interviewers in 2015 that U.S. money was “empowering a lot of bad people.” “There was massive resentment among the Afghan people,” the official said. “And we were the most corrupt here, so had no credibility on the corruption issue.” Several of the interviews mentioned Karzai, and the AP reported that the former Afghan president “has denied wrongdoing but hasn’t denied involvement in corruption by officials in his government.” Barnett Rubin, a senior adviser to the former U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, said in a 2015 interview that “Holbrooke hated Hamid Karzai.” “He thought he was corrupt as hell,” Rubin said. Karzai held on to power in 2009 after an election his opponents and observers said was mired in fraud. As The Post reported, a U.N.-backed panel later determined that about 1 million of Karzai’s votes were illegal. But Washington helped broker a deal that ultimately kept Karzai in power for another term.

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What are articles of impeachment?

The process for dealing with a President or other federal elected official who abuses their office is spelled out broadly in the Constitution.

In Article I of the Constitution, it says the House shall have the sole power of impeachment and the Senate shall have the sole power to try impeachments.

But the process has evolved over the years. The Constitution does not include the term "articles of impeachment," but a November 2019 Congressional Research

Service analysis of the impeachment process explains what they are.

"The House impeaches an individual when a majority agrees to a House resolution containing explanations of the charges," according to the report. "The explanations in the resolution are referred to as 'articles of impeachment.'"

Once articles of impeachment are approved in the House, the Senate takes those allegations and conducts a trial considering whether to remove a President

from office. The Constitution mandates that the chief justice of the Supreme Court presides.

A President may be impeached and removed for "Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors," according to Article II of the Constitution. There's no hard and fast definition of those, so Congress has the ultimate say.

Democrats initially prepared two articles of impeachment against Trump, for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. They will debate those and then

proceed to a vote before their holiday recess.

They'll vote on each one separately, first in the House Judiciary Committee and, if majorities approve them there, in the full House. It takes a simple majority to refer an article of impeachment to the Senate. It's a much higher threshold -- a 2/3 supermajority, or 67 senators -- to remove a President from office.

Articles of impeachment against Bill Clinton

In the case of President Bill Clinton, the House Judiciary Committee prepared four articles of impeachment in 1998. But only two -- for perjury and obstruction of justice -- were referred by the full House over to the Senate for trial. Multiple Republicans broke ranks to oppose the other two, which accused perjury in a deposition and abusing power in his efforts to cover up his relationship with Monica Lewinsky. A number of Republicans, including Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, who is still a senator, sided with Clinton to allow him to stay in office.

President Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 before the House could vote to impeach him, but after the House Judiciary Committee, with help from six Republicans on the committee,

had approved three articles of impeachment -- for obstructing justice, violating the rights of citizens, and obstructing Congress's power of impeachment.

This last article is similar to the obstruction of Congress article Democrats prepared against Trump.

Articles of impeachment against Andrew Johnson

The case of President Andrew Johnson in 1868 went differently. Congress was at odds with him over Reconstruction and had passed a law -- the Tenure of Office Act -- in an effort to essentially restrict Johnson's power. They impeached him for ignoring the law they had just passed.

The House prepared and passed 11 articles of impeachment against Johnson and most of these had to do with the Tenure of Office Act. The trial went on for months in the Senate. A majority supported removing him from office, but senators fell one vote short of a 2/3 necessary after a number of Republicans sided with him. So Johnson was acquitted by the Senate first on the 11th article and then, according to the House historian, on two more articles. The Senate ultimately abandoned the trial.

Bangalore's 200 Lakes: How A Boon Became A Bane

Litigation over the upkeep of Bangalore's lakes within its municipal limits is a perennial issue, encroachment and sewage inflow being the main challenges

Much water flowed out of Bangalore's Hulimavu lake without warning on a bright Sunday afternoon last week. It wasn't the rain to blame, but someone had damaged the tank bund causing untold misery to hundreds of residents downstream. Many became refugees at a makeshift shelter and the list of belongings lost or destroyed--documents, household appliances, cars--only grew. As does Bangalore's litany of lake woes--the Hulimavu lake breach near the southern fringe of the city was the third of a water body spilling over in about a month. None of them are as well known as the city's biggest tank, Bellandur, which periodically makes news countrywide for its dramatic visuals of foam rising up several feet or, at the other extreme, seething water. But Bangalore has close to 200 lakes within

its municipal limits and litigation over their upkeep is a perennial feature; encroachments and sewage inflow being the main challenge. Occasionally, fish deaths have occurred in some lakes because of sewage and low oxygen levels.

This June, the Karnataka High Court asked the state government to appoint the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), a CSIR lab, to study the condition of lakes in Bangalore and suggest measures for their restoration.

In Bangalore's software boom years of the early 2000s, the government created a Lake Development Authority (LDA) to protect and oversee water bodies that different public agencies managed. But the LDA was subsequently wound up. In 2011, the high-court-appointed Justice N.K. Patil committee laid out an action plan for the preservation of

the lakes following which, in 2014, the government passed the Karnataka Tank Conservation and Development Authority Act to create a new nodal agency.

"There are some positive provisions in that law. That authority is supposed to be the oversight authority, but even that has been dysfunctional," says Leo Saldanha of Environment Support Group, which has led some of the litigation over lakes. "We have created the institutional network, developed the guidelines and shown how this can be turned into functional ecosystems." But when it comes to various agencies taking their custodial rights seriously, there's been a total collapse, he observes.

At Hulimavu too, the lake breach only amplified the confusion about which agency actually managed the lake--the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike or



the Bangalore Development Authority. As for the damaged bund, a police investigation is currently on to establish how it happened--initial reports indicate that there had been some digging near the bund ostensibly to lay a pipe.

Bangalore's lakes have a long history. Nearly all of them are manmade, some of them a few centuries old, and are interconnected. They form a complex network of water bodies, which once provided the town its drinking water. Tank

building, we are told, mostly continued into the late 19th century--by then, however, the newly constructed Hessarghatta lake along the Arkavati river became the main water source for the city's residents. In the late 1960s, the government drew up a plan to pump Cauvery river water to Bangalore--100km away. As ecologist Harini Nagendra writes in Nature and the City, lakes as a water source became less important to administrators and planners in a growing city.

Assembly Elections 2020

Does AAP Chief Arvind Kejriwal

Have The X-Factor To Defend Delhi?

With elections due early next year, the battle for Delhi is clearly hotting up. The Aam Aadmi Party is banking on Arvind Kejriwal's populist moves to woo voters. BJP, which swept the Lok Sabha polls, seems to be fumbling

governance. The focus has subtly shifted now: Chief minister Kejriwal's report card is more workmanlike than outright inspirational. A whole lot of early AAP luminaries have walked out, turned apostate, even bitter critics. And the combative edge has been deliberately dulled. But even with that thinned talent pool, AAP has stirred up some stagnant spaces: energised government schools, free and accessible healthcare, 24-hour cheap power, free water (see Bijli, Paani, Mohalla and More). The people of Delhi have developed a stake in AAP's government, says Kejriwal, and "it will be a positive vote, pro-incumbency vote". Also, tantalisingly, that people in other states are watching (see Kejriwal's interview). His deputy Manish Sisodia, who steered the education policy, says it's the first election to be contested on issues like education. "If we fail, education fails," he tells Outlook. Prof Rajendra Pratap Gupta, a public policy expert who works on education, health and employment, too feels these polls will be a turning point in setting a political narrative. "It may reset the model for Indian politics. For the first time, the UEP (unique electoral proposition) has moved to health and education, something successive governments failed to deliver," he says. Gupta, who was involved in writing the BJP's 2009 and 2014 poll manifestos, feels AAP's policy thrust will resonate because of "the current socio-economic and job scenario, the majority of our population being young".

Kya kaam ke naam par vote padta hai?" Do people vote for performance? This is the simple question Arvind Kejriwal is seeking an answer to-shorn of theory, or hifalutin ideology, a question meant to appeal to the common citizen. Delhi will vote again in early 2020, to get a government that will craft its destiny for the first half of the new decade. Kejriwal, a man who once deigned to loom much larger over India's political landscape, has limited the horizon of his ambition. He wants only Delhi. There is stiff, and bitter, opposition though. The BJP wants desperately to break its 21-year long jinx and get a shot at power in the national

capital. For the Congress, which ruled Delhi for 15 years under Sheila Dikshit and justly claims to have begun its transformation, it's a fight for relevance in a purana qila. And yet, this is about much more than Delhi. For, this is no ordinary three-sided electoral fight. The politics and personality of Arvind Kejriwal-beaver-like, unputdownable, jack-in-the-box-is the X-factor that sets it apart. He and his party, AAP, form a long, inscrutable side in this triangle. They evoke devotion and cause exasperation. They mutate, but also stay identifiably the same. They often flatter to deceive-making a lot of noise and then seeming to suddenly vanish from

the stage. But on accounting day they turn up again, with a long list on the credit side. That's why this fight is about more than Delhi: it's a novelty in Indian politics, and neither the BJP nor the Congress quite know how to go about it. Both covet Delhi the old way, purely as territory. They may or may not breach the fortress wall, but their politics still seems out of the traditional playbook. And AAP, despite getting its hands dirty in actual politics, somehow retains the sense of carrying a new idea. And Delhi has not been an easy laboratory to test new ideas. The sprawling metropolis teems with contradictions. It is India's capital city, the seat of the Union

government-housing all the markers of power. It is also home to millions of powerless: a vast, mobile demographic web that makes up its unorganised workforce of drivers, plumbers, electricians, peons, private security guards and domestic helps. Pulling up daily on a platform between the sprawling bungalows and shiny malls of the old and nouveau elite is this train from the real India out there. How to plan the infrastructure for such a dynamic thing in constant evolution? In 2015, AAP had made a stunning sweep, with an IIT topper-like scorecard of 67/70. The wind in the sail had come from a huge sentiment against corruption, a desire for clean

1200% Rise In Sexual Assaults, But Who Cares? Even Af, Pak Are Safer Than India For Women

December 2012. Hyderabad, November 2019. Only the names have changed. The name of the city, the victim, names of the perpetrators...what remains the same is the monstrosity of the crime. A 27-year-old veterinarian subjected to brutal sexual assault by four men in the Telangana capital, strangled to death and her body burnt in an attempt to erase all proof. What followed next was a media spectacle-a minute-by-minute dissection of the crime by TV channels competing to outdo each other in how much gory details they can pass off as news. Protests spilled out onto the streets and reverberated in Parliament where some lawmakers even called for castration and public lynching of

rapists. In the noise, what is lost is the cry for help of the woman returning home in Hyderabad when she was gang-raped and murdered. Just like the cry of the 22-year-old paramedic gang-raped and brutalised on a moving bus in Delhi in 2012, a crime that triggered nationwide outrage and protests, hastened the fall of a government at the Centre and saw more stringent provisions introduced in India's rape laws. Since then, "women's security" has become a political issue and an election slogan. But not much changed in a country considered among the most unsafe in the world, ranked 133 among 167 nations in a recent report by Georgetown University's Institute for Women,

Peace and Security. An earlier global survey by Thomson Reuters Foundation had put India on top of a list of ten most dangerous countries for women, ahead of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Statistics bear out the stark reality faced by women in India, a country where the feminine form is worshipped as the mother goddess. Latest data released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show that more than 33,600 women were raped in 2017-that is, one rape every 15 minutes. Since 1971, when NCRB started collecting rape data, India has recorded a 1,200 per cent increase in cases of sexual assaults. What the data hides is the fact that among the



accused are political leaders, elected lawmakers, self-styled godmen and security personnel; a CRPF jawan is among three people arrested in the first week of November for raping a minor in Uttar Pradesh. The story becomes even horrific when crimes such as the multiple rape-and-murder of an eight-year-old

girl in a temple in Jammu's Kathua surfaces, very frequently, from each corner of the country. Brig (ret'd) G.B. Reddi, a Hyderabad-based political commentator advocates even more stringent laws to act as deterrent. "Unfortunately, these rape crimes only make media headlines.

Netflix Tests Long-Term Subscription Plans in India With Discounts, Aims to Offer 'Flexibility' to Users

Netflix is testing long-term subscriptions plans in India, the company confirmed to Gadgets 360. The new tests, which are being done first in India, brings annual, six months, and three months subscription plans to the video streaming service and offers discounts of up to 50 percent when compared to the monthly plans. This means that subscribers opting for a long-term Netflix subscription will get a discount on what they would otherwise pay monthly to the service. The testing is currently limited to select users, though it is targeted at both mobile and Web users.

By default, Netflix offers monthly subscription plans starting at Rs. 199. The Los Gatos, California-based company, however, is

testing a range of long-term subscription plans in India to retain subscribers for a longer time.

Netflix long-term subscription plans

Netflix is currently testing a '3 months' plan that's available at Rs. 1,919, discounted from the regular three months Premium subscription charge of Rs. 2,397 - a discount of 20 percent. Similarly, there is a '6 months' plan in the testing phase at Rs. 3,359, down from Rs. 4,794 - a discount of 30 percent. The company also has a '12 months' plan at Rs. 4,799. This shows a 50 percent discount over the regular Premium subscription that is available at Rs. 799 a month, which comes to Rs. 9,588 for a year.

We believe that our members may value the flexibility that comes from being able to pay for a few months at once. As always this is a test and we will only introduce it more broadly if people find it useful," a Netflix spokesperson said in a statement emailed to Gadgets 360.

The new long-term subscription plans were spotted by a Twitter user in Udaipur. However, Netflix is conducting the pilot across the country for various new and returning users.

At an event in New Delhi last week, Netflix CEO Reed Hastings revealed that Netflix spending Rs. 3,000 crores this year and next to produce fresh local content in India.

"You'll start to see a lot of stuff



hit the screen, big investment," Hastings had said at the event while underlining how important India is for the company. "We're trying to invest in that becoming more Indian in the content offering."

To recall, Netflix entered India back in January 2016 with three distinct plans -- Basic, Standard,

and Premium. The company, however, over time expanded its range of plans to match the tastes and preferences of Indian audiences.

The most recent update that Netflix brought to its plan portfolio is the addition of the Rs. 199 plan that is exclusively designed for mobile users.

Soaring Food Prices: One-Off Situation Or Structural Issue?

In Bangalore, onion prices scaled to Rs 200 per kg and, in some Delhi markets, they ruled between Rs 120 and Rs 150 a kg. Garlic was over Rs 280 per kg in some markets. No wonder thefts of onion and garlic were reported from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana, among others.

On December 5, a small pick-up truck with 64 garlic bags worth Rs 200,000 was hijacked from Bihar's Kaimur district on the GT Road in the night. A day earlier, a Panipat retailer complained that 80 bags of garlic were stolen. In October, a vendor in Lucknow was robbed of onion, garlic and tomatoes.

Such incidents rose since September when the prices of these vegetables zoomed.

Tomato prices calmed down to affordable levels, but onion and garlic continued their upward curves and angered the common man across the country.

Agriculture economist Dr Abhijit Sen attributes the high prices of several food crops to the poor kharif season this year. "The first advance estimate, based on area aerial survey alone, suggests that for most food crops the output will either be the same or less than last year," he explains. The second advance estimates (still awaited) will take into account the yields, and may be lower than the initial one. "So, probably on the outside there is a problem," concludes Sen.

He adds that crops like onion, which are localised, were impacted by local weather

problems. Thus, the output in some items may be affected more than the others. This led to supply problems, which can only be overcome with time. "On the demand side, I don't see much problem as there is no rise in demand," feels Sen.

In the case of onions and pulses, India has supply links with neighbouring countries. The problem, therefore, intensified, but the demand remained more or less static. Besides the supply-side issues, higher costs contributed to a rise in retail prices.

Devendra Kumar Pant, Chief Economist, India Ratings & Research, states that the rise in inflation in the past few months was mainly from the food side. "Core inflation this



year is still low, which shows that the (overall) demand conditions are weak," explains Pant. He maintains that the current prices of vegetables, fruits and pulses responded to demand-supply situation.

In the case of pulses, we went through a cycle of low inflation and deflation for a year or two continuously. As the deflation cycle in pulses broke, we witnessed a bout of inflation. Food is more a story of demand and supply, according to Pant.

'Vindication' - Saudi Arabia hails 10% debut jump in Aramco shares

Saudi Aramco (2222.SE) shares surged the maximum permitted 10% above their IPO price on their Riyadh stock market debut on Wednesday, in a move hailed by the government as a vindication of its towering \$2 trillion valuation of the state oil company. The shares closed at 35.2 riyals (\$9.39) each, up from the initial public offering (IPO) price of 32 riyals and at the daily limit of price moves allowed by the Tadawul exchange.

That gives Saudi Arabian Oil Co (Aramco) a market value of

about \$1.88 trillion, comfortably making it the world's most valuable listed company and closing in on the \$2 trillion price tag long coveted by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. "It's a great day for Saudi Arabia and the leadership of Saudi Arabia and for the people of Saudi Arabia. It's a D-Day for Aramco, it's a day of reckoning and vindication," Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman told Reuters in Madrid.

Aramco raised a record \$25.6 billion in its IPO last week, the culmination of a years-long effort

by the Crown Prince to open up the energy giant to outside investors and raise funds to help diversify the economy away from oil.

Aramco's IPO process, however, has been a struggle since the Crown Prince announced in 2016 his plan to raise as much as \$100 billion via an international and domestic listing of a 5% stake. Listing plans were halted in 2018 and when the deal was revived this summer, it found little interest beyond the Gulf. Riyadh scaled back its ambitions and canceled

roadshows in New York and London, selling just a 1.5% stake and relying on mainly domestic and regional buyers.

Just 23% of the institutional tranche was sold to non-Saudi investors. Sources have said the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) and Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), sovereign wealth funds of two of Saudi Arabia's Gulf allies, planned to invest.

International banks lured by expectations of lucrative fees were also sidelined after failing to bring in foreign investors, banking sources said. Prince Abdulaziz

said last week that Aramco was worth well over its IPO valuation of \$1.7 trillion and predicted investors who didn't buy into the offering would be "chewing their thumbs" after missing out. The flotation propels the Riyadh bourse into the world's top 10 by value of listed companies. Aramco's share price surge values it at more than six times U.S. oil major Exxon Mobil Corp (XOM); more than twice Saudi Arabia's annual gross domestic product; and far ahead of U.S. tech giant Apple's (AAPL.O) \$1.2 trillion price tag.



Women using Instagram to cope with miscarriage distress

The findings are based on a qualitative research study on 200 posts of text and pictures shared by Instagram users.

Despite its common occurrence, there is still a lot of stigma surrounding miscarriage and many women find that their emotional and psychological needs are unmet as they go through a devastating grieving process. But for some, Instagram has emerged as a tool to cope with such distress, a study says.

The study, published in the journal *Obstetrics & Gynecology*,

found that the content posted by Instagram users included rich descriptions of the medical and physical experiences of miscarriage, and the emotional spectrum of having a miscarriage and coping with those emotions, the social aspect, and family identity.

"I find it endlessly fascinating that women are opening up to essentially strangers about things that they hadn't even told

their partners or families," says Dr. Riley. "But this is how powerful this community is," said Amy Henderson Riley, Assistant Professor at the Jefferson College of Population Health, Thomas Jefferson University, US.

The findings are based on a qualitative research study on 200 posts of text and pictures shared by Instagram users. "What surprised me the most

was how many women and their partners identified as parents after their miscarriage and how the miscarriage lasted into their family identity after a successful pregnancy," said Rebecca Mercier, Assistant Professor at Thomas Jefferson University.

"The extent to which this loss affects women and their families, and the longevity of their grief is a blind spot for

clinicians," Mercier said.

These personal accounts also provided insight into patients' perspectives of typically defined experiences.

For example, in the clinic, the typical definition of recurrent pregnancy loss is after three pregnancies. However, the researchers found that many patients who had had two or more miscarriages identified with having recurrent pregnancy loss. "I'm hoping that this study will encourage clinicians to point patients to social media as a potential coping tool, as well as to approach this subject with bereaved and expecting parents with more respect and empathy," Mercier said.

Social media is becoming a common avenue for patient testimonials. For example, the short video-sharing platform TikTok has recently become a home for some users to make videos sharing their personal health struggles.

"As far as we know, this is the first study to look at the intersection of Instagram and miscarriage," Riley said.

"But this is a drop in the bucket. Social media platforms are evolving rapidly and a theoretically grounded research must follow," she added.

Our ancestors learnt to smile so that they can have sex



Believe it or not but our forefathers were way smarter than us when it came to wooing the opposite sex for mating. According to a new study, Neanderthals learnt how to smile and make expressive faces in order to attract less-aggressive mates.

Researchers from the University of Milan focused on genetic samples from Neanderthals, which showed that gene mutations might have led humans to "self-select less aggressive mating partners". This behaviour finally led to the "self-domestication" of ancient humans.

The study suggests that modern humans domesticated themselves after they split from their extinct relatives - Neanderthals and Denisovans - approximately 600,000 years ago, reported sciencemag.org citing the study that was published in the journal *Science Advances*.

Giuseppe Testa, a molecular biologist at University of Milan in Italy, and colleagues knew that one gene, BAZ1B, plays an important role in orchestrating the movements of neural crest cells.

Most people carry two copies of this gene. Significantly, one copy

Our forefathers were way smarter than us when it came to wooing the opposite sex for mating.



of BAZ1B is missing in people with Williams-Beuren syndrome, a disorder linked to cognitive impairments and extreme friendliness.

Genetic data was gathered from human stem cells taken from the remains of two Neanderthals and one Denisovan.

These two groups of prehistoric ancestors lived around the same time and there is even evidence to suggest they interbred.

"BAZ1B" is the gene which allows dogs to make their eyes expressive in a way wolves cannot, reports *NYPPost*.

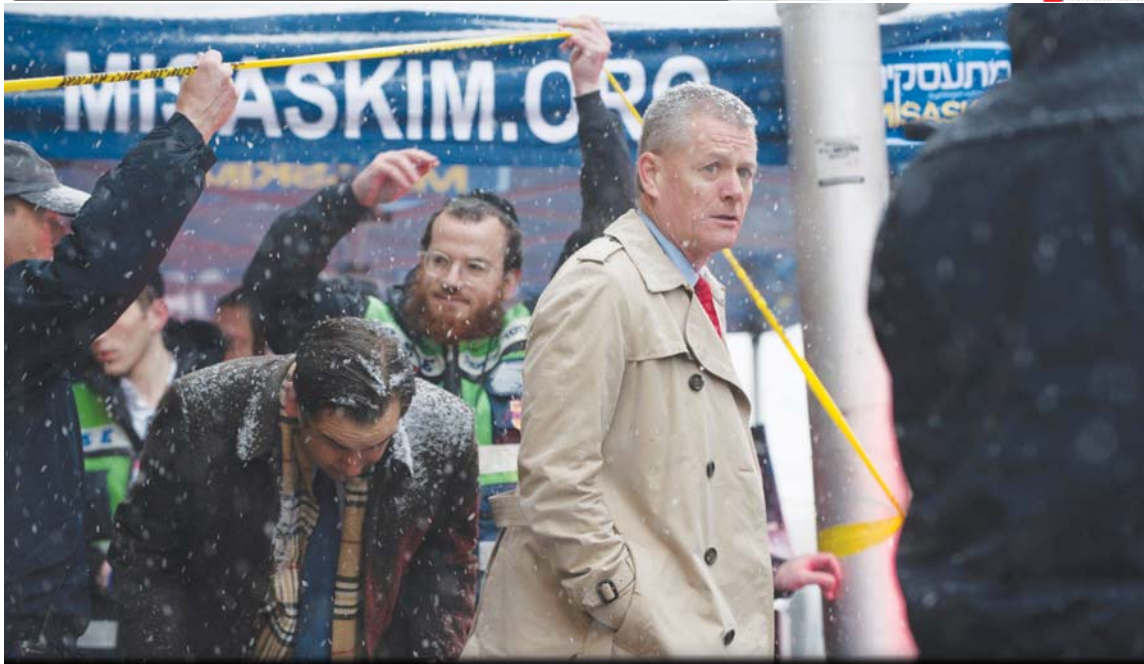
"It is thought that selected breeding patterns of some Neanderthals led to the BAZ1B gene and could have contributed to Homo sapiens developing distinctively expressive faces".

When the researchers looked at hundreds of BAZ1B-sensitive

genes, they found that in modern humans, those genes had accumulated loads of regulatory mutations of their own.

This suggests natural selection was shaping them.

According to *The Sun*, Williams-Beuren syndrome causes humans to have what some people perceive as a welcoming expression with a wide mouth and a small nose.



Motive unclear in deadly New Jersey kosher grocery rampage: officials

(News Agencies)- Investigators are not sure why two people launched a deadly attack at a New Jersey kosher grocery store, federal and state officials said on Wednesday, but a federal law enforcement source said it did not appear to be an act of terrorism. Six people, including the two shooters, three civilians and a police officer, died in a series of events that ended in a police shootout on Tuesday in Jersey City, New Jersey, across the Hudson River from New York City. The four-hour gun battle at the Jewish JC Kosher Supermarket erupted after the pair shot the police officer at a nearby cemetery and then fled in a white

van. It ended after police crashed an armored vehicle through the wall of the market. "We are not in the position at this time to say definitively why the suspects stopped in front of the supermarket and began firing," New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal told a news conference, flanked by state and federal colleagues. Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop reiterated in a later news conference that he considered the shooting a hate crime. "My sentiment is that it should be viewed as a hate crime and called out aggressively and called out quickly," Fulop said, without providing evidence. The federal law enforcement source said investigators believe mental illness and drug use may have been the primary factors in the attack. He said investigators now view an anti-Semitic message posted online by one of the shooters as a secondary factor. Officials identified the shooters as David Anderson, 47, and Francine Graham, 50. The three

civilian victims inside the market were Mindy Ferenz, 32, Miguel Douglas, 49, and Moshe Deutsch, 24, they said. A fourth person who was in the market when the shooters entered escaped. Officials declined to identify that person. Police found a homemade pipe bomb in the rented van that the shooters drove to the market. The initial confrontation between the suspects and police near the Jersey City cemetery, about a mile (1.6 km) from the supermarket, was linked to a previous homicide investigation, officials said. The dead police officer, identified as Joseph Seals, a 15-year veteran of the force and father of five, was shot at the cemetery. "We are deeply shocked and saddened by the antisemitic attack in #JerseyCity yesterday," the Israeli embassy in Washington said on Twitter. "This remains a very fluid and fast-moving investigation," said New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy. "There is no ongoing security concern."

Woman sues major hotel chains alleging they failed to stop sex trafficking at their properties

(News Agencies)- A woman who says she was the victim of sex trafficking in 2012 and 2013 at multiple hotels in Oregon and Washington is suing six major hotel chains in federal court, saying they neglected trafficking happening "openly on hotel properties" and failed to intervene "to continue earning a profit." "Rather than taking timely and effective measures to thwart this epidemic," the suit said, "defendant hotels have instead chosen to ignore the open and obvious presence of sex trafficking on their properties, enjoying the profit from rooms rented for this explicit and apparent purpose."

The suit, filed Monday in US District Court in Portland, names Hilton Worldwide Holdings, Inc., Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, Marriott International, Choice Hotels Corp., Extended Stay America and Red Lion Hotels Corp., as defendants.

Hilton Worldwide Holdings said the hotel property where the suit alleges the trafficking took place is independently owned and operated, but issued a statement saying, "Hilton condemns all forms of human trafficking, including for sexual exploitation. As signatories of the ECPAT [formerly End Child Prostitution and Trafficking] Code since 2011, we are fully committed, in each and every one of our markets, to protecting individuals from all forms of abuse and exploitation."

"We condemn human trafficking in any form,"

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts said in a statement. "Through our partnerships with the International Tourism Partnership, ECPAT-USA, Polaris Project and other organizations that share the same values, we have worked to enhance our policies condemning human trafficking while also providing training to help our team members, as well as the hotels we manage, identify and report trafficking activities."

Extended Stay America also condemned human trafficking in a statement to CNN.

"We require all our associates to be trained on identifying the signs of human trafficking and on how to report them," the statement said. Marriott International issued a statement saying, "While we are not commenting on the specifics of the litigation, Marriott International is working to help combat the horrific crime of human trafficking in hotels. Marriott International developed training in partnership with leading human rights organizations to teach its hotel workers to recognize the signs of human trafficking and how to respond. The company made the training mandatory for all its hotel workers in 2017; to date, more than 700,000 employees have completed the training."



Bougainville To Become World's Newest Nation: 10 Things To Know

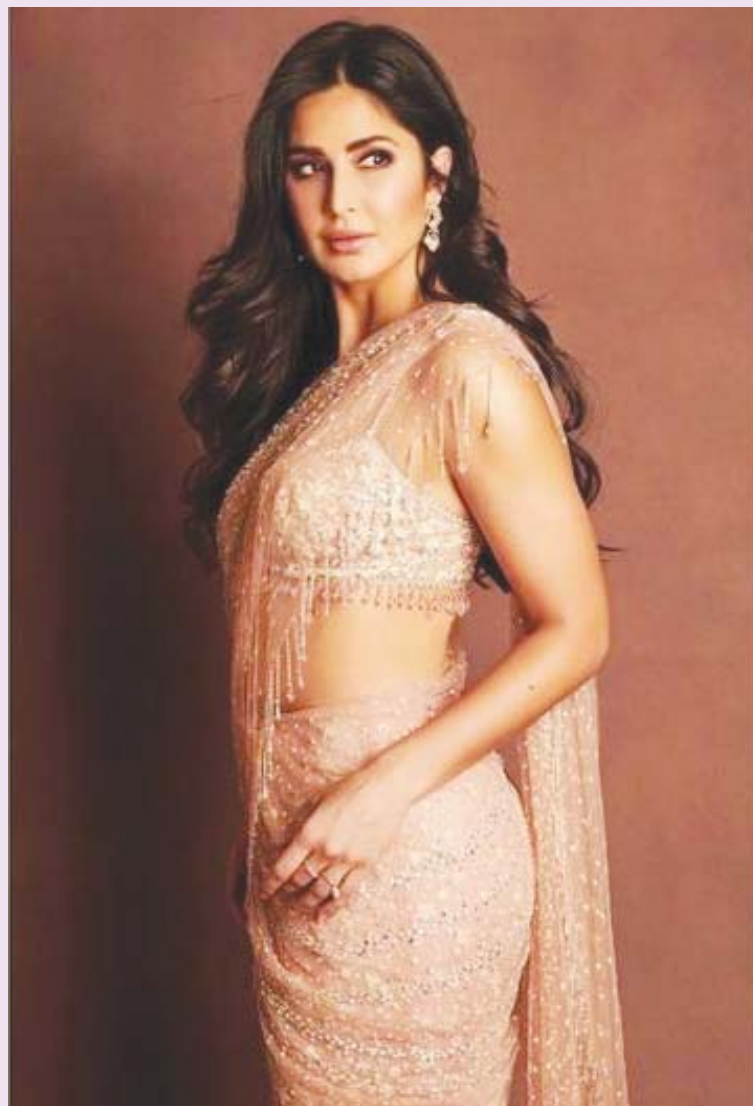
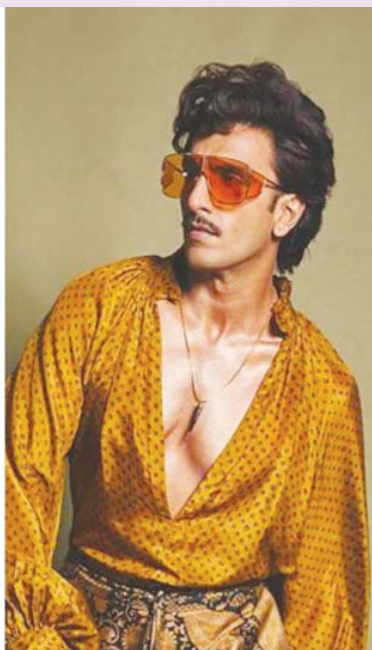


(News Agencies)- The South Pacific archipelago of Bougainville on Wednesday overwhelmingly voted to become independent of Papua New Guinea, becoming the world's latest territory to seek secession. Here are some facts about Bougainville: - Buka town on Buka island is the capital of the region, and houses the government headquarters. - Around 300,000 people live in the territory, mostly in villages outside Buka and the two other main towns of Arawa and Buin, both on Bougainville island. A 2011 census recorded the population as 249,358. - More than 200,000 voters were registered to cast ballots in the referendum, a significant

increase in the electoral rolls, chief referendum officer Mauricio Claudio said last month. - Bougainvilleans are mostly Melanesian and the local language is Tok Pisin, a Papua New Guinean pidgin English, though there are at least 19 distinct indigenous languages. - Bougainville island was named after French navigator Louis Antoine de Bougainville, who sailed along its east coast in 1768. - In the 19th century, Bougainville was colonised by Germany. It was used by Japan as a military base during World War Two, and after, was administered by Australia until Papua New Guinea (PNG) gained independence in 1975.

Ranveer Singh, Katrina Kaif, Kriti Sanon, Janhvi Kapoor: Best and worst dressed celebrities this week

Let's find out which celebrities dressed their best, and whose looks were a poor, sorry mess. From Ranveer Singh and Katrina Kaif, to Nupur Sanon and Akshara Hassan, here is the list for this week's best and worst dressed celebs.



What is it about Bollywood celebrities that excites populations all around the world? The craze with which people obsess over celebrities is quite unreal, and in India they are given almost God-like status. It could be their onscreen personas,

their larger-than-life lives, their well-maintained physique, their inspirational lives and even their sense of style. In the past few years, even before Sonam Kapoor Ahuja went all out with her style game, celebrities would inspire masses, in fact even

Govinda's over-the-top outfits from the '90s managed to inspire the masses for quite some time. So, as tradition goes, let us dig into this week's fashion scorecard and find out which celebrities dressed their best, and whose looks were a poor, sorry mess. From Ranveer Singh and Katrina Kaif, to Nupur Sanon and Akshara Hassan, here is the list for this week's best and worst dressed celebs. Always the fashionista, Ranveer Singh once again managed to impress us with his quirky style. Dressed in Sabyasachi Mukherji from head to toe, the actor's look was inspiring. From the big hair, the retro sunnies and the vintage vibe of the outfit. We loved it all! Katrina's beauty is quite something, and she looks even more stunning in traditional wear in hues of pink and red. So we were absolutely delighted when Katrina donned this gorgeous light pink Tarun Tahiliani saree, the actor had her hair in loose waves and sported minimal make-up with the heavily embroidered saree. While many celebrities managed to impress us with their outfits at the recent Fashion and Glamour awards, it was Malaika's outfit that was just unforgettable for us. The high-necked shimmery Atelier Zuhra

outfit was a complete winner, and Malaika was styled to perfect as well. We are absolutely loving that Malaika is channelling her inner Jennifer Lopez/Beyonce these days with all her uber glam outfits. Kriti Sanon's saree game is going pretty strong, the actor wore a gorgeous bright yellow Manish Malhotra piece which completely blew us over. While her saree was beautiful, it was the unique blouse with its billowy sleeves that did a number on us. While Kriti has really upped her style game of late, and we are absolutely in love with all the sarees and traditional looks she has been sporting, we

wish sister Nupur would also put her fashionable foot forward. This highly ruffled gown by Rudraksh Dwivedi is a total sin, the colour, the pattern, just everything falls flat for Nupur. And we have seen designs by Rudraksh Dwivedi, so we know just how great his designs can be. Janhvi who is usually spotted in simple clothes and minimal make-up gave us a bit of surprise when she joined the Manish Malhotra sequined saree bandwagon, following Kareena Kapoor Khan, Karisma Kapoor, Kriti Sanon, Bhumi Pednekar, and many others. Janhvi opted for a lilacish-pink coloured version of the saree, wearing a bikini blouse, her hair in big curls, the young actor flashed her pearly whites for the camera.



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Panipat movie review

Arjun Kapoor-Kriti Sanon film is intriguing but tedious

Panipat movie review: Ashutosh Gowariker makes his war drama larger-than-life but Arjun Kapoor film is let down by its length.

Panipat

Cast: Arjun Kapoor, Kriti Sanon, Sanjay Dutt, Mohnish Bahl

Director: Ashutosh Gowariker

Sitting down to watch an Ashutosh Gowariker period drama, you know what to expect -- lavishly mounted sets, spectacular locations, larger-than-life characters and an extraordinary line-up of supporting cast. Panipat has all this in abundance. Starring Arjun Kapoor and Kriti Sanon in lead roles with Sanjay Dutt as the antagonist, the film is based on the Third Battle of Panipat that was fought in 1761.

As Maratha forces take on the Afghan invader Ahmad Shah Abdali (Sanjay Dutt), they are led by the commander-in-chief Sadashivrao Bhau (Arjun Kapoor), along with the Peshwa heir and his nephew Vishwasrao (Abhishek Nigam), his cousin Shamsher Bahadur (Sahil

Salathia) and a Muslim aide Ibrahim Khan Gardi (Nawab Shah). Abdali, meanwhile, is being supported by Najib ud-Daula (Mantra). To ensure there is no historical inaccuracy, Gowariker keeps as close to the facts as possible, taking only a few cinematic liberties.

There are a few surprises in the outcome of the battle itself, most of us conversant with details of what happened via our history books. However, Gowariker manages to make the face-off larger-than-life. The climactic war sequence is elaborate, gripping and keeps you on the edge. As thousands of warriors take the final stand with majestic animals in tow, the director ensures that you are invested in the outcome. Panipat balances the war and political manipulations with beautifully choreographed and well-synchronized dance sequences. Even if song-and-

dance appears to be a misfit in the situation, you love watching them for the grandeur. Adding to the mood are the songs by Ajay and Atul.

CK Muraleedharan's cinematography deserves applause from start to end. The aerial shots during the dance sequences and the final war scene leave you speechless. While visual effects are on point, the editing is a bit loose and falters at some places.

Arjun Kapoor delivers a sincere performance. He gets under the skin of the character so seamlessly that it's tough to distinguish the actor from the Maratha warrior he is shown playing. The war scenes are some of his best shots. The conviction - right from his look, attire to dialect and sword fighting sequences - is there and Arjun's hard work shows.

Also read | The Marvellous Mrs



Maisel season 3 review: This one will give you a sugar rush. Kriti, on the other hand, looks a tad too over-the-top. Being a Delhi girl, the Marathi accent and dialect doesn't suit her and sounds fake and forced.

The Khilji from Padmaavat in his introductory scene as he smashes his betrayer's face with his crown and then nonchalantly wears it on his head.

Among the supporting cast, Mantra shines as the baddie. His Najib ud-Daula is conniving and deceitful and the actor looks good while doing that. Mohnish Bahl as Nanasaheb Peshwa is powerful with that husky voice but gets limited screen time. Padmini with evidently highlighted wrinkles, but he flaunts them with elan. Dutt looks strikingly similar to Ranveer Singh's slightly layered character.

Pati Patni Aur Woh movie review

Kartik Aaryan, Bhumi Pednekar make this comedy work



Pati Patni Aur Woh

Cast: Kartik Aaryan, Bhumi Pednekar, Ananya Panday, Aparshakti Khurana

Director: Mudassar Aziz

Remakes can be a tricky business as comparisons are bound to happen with the original content. Here's one right at the beginning: I had one problem when I recently watched the original Pati Patni Aur Woh (starring Sanjeev Kumar, Ranjeeta and Vidya Sinha). The writers and the director gave us naive women who will believe every word a man says, even

agreeing to continue with a relationship despite knowing that the man cheated. Cut to 2019, three decades later, and Mudassar Aziz's modern take on Pati Patni Aur Woh didn't rectify that mistake either. The whole premise that a guy can so easily fool his wife and the woman he loves outside his marriage is so troubling.

The film starts with a dashing voiceover by Jimmy Sheirgill who asserts that 'aisa koi sawal nahi jiska uttar aapko Uttar Pradesh mein na mile'. And then we're introduced to Abhinav Tyagi aka

Pati Patni Aur Woh movie review: Kartik Aaryan and Bhumi Pednekar put in credible performances in this funny but problematic film.

Chintu (Kartik Aaryan), who works as a government employee in Kanpur's PWD department. He married Vedika Tripathi (Bhumi Pednekar), a physics teacher from Lucknow, at an early age. Vedika aspires to live in Delhi because modern-day life is more tempting. They get married soon after their first meeting where Vedika makes it clear that she 'likes sex', and the two lead 'happily ever after' life for three years until Tapasya Singh (Ananya Panday) shifts from Delhi to Kanpur to find a location to set up a workshop for her designer boutique. Just when Chintu was looking for ways to spice up his mundane married life, he is assigned the job of helping Tapasya find the plot and, in no time, he gets into a I-don't-know-how-it-started and I-am-not-even-sure-of-what's-going-on-between-us relationship with her.

Between all this, Chintu's colleague and best friend, Fahim Rizvi (Aparshakti Khurana) backs his gharwali-baharwali game and saves him each time he is about to get caught red-handed. What ensues next is a series of confusions, complications, white lies and realisations that sound rather illogical. The film's tone is sexist, where it is okay to call your best friend's girlfriend as daayan, chudail and naagin. Call it a comedy of errors and it won't be wrong because there are plenty of them that look unsettling. I couldn't help noticing how the film ridiculously switches between Kanpur to Lucknow in a matter of seconds and without even giving the audience a proper reason. Maybe, location consistency is something that makers didn't pay any attention to. Talking of comedy, the humour

is well-placed but you can't call it extraordinary. At places where the comic element goes down, the makers have cleverly infused it with witty dialogues and one-liners like 'No what no why, free free bird blue blue sky', 'Vichaar karne se bachhe paida nahi hote', 'Ladki dekhte hi how I wonder what you are ho jaate ho'.

Comic timing is one thing that goes in favour of Pati Patni Aur Woh. Especially the camaraderie and banter between Kartik and Aparshakti's characters is so good that it keeps you invested whenever the two appear together on screen. There are little nuances that are quite pleasant to watch. For instance, how Chintu and Vedika address each other as Tyagi ji and Tripathi, respectively shows the modern-age bonding between couples.

Deepika Padukone says she watches cricket with Ranveer Singh

'My all-time favourite cricketer is Rahul Dravid'

Deepika Padukone appeared on the cricket show and talked about the importance of sports in our daily lives. Bollywood actor Deepika Padukone, who has often talked about starting a discourse on mental health, has said we must focus on physical and mental strength equally. She was speaking on the Star Sports' show Nerolac Cricket Live. "How much we focus on our physical strength; our mental strength and mental endurance is equally important if not more. At times you feel your body is not keeping up with the mind. I think sometimes it's the mind that takes over - and nurturing that is very important. A young athlete will figure that along the way, but they should pay attention to that - the grit, courage, determination and spirit is important." Deepika will soon be seen in Kabir Khan's 83 in which she will essay the role of Kapil Dev's wife Romi, opposite husband Ranveer Singh who plays Kapil Dev in the film. Deepika also revealed that she watches cricket matches with Ranveer. "Ranveer and I watch matches together, he is a very big football fan which everyone knows - but he

is also a big cricket fan. We don't watch every single match, but yes, when there are important games, we either make it a point to sit with each other or with family and friends and make it an event, like the whole nation does," she said. "My all-time favourite cricketer is Rahul Dravid; a lot of my idols are not what they have done in the sport and the game, but how they have conducted themselves outside - for me he is somebody I have admired and looked up to, and, he is from Bangalore." Deepika is currently receiving positive feedback for her first look posters and teaser of her debut production, Chhapaak. Deepika plays acid attack survivor Malti in the Meghna Gulzar directorial that also stars Vikrant Massey. It is based on the real life story of Delhi's Laxmi Aggarwal and is slated to hit theatres on January 10.



Mardaani 2 to be released without promotional songs, Rani Mukerji says 'it would dilute film's intent'

Rani Mukerji on Wednesday said that her upcoming crime-drama Mardaani 2 would release without promotional songs as the film strives to deliver a strong social message about crimes against women. "We wanted to protect the sanctity of our message and not do any marketing gimmicks like shoot a promotional song just to get more conversions and more eyeballs. We felt this would be counterproductive to what we wanted to achieve," said Mukerji during a press conference. "When at one hand we

are trying to deliver a powerful message, we couldn't have recorded and shot a music video because that would have diluted the intent of the film," the actor added. According to the makers of the film, they wish to communicate about the serious issue and do not wish promotional songs to cause any disturbance during the film. The thriller will see Rani in a race against time to capture a brutal serial rapist who systematically targets women. Rani plays the role of the fearless and committed Superintendent of Police, Shivani Shivaji Roy in Mardaani 2.

Mahesh Bhatt: 'More interested in the longevity of my films than by their debut grosses'

Filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt says he is more interested in the longevity of his films than by their debut grosses. Mahesh on Wednesday took to Twitter, where he shared a poster of his film Zakhm, which was released 21 years. He wrote: "I am more interested in the longevity of my films than by their debut grosses. I ask does it have anything to say in 10 years or 20 years? Could it still have legs? Could it still be around? History is rife

with films that we love today that were 'bombs' on their opening weekend." Zakhm is considered of Bhatt's finest directorial efforts and is said to bear autobiographical shades. The film won Ajay Devgn a National Award as Best actor, and also featured Pooja Bhatt, Sonali Bendre, Nagarjuna, and Kunal Kemmu as a child artist. The film won the Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration. Bhatt on Wednesday announced that he is venturing into the digital space with a web-series based on the relationship of a struggling filmmaker and a top female actor in the 70s.



The Duchess of diamonds!

Kate Middleton dons Diana's glittering headpiece as she joins Prince William for the Queen's Diplomatic Reception at Buckingham Palace



The Duchess of Cambridge looked stunning in the Lover's Knot Tiara, as she arrived at Buckingham Palace on Wednesday night for the Queen's Diplomatic Reception.

highlights of the royal calendar. They also joined the Queen, 93, Prince Charles, 71, and the Duchess of Cornwall, 72, for the Diplomatic Reception, to greet some of the 1,000 guests in attendance for the lavish event.

The duchess wore a floor length navy velvet Alexander McQueen gown for the occasion, which she paired with sparkling silver drop earrings and one of the Queen's silver necklaces.

In a sentimental nod to Prince William's mother Princess Diana, she finished her outfit with the Cambridge Lover's Knot Tiara - a piece given to the

late royal on her wedding day and much beloved by Kate.

The white tie Diplomatic Reception is the main social event of the year in London for the diplomatic community and reflects the Queen's importance in terms of the UK's international relations.

The Queen joined Kate and William, wearing a white gown for the event, with white netting detail, by Angela Kelly. She teamed her gown with white gloves, an emerald necklace and the Grand Duchess Vladimir Tiara, with pearl drops, as she greeted guests.

As Kate arrived at the Palace she was dressed in

a navy blue velvet Alexander McQueen dress. The brand is one of the Duchesses' favourites, and she regularly chooses the British designer's gowns for formal occasions, most recently the Royal Variety Performance in November. The mother-of-three accessorised with the striking Nizam of Hyderabad necklace - a piece loaned to her by the Queen.

It was given to the Queen in November 1947. Kate last borrowed the diamond stunner to attend a black tie Portrait Gala in 2014 at the National Portrait Gallery in London.

The duchess was wearing the Dame Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order on her blue sash, which she wore for the first time in June at The Queen's State Banquet. The honour was given to her by the Queen in April for her services to the sovereign. She also sported the Queen's Royal Order, which features a jewel encased image of the Queen pinned on a chartreuse yellow ribbon and worn on the left shoulder.

The miniature portrait, painted on glass, depicts the Queen as a young woman in evening dress wearing the ribbon and star of the Order of the Garter.



Jim Carrey in talks to reprise his role in Ace Ventura 3

A third Ace Ventura film is reportedly in the works, with a possibility of veteran actor Jim Carrey's return as the iconic character.

A source told the website We Got This Covered that there are only talks to do a third film in the series and Carrey is said to be interested in the idea. Production house Morgan Creek, which backed the first two films in the series, alluded to the confirmation of the news on Twitter.

The banner shared the link of the story on its official account, captioned as "#AceVentura3".

Carrey starred as the eccentric private detective specialising in the retrieval of missing animals in two films -- Ace Ventura: Pet Detective (1994) and Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls (1995). The actor is previously said to have turned down the idea of reprising the role of Ventura, his When Nature Calls co-star Tommy Davidson had said.

SAG Awards nominations

The Irishman and Game of Thrones score big; Joaquin Phoenix, Leonardo DiCaprio to duke it out

Martin Scorsese's The Irishman, Quentin Tarantino's Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, the South Korean social satire Parasite, director Taika Waititi's Jojo Rabbit and Jay Roach's post MeToo newsroom drama Bombshell have been nominated for the top prize at the 26th annual Screen Actors Guild awards.

America Ferrera and Danai Gurira announced the film and TV nominees on Wednesday. Robert De Niro will receive

the Life Achievement Award, presented by Leonardo DiCaprio. In the television category, HBO's Game of Thrones and Big Little Lies, Netflix's Stranger Things and The Crown, and Hulu's The Handmaid's Tale were nominated for Best

Drama Ensemble. The 2020 ceremony will take place on January 19 at the Shrine Auditorium. While The Irishman, Once Upon a Time in Hollywood and Bombshell led the film category with four nods apiece, Amazon's The Marvellous

Mrs Maisel led the TV field, also with four nominations.

Here is the full list of nominees.

Cast in a Motion Picture "Bombshell" "The Irishman" "Jojo Rabbit" "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" "Parasite" Male Actor in a Leading Role in a Motion Picture Christian Bale, "Ford v Ferrari" Leonardo DiCaprio, "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" Adam Driver, "Marriage Story" Taron Egerton, "Rocketman" Joaquin Phoenix, "Joker"





The Runaway Husbands



office are abandoned wives, volunteering their hours at the office to help women like them. Sibash Kabiraj, regional passport chief in the city of Chandigarh, says it all began when the wives started coming to him and pleading for help. A lifelong civil servant with a taste for the fine print, Kabiraj realized Indian law would allow him to suspend - and even cancel - the passports of overseas Indian men who had misled their wives. The Passport Authority requires approval from the central government to take away a passport but can do so if the holder lies or withholds information, or if there is a warrant or court summons, among other reasons.

But there was a problem in this country notorious for its bureaucracy. "One suspension of a passport, it requires a lot of paperwork," he says. Not one to be stopped, he explained

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(News Agencies)- In a pink-walled room of a government office at the foot of the Himalayas, Indian women spend their days cancelling the passports of runaway husbands. Midday on a Monday, the father of a woman who married a merchant marine is explaining how the husband lied about being single and

failed to disclose the fact that he had a child and a warrant for his arrest. The case, says worker Amritpal Kaur, should qualify for immediate impoundment of the man's passport. Kaur isn't your usual Indian bureaucrat. She isn't a government employee at all. She and the other women who work in the passport

Deepika Padukone Steps Out Of Comfort Zone With 'Chhapaak' And She Won't Regret It



(By Our Staff Reporter) After playing quite a few goody-goody roles in her career so far, Deepika Padukone is finally stepping out of her comfort zone with Meghna Gulzar's Chhapaak, which hits the screen early next month. But will she be able to pass her litmus test in a difficult role which he has dubbed as the most emotionally challenging one yet for her?

Padukone, the highest paid actress in Bollywood, has mostly played glamorous roles ever since making her debut opposite Shah Rukh Khan in Farah Khan's Om Shanti Om in 2007. From Love Aaj Kal (2009), Cocktail (2012), Goliyon Ki Raasleela: Ram-Leela (2013) to Chennai Express (2013), Piku (2015) and Padmaavat (2018), she has delivered hits consistently over the years. Cond Page on 18

U.S. panel eyes sanctions for Indian minister over citizenship curbs for Muslims



(Insider Bureau)- A federal panel on religion has urged the United States to weigh sanctions against India's Home Minister Amit Shah if the south Asian nation adopts legislation to exclude Muslims from a path to citizenship for

religious minorities from its neighbors. Shah is a close associate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose Hindu nationalist-led government is seen by critics as pushing an agenda that undermines the secular foundations of India's democracy.

On Tuesday, parliament's lower house approved the measure covering citizenship for non-Muslim minorities, specifically Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs, who fled Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before 2015.

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Arctic May Have Crossed Key Threshold, Emitting Several Tons Of Carbon

(News Agencies)- The Arctic is undergoing a profound, rapid and unmitigated shift into a new climate state, one that is greener, features far less ice, and is a net source of greenhouse gas emissions from melting permafrost, according to a major new federal assessment of the region released Tuesday.



The consequences of these climate shifts will be felt far outside the Arctic in the form of altered weather patterns, increased greenhouse gas emissions, and rising sea levels from the melting Greenland ice sheet and


mountain glaciers. The findings are contained in the 2019 Arctic Report Card, a major federal assessment of climate change trends and impacts throughout the region.

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