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Assembly election results:

Voters have fired a warning shot



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India's guarded optimism to pakistan's dubious generosity



Story ON Page 18



Donald Trump denies any ties to ex-lawyer Michael Cohen's crimes

(By Our Staff Reporter) -US president Donald Trump on Thursday said he never told his private lawyer Michael Cohen to break the law and denied any ties to his crimes, a day after Cohen was sentenced to prison on charges that included hush money payments to women ahead of the 2016 presidential election. "Cohen was guilty on many charges unrelated to me," Trump said in a series of Twitter posts, adding that Cohen wanted "to embarrass the president and get a much reduced prison sentence, which he did." (Contd. on 21)

Leopard kills Indian Buddhist monk meditating in forest

(Agencies) A monk meditating in a forest in the Indian state of Maharashtra has died in a leopard attack, officials say.



Rahul Walke had been "meditating under a tree" in the Tadoba forest, which is a protected tiger reserve, officials told PTI news agency. Walke had been attached to a Buddhist temple which is inside the forest, but he had walked to a spot quite far away from it to meditate. Forest officials said they had warned the monks against going too far inside. "I would like to tell everyone not to go inside the forest," GP Narawane, a forest official, told BBC Marathi. (Contd on page 21)

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(See Full Page Advt. on Page 32)

Sri Lanka parliament sacking 'illegal'

Sri Lanka's top court has ruled that the president's dissolution of parliament last month was unconstitutional, as a political crisis continues to grip the nation.

President Maithripala Sirisena dismissed his prime minister and replaced him with former leader Mahinda Rajapaksa in late October.

When that decision was contested, he dissolved parliament.

The ruling could see sacked PM Ranil Wickremesinghe return to office.

The legislature - which has been sitting after a temporary ruling from the Supreme Court - has already

passed two no-confidence motions against Mr Rajapaksa.

The controversial but popular leader was president at the end of Sri Lanka's nearly three decade-old civil war in 2009 and is accused of presiding over vast human rights abuses, which he denies. On Wednesday, the parliament passed a vote of confidence in Ranil Wickremesinghe as prime minister.

His party and its allies have a simple majority in parliament - and have argued from the beginning that President Sirisena's actions, including calling a snap election nearly two years ahead of

schedule, were unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court on Thursday said the president could not dissolve parliament until it was four-and-a-half years through its five-year term. Correspondents say that if the president does not accept the top court's decision, it could lead to impeachment proceedings. However this would require the support of a two-thirds majority in parliament and a special inquiry by the Supreme Court.

In a tweet, Mr Wickremesinghe called on President Sirisena to "promptly respect the judg-



ment of the courts". He is yet to comment. Namal Rajapaksa, an MP and son of Mahinda Rajapaksa, tweeted: "We respect the decision of [Sri Lanka's] Supreme Court, despite the fact that we have reser-

ervations regarding its interpretation." The political crisis, which began on 26 October when President Sirisena shocked the nation by suddenly sacking his PM, is being closely watched by the US, India, China and

the European Union. The government has been in paralysis since an appeals court ruling last week that restrained Mr Rajapaksa from acting as prime minister, in a separate case brought by 122 MPs.

Government to ban higher denomination Indian Currency notes in Nepal



(Agencies)- The government has decided to ban the use of high denomination Indian Currency notes and use only IRS 100 in Nepal from

now onwards. The government has called on the people to refrain from keeping or carrying Indian bank notes higher than 100 notes as the government

has not legalised the Indian bank notes of denomination Rs 200, Rs 500 and Rs 2000, according to government's spokesperson and

Minister for Information and Communications Gokul Prasad Baskota. People have been using IC notes RS 200 and Rs 500 in the Nepali market. Billions of Indian currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 have been still stuck in Nepal after the Indian government withdrew the notes from circulation in 2016 in a bid to curb tax evasion and black money. A Cabinet meeting on Thursday decided to waive the loans of farmers, disbursed by

public cooperatives. Around 7,000 farmers will be benefitted by the decision. The farmers had taken Rs 193.9 million in loan from public cooperatives. The interests of the amount will be around Rs 1 billion. The government has decided to send the ordinance brought to integrate police personnel into Nepal Police and province police to Civil Service Commission for discussion. The government has also decided to implement the

suggestions mentioned in the report of a task force formed to give suggestions on the demands raised by the Nepal Textile Industry Association. Likewise, the meeting has approved temporary contract appointment of 167 persons to complete the project related to drinking water on time. Billions of banned Indian currency in the 500 and 1000 denominations, within and outside the banking system in Nepal, were affected by demonitisation in India.

House says Myanmar crimes against Rohingya are genocide

(Insider Bureau) - The US House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution Thursday declaring that the crimes committed by Myanmar's security forces against Rohingya Muslims constitute genocide — a notable move given the US State Department has yet to make such a designation.

"The United States has a moral obligation to call these crimes genocide. Failing to do so gives the perpetrators cover and

hinders efforts to bring those accountable to justice. With this resolution, the House fulfills its part of that duty," House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) said in floor remarks in support of the resolution. The resolution passed with a vote of 394 to 1. It also calls for "the immediate pardon and release" of Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, who have spent more than a year in prison for their work exposing the massacre of Myanmar's

Muslim minority. The State Department this week defended its decision to not yet label the crimes — which based on its own reporting included acts of mass killing, destruction and sexual violence — as genocide. That report, quietly released in September, found that violence against the Rohingya in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State was "extreme, large-scale, widespread, and seemingly geared toward both terrorizing the population and driving out the

Rohingya residents." Deputy spokesman Robert Palladino said Tuesday that their conclusion last year that ethnic cleansing had occurred "in no way prejudices any potential further analysis on whether mass atrocities have taken place, including genocide or crimes against humanity." "What the United States continues to do at this time — our efforts have been and remain focused on steps that will improve the situation for Rohingya refugees and all people in



Burma and as well as promoting accountability for those that were responsible for these atrocities," he said, adding that they are "open to new information." he United Nations has called for Myanmar's

generals to face an international tribunal on charges of genocide. The chair of a UN fact-finding mission on the situation said in September that he had "never been confronted by crimes as horrendous and on such a scale as these."

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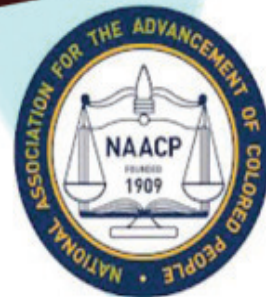
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How Congress led by Rahul Gandhi turned the party around in 3 states

Ironically, or perhaps appropriately, those are the same factors the BJP has got right since it embarked on its winning spree since 2014.

Never write the obituary of a party. Or a leader. And never write the obituary of a party which is 133 years old, and a leader who belongs to a family which has produced three prime ministers.

Never also underestimate the ability of the Indian electorate to throw up surprises.

The Congress is back, winning the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. And it is back in the region where it was most deeply vulnerable. If there is a pattern in this set of elections, here are five factors Congress got right. Ironically, or perhaps appropriately, those are the same factors the BJP has got right since it embarked on its winning spree since 2014.

The first is leadership. This was always Narendra Modi's forte. What changed?

Rahul Gandhi got it right — not because he won the election on his own steam but because a leader has to take the right decisions. He took the right decisions in Madhya Pradesh. The state president was the old, but the resourceful, Kamal

Nath who knew how to rev up an organisation. Jyotiraditya Scindia was the most popular of all leaders across regions and demographics. Digvijay Singh knew the state organisation inside out but was kept in the background because of his perceived public unpopularity. In Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot was most popular. Sachin Pilot worked hard, and rebuilt the organisation. In Chhattisgarh, TS Singh Deo, as the Thakur leader and leader of opposition, and Tamardhwaj Sahu and Bhupesh Bagel, as the key swingers of the crucial Other Backward Classes vote, were empowered. Gandhi picked no chief ministerial candidate, although he will have to do so now (but everyone worked hard believing that they had a chance). But in a loose organisational setup, to manage leadership, and reconcile factions, is testament to Gandhi's underestimated management skills. Once he had figured leadership, he led from the front with an aggressive and energetic campaign.

The second is religion. In

Indian elections, you have to get religion right. The BJP has always relied on polarisation, portraying itself as the Hindu and the Congress as the pro-Muslim party.

The Congress, soon after the 2014 elections but definitely after the Uttar Pradesh elections, realised that it had to change its game. And this led to Rahul Gandhi picking up straight from his grandmother's textbook of displaying Hindu religiosity rather than from his great grandfather's practice of aggressive agnosticism. Many criticised this as the Congress' turn to soft Hindutva. But Gandhi stayed on the path, convinced that he needed to be in tune with the beliefs, but not necessarily the prejudices, of his society. The polarisation trick did not work.

The third is the economic narrative. The BJP constructed the vikas (development) promise as an overarching platform. It is unravelling.

The Congress picked up local issues in each district and constituency. It helped that the party was the challenger and thus had

the advantage of taking on an incumbent. But as Gandhi said in each state, there were two pillars of the party's strategy, a promise to protect farmers, reeling from low prices, and a promise to provide jobs to the young. Agrarian distress and unemployment have become the two biggest failures of the government. The Congress capitalised on the resentment, and promised both short term measures such as loan waivers and longer term measures of promising ways to encourage small and medium industries everywhere to create jobs. These are not easy promises to keep, but for now they have worked. It also built on the anger that has been accumulating over both demonetisation and implementation of the Goods and Services Tax. No Indian election can be won without getting caste right, and this is the fourth factor. The BJP has, since 2014, become an inclusive Hindu party. It has consolidated upper castes, and gone beyond them to win over the support of OBCs, Dalits and tribals. The Congress recognised



it had to be as all-embracing. It went back to the upper castes and leveraged on their latent sense that the BJP has betrayed them by turning pro backward and Dalit. It went to the Dalits and constantly emphasised the BJP's upper caste character. It picked on local issues, from the encounter of a Rajput gangster in Rajasthan to putting up its own upper caste candidates in several constituencies. It also sought to win back the OBC vote by giving them representation in leadership in both Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. All of this helped the Congress create a far more inclusive and umbrella coalition within the Hindu fold than it has at any point since 2014.

The fifth is organisation,

which matters. And the BJP has got this right with the extensive use of its booth committee and panna pramukhs and cadre based machine.

The Congress knew it cannot replicate the BJP and RSS machine. But it needed boots on the ground. Sachin Pilot in Rajasthan did this over the past four years. Kamal Nath did this in Madhya Pradesh over the past eight months, building on an already strong base. And the collective leadership of Chhattisgarh did this over two years, especially after the exit of Ajit Jogi. They were ably assisted by the Congress' data analytics team and the Shakti programme, which gave to the Congress, for the first time, an in-depth sense of its own organisational base by connecting its workers to the leadership.

Is Amit Shah a better challenger than defender?

A defining feature of the elections in the past four years has been the way Amit Shah has redefined the way they are fought.

This, complemented by Narendra Modi's popularity, has arguably been a central factor in the BJP's dream run.

Tuesday's outcome has raised questions about the limits of his method of election management. Does it work in all settings? Can organisation be a substitute for governance? And most importantly, is Shah a better challenger than defender?

Shah has focused on expanding the party's base; selection of candidates after multiple feedback mechanisms;

beginning campaigns early; strengthening booth committees and even appointing panna pramukhs in charge of each voter roll; and voter mobilisation on polling day. Make no mistake. This has made BJP formidable — and the fact that it could convert what was supposed to be an easy win for Congress in Rajasthan into a battle, and almost defend Madhya Pradesh owes something to this ability of the machine. But a few issues have emerged.

Is the excessive focus on internal organisational work actually distracting workers on the ground from listening to the people and reaching out to voters. Ticket distribution is a dilemma for any party. But it is

particularly true for an incumbent. If you repeat MLAs, you risk confronting local resentment. If you don't repeat MLAs, you risk them rebelling and standing against the official candidates. This time around, an analysis by How India Lives for HT showed that the share of candidates repeated by BJP in MP and Chhattisgarh was higher than in the 2008 and 2013 polls. It was lower in Rajasthan by three percentage points. While a detailed analysis of whether those who got repeated have won or lost will take time, it is clear that both strategies have risks. And Shah's model does not have a clear cut answer for it.

Shah also believes in

deeply aggressive campaigning, which primarily attacks the rival. In 19 of the 22 elections post 2014, BJP was the challenger. This worked. But as it defends its record, the focus has to shift on governance achievements. Voters perhaps are jaded by just sheer attacks, which they have heard in the past already. The party's strategy to defend its record relies on direct outreach to beneficiaries of governance welfare schemes.

That is good, but that is clearly not good enough, for people's aspirations have moved beyond just welfare to other economic concerns. A formidable organisation cannot neutralise governance failures.



Political scientist Manisha Priyam said, "The narrative was important in these elections- of distress amongst farmers, conjoined with dwindling cash amongst landless labourers. Amit Shah's

machinery could not overwhelm the narrative." The machine is formidable. But it is faltering and it needs more than a fresh coat of paint. It needs re-engineering.

The Congress's rebound is impressive

There's a message for the Congress in the electoral outcome in the three Hindi heartland states: take smaller, ideologically proximate parties along on turfs where the fight is straight with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Or else a smooth ride to power could become arduous, even accident-prone. The Congress's impressive rebound, if not outright victories, came exactly a year after Rahul Gandhi took the party's reins from his mother, Sonia Gandhi. It devolves upon him now to ensure the party doesn't play high and mighty the way the BJP did in the wake of its resounding 2014 win followed by a string of successes in states. The Congress's solo victories in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan must facilitate rather than come in the way of co-opting the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in government formation. The same principle should apply to the Samajwadi Party (SP) in legislatures where it has a presence. The art of sharing power with like minded parties was perfected by the CPI-M in West Bengal. It never abandoned its left front allies despite notching up majorities of its own. In the instant context, early partnerships with the BSP-SP will generate the goodwill the Congress so direly needs to build a front that will be a formidable challenger to the BJP's hegemony in Uttar Pradesh. Having won 71 of the 80 Lok Sabha seats last time, the saffron party has a lot to lose and little to gain in the bellwether state where it's hard put to revive the Ram Temple movement. Rahul Gandhi would add extra sheen to his party's electoral success, for which he can legitimately take credit, by assuming

stewardship of post-poll initiatives. Towards that, he should not also abandon the alliance with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) despite the setback in Telangana. To have Chandrababu Naidu by his side could be as valuable for Rahul as it was for Narendra Modi in the run-up to the 2014 polls. The Andhra chief minister's support for the BJP's PM-face helped him overcome the image crisis that was his bane since the 2002 Gujarat riots. Keeping aside Chhattisgarh which resoundingly voted for a change, a post-mortem of the results in Rajasthan and MP would show as to what continues to ail a resurgent Congress. Disingenuous ticket-allocation caused by factionalism which, in turn, triggered avoidable, constituency-specific rebellions. The picture will be complete if one factors in the party's failure to stitch up pre-poll pacts with the BSP. Its strategy to go it alone certainly worked in Chhattisgarh, but not in the other two Hindi states. A tie-up with Mayawati could have helped the Congress deny the BJP the ground it has managed to retain in the two provinces. Objectively speaking, the saffron party has been ousted from power; it hasn't been wiped out the way the Congress was in these states in 2013. So shattered was the latter's morale after the disastrous show that a year later, it couldn't fight for an honourable defeat. The result: the Congress's lowest-ever tally in Parliament's Lower House since Independence. In contrast, the BJP has retained sizeable footprints in Rajasthan and MP that send 54 members to the Lok Sabha. Given the very tangible alienation of farmers, tillers, small

traders and the unemployed youth, the party has done a commendable salvage job in the face of adversity. With better resources and cadres, the BJP has a reasonable chance of a comeback in parliamentary elections in 2019. To forestall that eventuality, the Congress will have to quickly formulate and implement policies in tune with aspirations raised by its poll-time narrative. There might be other unforeseeable gauntlets the BJP could throw down to do what it does the best: whip up hyper religious, nationalistic fervour to polarise popular opinion. The saffron offensives of such a nature can only be negated by a counter-narrative enabled by the collective ground-connect of non-BJP parties. On account of the fault-lines within, the Congress could have met the fate that has been its staple over the past five years. Flawed candidatures caused it maximum damage in the desert state, where a projected landslide win became a cliffhanger. The reason: a robust challenge to official nominees by renegades claiming loyalty to Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot. Rearguard action to contain damage came late and was of little help. That the rebels queered the pitch for the party in nearly two dozen constituencies was confirmed by a top state-level leader. But in Rajasthan's many satta markets, the count was two-fold more of triangular fights involving Independents from the Congress stock. On account of Shivraj Singh Chouhan's undiminished appeal, Madhya Pradesh was a state more difficult to win than Rajasthan. What helped the Congress there were the BJP's bad candidatures — and its own competent job of candidate selection.

The BJP must draw the right lessons for 2019

The BJP must go back to the economic drawing board. The problem, however, is timing

Tuesday's electoral setback has sparked a debate within the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), its ideological parent, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and its wider ecosystem of supporters. They take heart in the close contest in Madhya Pradesh, the credible performance in Rajasthan, and while surprised at the Chhattisgarh outcome, attribute it to local factors. Many within the party fold also believe that the 2019 election will be fought on a different template. At the same time, a process of introspection has already begun. Close defeats are still defeats. And for a party leadership obsessed with winning, this has come as a major setback, just months before the national elections. The internal debate is broadly on the following lines. On the one hand are supporters and loyalists who argue that the BJP lost because it focused on development and welfare schemes, but ignored the ideological agenda of Hindutva. They critique the Modi government for not delivering on the Ram temple issue and believe that only an ordinance or an effort at legislation on the issue will showcase the government's commitment. This will consolidate Hindus, make 2019 an emotive election, and drown class based and caste based considerations. On the other hand are those who believe the outcome actually reflects the limits of the Hindutva approach. To suggest that the BJP regime has not been committed enough to its ideological worldview is not true. From the obsession with cow protection, which has had dangerous consequences, to aggressive display of majoritarian political symbols, to the marginalisation of minorities in various spheres, the hardline has actually managed to push its script. Both Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath's speeches reflect this. But while this keeps the base happy, it does not influence the floating, swing vote. Those voters are concerned with immediate livelihood issues. The BJP's losses in urban centres indicates disillusionment of the middle class, young and trading communities. Its losses in rural areas shows the anger of farmers. Its setback in the tribal belts shows that marginalised communities, who were getting attracted to the BJP, are moving away. The lesson, therefore, to draw from the results is the need for the BJP to go back to the economic drawing board. The problem, however, is timing. The government cannot address the structural issues of farm incomes and jobs in four months. So it will be tempted to turn to hardline Hindutva. That would be a mistake and reduce it to its core vote. The additional 10-12 percentage points the BJP has gained in 2014, compared to 2009, will be at risk. Narendra Modi has a creative and extraordinarily sharp political mind. He needs a new narrative, a new story, and implement whatever corrections are feasible on the economy. He must avoid the short cuts of identity and divisive politics.



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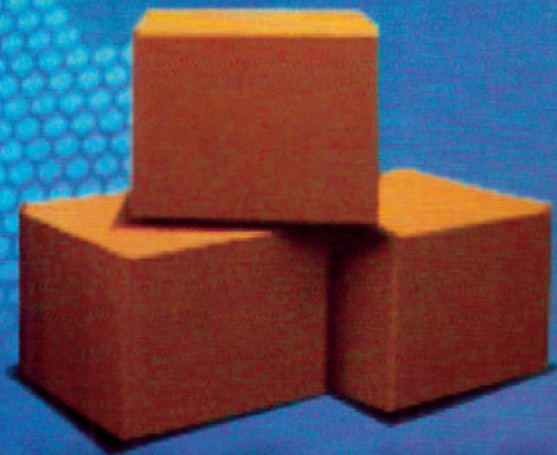
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KCR may now be aiming for the national stage

With so many regional leaders vying for bigger stakes at the Centre post 2019 polls, KCR will not have it easy. However, with his stunning comeback to power with an incredible sweep in Telangana, nobody can afford to ignore him too.

With so many regional leaders vying for bigger stakes at the Centre post 2019 polls, KCR will not have it easy. However, with his stunning comeback to power with an incredible sweep in Telangana, nobody can afford to ignore him too. The swagger and body language of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) leader K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) at the post-victory celebrations in Hyderabad on Tuesday was unmistakable. A near three-fourths majority in Telangana with TRS winning 88 of the 119 seats in the assembly means that KCR, who had gone quiet for the past few months on his plan for a non-BJP, non-Congress, Federal Front, is back in business. He made his intentions very clear. "In ten

days, I will unveil an action plan in Delhi for a new national party which will actually be a consortium of regional parties." Given the huge majority that TRS would enjoy in the new assembly, KCR can afford to allow his preferred successor, his son KT Rama Rao and his nephew T Harish Rao along with daughter K Kavitha to run the state for him, even as he devotes his time and attention to national affairs. Unlike some of the regional satraps, KCR is no stranger to the corridor of powers and machinations in Delhi. Both during his stint as a union minister for labour and employment during UPA 1, as well as through the long struggle to achieve separate statehood for Telangana, KCR built bridges across the political spectrum. He is likely to leverage

those relationships to strengthen the Federal Front. Witness the alacrity with which leaders like Mamata Banerjee, Nitish Kumar and HD Kumaraswamy greeted him on his victory. Those who think that with only 17 Lok Sabha seats up for grabs in Telangana, KCR could be overplaying his hand, might be underestimating him. KCR enjoys excellent equations with Jagan Reddy of YSRCP and has publicly promised his *bête noire*, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, a "return gift" for trying to foray into his state. With Andhra having 25 LS seats, KCR in reality will be playing on the national stage with a bigger number of LS members backing him. Unlike Naidu, KCR is fluent in Hindi. This could appeal to a wider audience in northern India. An open alliance with



AIMIM and his minority friendly image means that KCR's secular credentials are not in question. His emphasis on a welfare oriented rural development model, with its agricultural doles, stress on large-scale irrigation projects and inclusive growth, which encompasses all sections of society, provides an alternative narrative to the perceived failures of the NDA on those fronts. However, some crucial issues remain to be addressed. How is the Federal Front different from the Mahagathbandhan that Naidu was trying to stitch up?

In spite of posturing by KCR, the comeback of the Congress in three critical Hindi heartland states means that for any non-BJP government to come to power at Centre, it would have to be either led or supported by India's Grand Old Party. Given that the Congress is still the principal opposition to TRS in Telangana, how will KCR deal with it? Of course, KCR in the past has shown incredible ideological flexibility to manage political relationships with parties of all hues, including the TDP.

Shaktikanta Das should be guided by the country's interests

The appointment of former economic affairs secretary Shaktikanta Das as the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) seems to have created a flutter, with everything from his education to his behaviour and performance as a bureaucrat being discussed. Some of this is unfair. Sure, the circumstances of his predecessor's exit were strange, and brought about, if only partly, by the government, but Mr Das should be judged neither on the basis of who he is nor the circumstances of his appointment. He isn't the first

bureaucrat from the finance ministry to be appointed to RBI. On the contrary, historically, the Indian central bank is a natural progression for senior finance ministry officials. And again, not all who are nominated to the top job in RBI have academic grounding in economics, although most have spent time running banks or dealing with matters financial. On the last count, especially, Mr Das' credentials can't be discounted. It also seems a bit unfair to judge him for his views on demonetisation — as a senior bureaucrat in the finance



ministry, he couldn't very well have criticised a policy of his own government. What Mr Das should be judged on is how he operates as the Reserve Bank of India's 25th

Governor. There have been bureaucrats before him who have ended up on Mint Street because the finance minister of the day thought they would be pliable — only to discover that the Indian central bank is that rare institution which demands and inspires complete independence of thought and action from its leaders. Decisions on the quantum of reserves to be held by the central bank, on whether lenders which have weakened themselves through indiscriminate, and sometimes unethical, lending be allowed to

continue on this path, on finding a balance between growth and inflation, and on the kind of aid ailing businesses, including finance companies, need have to be taken transparently and openly, and with an eye on the big picture (which is growth, stability, and inflation management as far as RBI is concerned, not electoral compulsions). Das should, therefore, be guided not by what the finance ministry wants but what the country needs. If the behaviour of past Governors is anything to go by, he will be.

Like the EU, India must regulate data effectively

The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is considered a game changer in the technology policy world today. It has pushed several countries, including India, to adopt a regulatory stance towards personal data. The Justice Srikrishna Committee deliberations, leading up to the Personal Data Protection Bill (PDP Bill), is a reminder of the vast powers that this stance can vest with the bureaucracy. The proposed Data Protection Authority can investigate and adjudicate contraventions, formulate rules and monitor compliance, and evaluate *ex ante* whether a proposed processing of personal data merits course correction. But while

celebrating the might of the State against hitherto unchecked technology giants, it would serve us well to remember that better regulation is not coterminous with micromanaged legislative prescriptions. Often, such prescriptions are counterproductive, and especially so when regulating new technologies or domains that demand greater scientific expertise. India's current experiences with food safety and the environment testify to this fact. Elaborate legislative prescriptions have led to unwarranted licensing and controls, while acute shortage of testing labs and qualified personnel persists. Amid GDPR conversations, we tend to look beyond advances in the EU towards "better regulation". This initiative over the past few years aims

for regulatory outcomes at minimal cost. As part of the exercise, policy design and preparation, adoption, implementation and monitoring, evaluation and revision are subject to stringent evaluation. This evaluation involves fitness checks on how prior interventions advanced policy goals, impact assessments that deliberate upon alternative choices and their projected consequences, and collective consultations when the subject matter involves multiple regulatory or policy actors. Such collective consultations are particularly relevant to the Indian experience on regulating data and emerging technologies. Take, for instance, the data localisation debate here. RBI's April 2018 directive on storing financial

transactions data locally hit the payments industry like a bolt from the blue. But this was only the beginning of episodic interventions that soon revealed how chequered policymaking can affect the borderless and free nature of the Internet as we have come to experience it over the years. The PDP Bill came next, stipulating server localisation for an undefined category of "critical personal data" which could be carved out ad hoc from a broader category of defined "sensitive personal data." A new (and now redacted) e-commerce policy followed, prescribing a sunset period of two years within which all e-commerce data ought to be localised in India. Oddly, none of these interventions exhibited

consistency or clarity over the underlying policy rationale. Did the rationale emanate in a heightened ability to access data for law enforcement purposes? If so, no actual figures were forthcoming on cybercrimes where law enforcement suffered because of the server being located elsewhere. If, on the other hand, the rationale was to bolster investments in indigenous artificial intelligence technologies like China did, it was unclear how mere data residence in Indian servers would help when a significant chunk of such data continued to be under private control, or how the various other parallel initiatives China had embarked on could be conveniently forgotten when making this case.

After Kamal Nath as Madhya Pradesh CM; decision on Rajasthan expected today

After consulting various leaders including United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi, and looking at the choice of every booth-level party worker in the states concerned, Rahul Gandhi picked Kamal Nath, 72, as chief minister of Madhya Pradesh.

After two days of deliberations, endless meetings, and significant jockeying by the supporters of chief ministerial aspirants, Congress president Rahul Gandhi, after consulting various leaders including United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi, and looking at the choice of every booth-level party worker in the states concerned, picked Kamal Nath, 72, as chief minister of Madhya Pradesh.

Kamal Nath is to take oath as Madhya Pradesh chief minister on December 17 at Lal Parade Ground in Bhopal, according to news agency ANI.

For Rajasthan, he was also expected to pick Ashok Gehlot, 67, or Sachin Pilot, 41. He was in a late-night meeting with Gehlot, immediately after meeting Pilot, at the time of going to print at 12:10am. For Chhattisgarh, the decision on the next chief minister is likely to be made on Friday.

The Congress won a landslide in Chhattisgarh, clearly won Rajasthan, and edged out the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday. On

Wednesday, the elected legislators of all three states passed resolutions asking Gandhi to pick their CMs. There were two aspirants in Madhya Pradesh, Nath and Jyotiraditya Scindia; two in Rajasthan, Gehlot and Pilot; and three in Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel, TS Singhdeo, and Tamradhwaj Sahu.

Even as the candidates themselves chose to play it cool, their supporters expressed themselves, with Pilot's backers blocking roads in Bharatpur and Karauli in protest.

Although some critics blamed the Congress party and Gandhi for "indecisiveness" in choosing the chief ministers of the three states, the delay in such a process isn't anything new.

In October 2014, the BJP took nine days after the results of the Maharashtra elections were announced to pick Devendra Fadnavis as its chief minister. In March 2017, it took the BJP eight days after the Uttar Pradesh election results to pick Yogi Adityanath.

Hours before the announcement

of the Madhya Pradesh CM, Gandhi tweeted a photo with Nath and Scindia at his residence in New Delhi. Along with the photo, the Congress president posted a fitting quote by Russian philosopher and writer Leo Tolstoy: "The two most powerful warriors are patience and time." After Gandhi's tweet, Scindia posted the same photo and said: "It is not a race, it is not about kursi, we are here to serve the people of Madhya Pradesh. I am leaving for Bhopal and you will get to know the decision today.

Late on Thursday, the Congress's Twitter handle congratulated Nath on being picked as the CM of the state that has a 230-member assembly. "Our best wishes to Shri @OfficeOfKNath for being elected CM of Madhya Pradesh. An era of change is upon MP with him at the helm," the party handle said. Local television channels reported Nath would take oath on Monday. Pilot and Gehlot, who first met Gandhi in the afternoon as the party deliberated on the next Rajasthan CM, appealed to their supporters to maintain calm as the party leadership



discussed the matter. "Friends, I appeal to all workers to maintain peace and discipline in the state. I have full faith in the party leadership. Whatever decision Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi will take in the interest of the state we will welcome that. We all are dedicated and sincere workers of the Congress and hence it is our responsibility to maintain its dignity," Pilot wrote in a Twitter message after the protests. Gehlot said the workers put in a lot of effort and should wait for Gandhi's decisions. On Wednesday morning, the four candidates reached Delhi to meet Gandhi, who also discussed the

matter with Sonia Gandhi and a few other senior leaders. He also looked at the preferences of all booth-level workers in the three states, collated through Shakti, the party's new network connecting the Congress headquarters to workers. Gandhi's sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was also seen going inside her brother's residence as consultations over the CM picks in the three states were underway. But the MP announcement didn't come immediately, perhaps in keeping with the protocol that a chief ministerial choice is best announced by the legislators.

Delhi's air upgrades to 'very poor', likely to continue for next few days

Government agencies have forecast that chances of any significant improvement in air quality over the next few days are remote, as meteorological conditions are not favourable for dispersion of pollutants.

The air quality of the National Capital improved marginally on Wednesday to 'very poor' after remaining in the 'severe' category for two consecutive days. Also, parts of Delhi-NCR have received light rainfall since Tuesday evening. However, government agencies have forecast that chances of any significant improvement in air quality over the next few days are remote, as meteorological conditions are not favourable for dispersion of pollutants.

A multi-agency task force, headed by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), has

asked government agencies to carry out special pollution-control drive and enforce corrective actions particularly in areas where the air quality remained severe. At least 27 such areas have been identified out of which 19 were in Delhi.

The air quality index (AQI) on Wednesday was recorded as 392 at 4pm against Tuesday's 413. Even though the overall AQI was 'very poor', many of the city's 36 monitoring stations recorded 'severe' air quality. These include Anand Vihar, Ashok Vihar, Bawana, Narela, Burari, Sonia Vihar and Wazirpur, among others. On a scale of 0 – 500,

AQI value between 401 and 500 is considered to be 'severe' level of pollution. According to the CPCB such high levels of pollution can affect healthy people and seriously impact patients with lung and heart ailments.

"The air quality is likely to remain in the upper end of the 'very poor' category over the next few days. This is mainly because the surface wind speed, high moisture levels and ventilation index are highly unfavourable for dispersion of pollutants trapped in the air," said a scientist of the government's early warning air quality

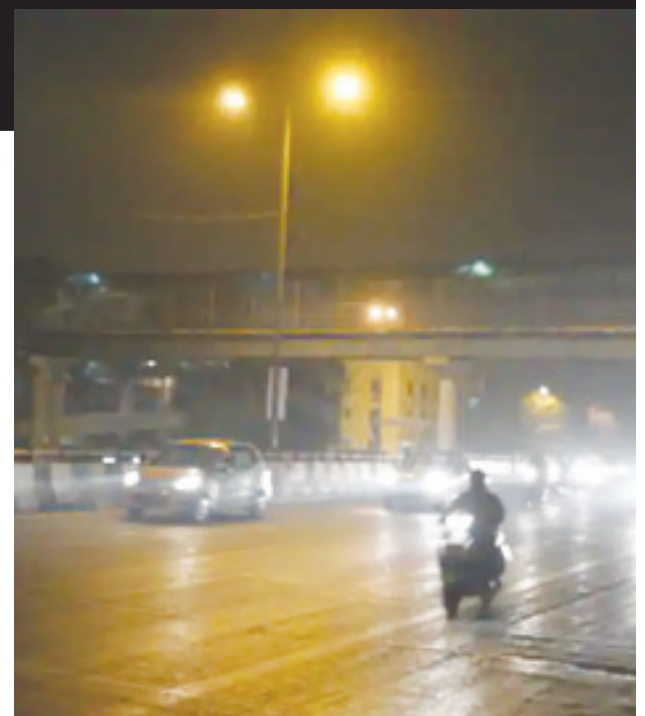
forecasting system.

According to CPCB officials, wind speed has picked up marginally, but high moisture content is allowing further trapping of local pollutants.

Meanwhile, officials in the India Meteorological Department (IMD), said, 1.4 mm rainfall was recorded on Wednesday at the Safdarjung observatory — which represents Delhi's weather.

Maximum temperature on Wednesday was recorded as 21.6 degrees Celsius, two notches below the season's average. The minimum temperature settled at 12.6 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal.

However, the minimum



temperature is expected to fall from Thursday to around 7 degrees Celsius. "Very light rainfall is likely to occur on Thursday morning as well. The minimum temperature had risen because of the western disturbance passing through Delhi. It is expected to drop again from Thursday, with the wind direction changing to northwesterly bringing cold and strong winds," said a senior IMD official.



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CBI secures Interpol Red Corner against Mehul Choksi

Central Bureau of Investigation spokesman Abhishek Dayal added that before asking Interpol to issue Red Notice against Mehul Choksi, the agency secured a non bailable arrest warrant against him as well.

(Agencies)-The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has managed to secure an Interpol Red Notice against fugitive diamond trader Mehul Choksi, in what is seen as a big boost to its efforts to bring him back to India to face trial in the Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud. Choksi became a citizen of the Caribbean country Antigua and Barbuda under a programme in which a certain quantum of investment entitles an individual to citizenship.

Investigations have showed that Choksi began the process to take citizenship of the twin-island nation last year, well before he left India in the first week of January. The fraud came out a little later. Choksi was formally granted citizenship in

November last year but took oath as an Antigua citizen on January 15.

Choksi, who, along with his nephew, diamond jeweller Nirav Modi, who, too, is a fugitive from India, perpetrated a fraud on PNB amounting to over ₹13,500 crore, according to CBI.

Neither has returned to India despite repeated summons from the investigation agencies and courts. "In July, Choksi, 59, was traced to Antigua after US authorities informed their India counterparts about his travel to the Caribbean nation. The CBI, through the ministry of external affairs, immediately approached the Antigua authorities asking for extradition of Choksi. The island nation has informed the Indian authorities that it would honour any legitimate request

to extradite him. The process has begun," said a government official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The Antigua authorities also pointed out the absence of a Red Notice against Choksi and the fact that one has now been secured means that gap has been addressed, this official added. A lawyer for Mehul Choksi said Mehul Choksi's legal team will work on setting aside the notice. "This [notice] appears to have been obtained by making misrepresentations to Interpol. As we didn't get an opportunity to represent our stand, this Red Notice has been issued. We shall be exposing the misrepresentations at various forums and we are confident that this Red Notice shall be set aside

in due course," said Sanjay Abbot. The Red Notice is basically an appeal to all Interpol member countries to arrest the person and send him or her back to the country which requested issuance of the same. A Central Bureau of Investigation official disputed Abbot's version.

According to this person who asked not to be named, the notice was issued despite objections raised by Choksi who claimed that the Indian agencies were persecuting him under political pressure and he was afraid of being "lynched" in India due to hostile environment against him. The matter went to a five-member Interpol committee's court, called Commission for Control of Files which cleared the



issuance of Red Notice. After investigation, a charge sheet was filed on May 16, 2018 against Mehul Choksi and 17 other accused persons including one former managing director and two executive directors of Punjab National Bank before the Special Judge, CBI cases, Greater Mumbai for cheating Punjab National Bank to the tune of ₹7080.86 crore (approx)," said Central Bureau of Investigation spokesman Abhishek Dayal.

Demolition of Muzaffarpur's house of horror begins, set to take a month

Following the Supreme Court's refusal to stay the demolition, a team of officials supervised the demolition operation on Thursday, even as workers knocked down the two upper floors with hammers.

(Insider Bureau) -The demolition of the notorious Muzaffarpur girls shelter home, which stood witness to horror stories of the abuse of 42 minors for years, finally began on Thursday. Local municipal authorities began razing the four-storeyed building that had been erected in violation of building by-laws. The way the house of horrors was constructed amply reflected the scale of cruelty its inmates had to suffer at the hands of shelter home owner, Brajesh Thakur, and its caretakers.

Abuse and barbarism inflicted on minor inmates aged between six and 17 years of age inside the high dark rooms of the shelter home, came to the fore in July this year after the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), which had conducted a social audit on shelter homes in the state, submitted its damning report to the government. The TISS report lifted the veil on organized physical and sexual exploitation of girls in Bihar shelter homes,

especially at the one in Muzaffarpur, where at least 34 out of the 42 girls tested positive for rape.

The stairs leading to the two upper floors of the building, located off Sahu Road near the Chhoti Kalyani area, have barely enough space for an individual to climb them. They were sealed with an iron grill, so that none could escape once it was locked. Boundary walls on the top floor of the building are seven foot high, with nails plastered to the walls. Since there is no high-rise anywhere in the vicinity, any attempt to flee from the top floor would have been akin to committing suicide.

The upper two floors of the building consisted of three big halls used mainly as shelters for short-stay inmates, while the ground floor was used for printing the daily Pratah Kamal, which has been discontinued since August 30. Thakur, a PIB-accredited journalist till October this year, was the 'proud' owner of three

newspapers published in Hindi, English and Urdu, respectively. The offset printing machine, which boasted of the most advanced technology in the region, is now covered with a sheet of dust, even as half-printed rolls of paper lie on it.

The third floor has a 14x14 foot store room-cum-kitchen, which was kept mostly locked. There was one big hall on the third floor and three ill-lit rooms. The hall has a just few small windows near the roof, to let sunlight in.

The condition of the third floor suggests that the inmates had to wait their turn to use the bathroom, since there were barely half a dozen toilets, which are window-less and get pitch dark if the light is switched off.

The fourth floor has two big rooms, which were generally opened during winter for inmates who required special medical care. Both the rooms have sufficient ventilation for light, but rendered difficult to access, since a concrete slab was laid across the



length of the wall.

Following the Supreme Court's refusal to stay the demolition, a team of officials led by executive engineer of Muzaffarpur municipal corporation, Suresh Kumar Sinha, and assisted by magistrate Janardan Prasad, supervised the demolition operation on Thursday, even as workers knocked down the two upper floors with hammers.

Municipal officials said it would take at least a month to raze the entire building. "We had to begin the drive manually, as it was difficult to carry heavy machines to the top given the narrow passage," said the executive engineer.

Neighbours, who claimed they had suffered due to Thakur's evil acts, expressed happiness as municipal authorities, assisted by labourers, entered the premises and started pulverizing the building. "I am excited to see the shelter home being razed. It has cast a slur on Muzaffarpur and its natives," said Maheshwar Sahu, a cloth shop owner. "Many of us feared that suspicious acts were going on inside the shelter home, but given the clout that Thakur enjoyed in the corridors of power, none could muster up courage to raise the issue," said Ramesh Kumar Jaiswal, a local businessman, who had come to watch the demolition.

Elaborate security arrangements ahead of the Dalai Lama's Bodh Gaya visit

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), has finalised the schedule of the Dalai Lama for his winter initiations at Bodh Gaya and urged the Gaya district administration and the Bodh Gaya Temple management Committee to ensure proper security arrangements for him during his stay.

(Insider Bureau) - The entire Buddhist township of Bodh Gaya has turned into a fortress, with heavy security deployed for the fortnight spiritual sojourn of Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, who is scheduled to arrive here on December 16. 800 security personnel have already been deployed and the Gaya police have sought additional 200 security personnel to complete the security layers, as discussed during a meeting of the Patna Zone inspector general (IG) NH Khan. The elaborate security arrangements are being made in view of the serious threat to Dalai Lama from the terror groups in Bangladesh. Last year, they triggered blasts around the

Kalchakra maidan during his visit. The terrorists were later identified as the members of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JUMB). Gaya senior superintendent of police Rajeev Mishra, who reviewed the security arrangements today, said that they are taking no chance and every corner of the Buddhist Township would be under continuous surveillance. He said that 1000 police personnel would be deployed to keep close vigil. The SSP and the Gaya DM Abhishek Kumar Singh also held a series of meetings with all the stakeholders, including hoteliers, tour operators, travel agents and guides apart from the different

monasteries of various countries and issued the security directives to them. The monasteries and hotels have been directed to keep records of the foreigners and ensure filling of the form C soon after landing at Bodh Gaya, the SSP said. The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), has finalised the schedule of the Dalai Lama for his winter initiations at Bodh Gaya and urged the Gaya district administration and the Bodh Gaya Temple management Committee to ensure proper security arrangements for him during his stay. As per the latest revised programme, Dalai Lama would arrive at Bodh Gaya on December 16 and remain here till January 8. He will also participate



in several functions organised by the local educational institutions during his stay. As per the final schedule, the Dalai Lama would arrive at Bodh Gaya on December 16 and offer prayers under the Bodhi Tree. On December 22-23 He would join the seminar on Buddhism organized by the Vat Thai monastery in Bodh Gaya. He would undertake three-day

special rituals with his devotees from December 24-26. On December 31, a mass prayer would be organised at the Kalchakra Maidan. The Dalai Lama would visit several educational institutions and take part in the programmes organised by the school children and teachers and is likely to leave for Dharamshala on January 9.

Will live and die in Madhya Pradesh, says outgoing CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who was ruling the state since 2005, said he will not move to the Centre following the BJP's loss in Madhya Pradesh, which it was ruling since 2003.

(Agencies)- Ruling out a new role outside Madhya Pradesh, outgoing chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday said he will soon take an "abhar" (gratitude) rally in the state's Vindhya region where the Bharatiya Janata Party had done well though losing in the state assembly election.

In an informal talk with journalists at the state BJP office, he said, "I am not a political person. I am emotionally attached with 7.50 crore people of Madhya Pradesh and I have resolved to serve them till my last breath."

"I will not go to Centre. I will live

in Madhya Pradesh and die in Madhya Pradesh," Chouhan said in response to questions if he sees his new role as the leader of Opposition or a Union minister after the BJP's defeat in the November 28 assembly elections after being in power for three consecutive terms. The party had won only 109 seats in the 230-member assembly, behind the Congress which won 114 seats, below the halfway mark, but got a majority with the help of the Bahujan

Samaj Party, the Samajwadi Party and some of the independents. On Congress' promise to waive loan of farmers within 10 days of its coming to power, he said the new government should keep the promises they made to the public. Also, it should continue to give incentives to farmers on sale of agricultural produce like wheat, paddy, garlic, onion, soybean etc.

In reply to a question, he said the state didn't need a legislative council as it unnecessarily put financial burden on people.

Chouhan, who was ruling the state since 2005, confirmed that he would take out an 'Abhar yatra' from Rewa in Vindhya



region to Mandasaur in Malwa-Nimad region. However, he said the dates of the yatra were yet to be decided.

The BJP performed exceedingly well in Vindhya region winning 24

seats out of 30, while the remaining went to the Congress. In the 2013 assembly elections, it had only won 16 seats against Congress' 12 and the Bahujan Samaj Party's 2 seats.

Shiv Sena puts pressure on BJP over Ram temple

(Agencies)- The Shiv Sena on Thursday stepped up pressure on the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) during the Winter Session of Parliament over the Ayodhya issue, accusing the ruling party of doing nothing in last four-and-a-half years to build a Ram temple, despite having a full majority in the Lok Sabha. Raising the matter in the Lok Sabha during Zero Hour, Sena demanded that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the centre should expedite the matter in the Supreme Court, which is currently hearing the dispute, or bring an ordinance at the earliest to build the temple.

"The BJP got clear majority but even then it did not take an initiative to build Ram temple in Ayodhya. We

demand that the government bring an ordinance on the issue," Sena MP Anandrao Vithoba Adsul said in the lower house of the Parliament.

Sena has been at loggerheads with the BJP ever since they fought the 2014 Maharashtra assembly election separately, and has been critical of the Narendra Modi government's economic policies.

Adsul reminded the BJP that it had taken out a yatra under the leadership of LK Advani in 1990 for construction of the temple, and accused it of having forgotten its core issue of Hindutva—an ideology which brought the two parties together.

Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray had visited Ayodhya on November 25 as part of his party's push to build a Ram temple there.



Vasundhara Raje retains bungalow she made official CM residence

The bungalow was in the midst of controversy after Raje chose to live there instead of the official CM residence 8, Civil Lines, on taking over as CM five years ago.

(Insider Bureau) - Outgoing Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje was on Thursday re-allotted her official residence, 13, Civil Lines, in Jaipur. The bungalow was in the midst of controversy after Raje chose to live there instead of the official CM residence 8, Civil Lines, on taking over as CM five years ago.

An order by the General Administration Department (GAD) said that Raje was being allotted the 13 Civil Lines without any charges. The GAD said the order was subject to a writ petition pending in the Rajasthan high court.

While 8, Civil Lines is the official chief minister's residence, Raje had chosen

13, Civil Lines as her official residence after coming to power in 2013. The bungalow had been allotted to her in her capacity as Leader of Opposition in 2008.

The more spacious official residence was converted into the state guest house. Her decision regarding the bungalow turned into a political issue after former BJP leader Ghanshyam Tiwari questioned Raje's occupancy of two bungalows.

He demanded that the CM vacate the 13, Civil Lines bungalow and shift to the official residence.

In May 2018, he submitted a memorandum to the governor saying that Raje

had encroached on the 13, Civil Lines bungalow as she was simultaneously using the official residence and she should vacate the former.

Tiwari's objection came after the Supreme Court in May quashed a law passed by Uttar Pradesh allowing former chief ministers to retain official bungalows for life.

In April, the state government had passed the Rajasthan Ministers' Salaries (Amendment) Bill 2017 which allotted former chief ministers a government bungalow, nine government staff and a vehicle for life.

The bill was challenged in the high court, but Raje

continued to live in bungalow number 13 even after the HC asked her to designate one of the two bungalows as the CM's official residence and vacate the other.



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Government owes cash-strapped Air India Rs 1,000 crore, says aviation ministry

(Agencies) - The government owes cash-strapped Air India Rs 1,000.62 crore, Parliament was informed Thursday.

In a reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha said there is an outstanding amount of Rs 1,000.62 crore

receivable by Air India Limited for Special Extra Section Flight (SESF) flights from the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

"Regular follow-ups for the same are made by Air India and the Ministry of Civil Aviation and

normally such dues are cleared from time to time," he said.

Air India (AI) operates SESF with B747-400 aircraft for the president, vice president and the prime minister. The costs on account of these flights are reimbursed to AI by the respective ministries.

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Sidhu meets Punjab CM Amarinder Singh for first time after 'my captain' controversy

During his half-an-hour long meeting with the CM, Sidhu also cleared the air on the "my captain" remark. The CM dismissed it too, saying it was "blown out of proportion by the media".

(Insider Bureau) -Back from New Delhi after thumping electoral victory of Congress in three states, Punjab local government minister Navjot Singh Sidhu on Wednesday called on chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh.

This was the first meeting between the two leaders after an unsavoury controversy erupted last month over Pakistan's

invite for the groundbreaking ceremony of Kartarpur corridor, which Amarinder had declined. Sidhu went to Pakistan despite Amarinder asking him to reconsider his decision and later called Rahul Gandhi his captain at a press conference in Hyderabad. It sent Amarinder loyalists gunning for Sidhu and the party's central leadership

had to step in to end the controversy by asking both sides to refrain from making public statements.

During his half-an-hour long meeting with the CM, Sidhu reportedly also cleared the air on the "my captain" remark. The CM dismissed it too, saying it was "blown out of proportion by the media". Sidhu, who had been recuperating from injury to his vocal cords due

to hectic poll campaigning, enquired about the health of Amarinder and wished him a speedy recovery.

Sidhu also gifted the CM a stuffed partridge brought from Pakistan. The CM's ringtone is a singing partridge. Both the leaders discussed results of recently concluded state elections and party's prospects in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. The Kartarpur corridor, which Amarinder has on Sunday called a "conspiracy of the Pak army" did not figure in the talks.

According to a party insider, it was the first time Amarinder met Sidhu one-to-one and Sidhu was able to clear some past misgivings.

After the meeting, Sidhu told the media that he could not meet the CM after winding up the poll campaign as he was advised rest by his doctors. He hailed the poll verdict as beginning of a new era under the leadership of Rahul.

He stood his ground on the



Kartarpur corridor saying it will not only open doors of peace but also change lives of farmers of the two nations. Sidhu later left for the wedding of actor Kapil Sharma, who hosted a popular comedy show featuring him.

Unfair To Call Vijay Mallya Thief For One Loan Default: Nitin Gadkari

(Insider Bureau) -Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday suggested that it is unfair to tag a "one-time loan defaulter Vijay Mallyaji" as a "chor" (thief), adding that the embattled businessman has a four-decade-long track record of timely debt servicing.

Mr Gadkari, however, clarified that he has no business dealing with Vijay Mallya, who faces extradition from the UK for alleged bank fraud and money laundering amounting to an estimated Rs. 9,000 crore. "40 saal Mallya regular payment kar raha tha, byaaj

bhar raha tha. 40 saal baad jab wo aviation mein gaya....uske baad wo adchan mein aaya to woh ekdum chor ho gaya?...jo pachaas saal byaaj bharta hai wo theek hai, par ek baar wo default ho gaya...toh turant sab fraud ho gaya? Ye mansikta theek nahi hai." (For 40 years Mallya was regularly paying interest on loans. After entering the aviation sector, he started facing problems, and suddenly he became a thief? If a person repays the interest for 50 years, and if he defaults once, then suddenly everything is

fraud? This mindset is not correct), Mr Gadkari said at an economic summit organised by the Times Group. Mr Gadkari said the loan he was referring to was from the Maharashtra government-owned entity Sicom to Vijay Mallya, which he repaid on time without any default. Stating that ups and downs are part and parcel of any business, the road transport minister said if someone goes through a downward cycle, then he or she has to be supported.

He stood his ground on the

Tamil Nadu deputy CM Panneerselvam summoned by panel probing Jayalalithaa's death

Besides Jayalalithaa's close confidant Sasikala, O Panneerselvam, who was interim chief minister when Jayalalithaa was hospitalised, had visited Apollo Hospital regularly where she was admitted from September till her death on December 5, 2016

(Agencies)-The inquiry commission probing the circumstances leading to the death of late Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa has summoned Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam to appear before it on December 20 for examination.

The Justice Arumughaswamy commission's summons to Panneerselvam follows the panel's decision deciding to question VK Sasikala, a close confidant of Jayalalithaa, now

incarcerated at the Parapana Agrahara prison in Bengaluru after being convicted in a case of owning disproportionate assets.

Besides Sasikala, Panneerselvam, who was interim chief minister when Jayalalithaa was hospitalised, had visited Apollo Hospital regularly where she was admitted from September till her death on December 5, 2016.

"When Jayalalithaa was under treatment, the then interim CM Panneerselvam

has regularly visited Apollo Hospital. Therefore, we have asked him to appear for the inquiry," said a source at the probe panel. Others who have been summoned next week include Health Secretary J Radhakrishnan on December 14 and Health Minister C Vijayabhaskar on December 18.

On being forced to quit as chief minister to pave way for the coronation of Sasikala soon after the death of Jayalalithaa on December 5, 2016, Panneerselvam launched

his "Dharma Yudh" from Jayalalithaa's 'samadhi'. With a group of legislators supporting him, he alleged that the late chief minister's death was shrouded in mystery. Later, as a precondition for the merger with the other faction led by now Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, he demanded a Commission of Inquiry to unravel the mystery and the purging of Sasikala, her nephew TTV Dhinakaran and their kin from the party.

After the merger, Sasikala



and Dhinakaran were officers, surgeons and staff ousted and the Commission under retired high court judge, Justice Arumughaswamy, was constituted in September 2017. So far, it had examined 130 witnesses, including IAS and IPS

of Apollo Hospital and aides of Jayalalithaa like the car driver and cook. The panel, on its third extension, is expected to submit its report on February 24, the birth anniversary of Jayalalithaa.

India, Russia may get to share military facilities

India and Russia also discussed joint manufacturing of the AK-103 Assault Rifles. India and Russia will jointly produce the rifles, which will replace the indigenously made INSAS rifles now used by the military, the second officer said.

(By Our Staff Reporter) - New Delhi and Moscow will sign a logistic supply agreement soon that will allow their military forces to share each other's facilities. As India's footprint in the region increases, logistic supply agreements will allow warships and aircraft to refuel and refurbish, improving the endurance of the Navy and Air Force. India has similar agreements with the United States and Singapore.

The decision to sign the logistic agreement was taken on Thursday at the 18th India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) held in New Delhi where defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman met her counterpart General Sergei

Shoigu of the Russian Federation.

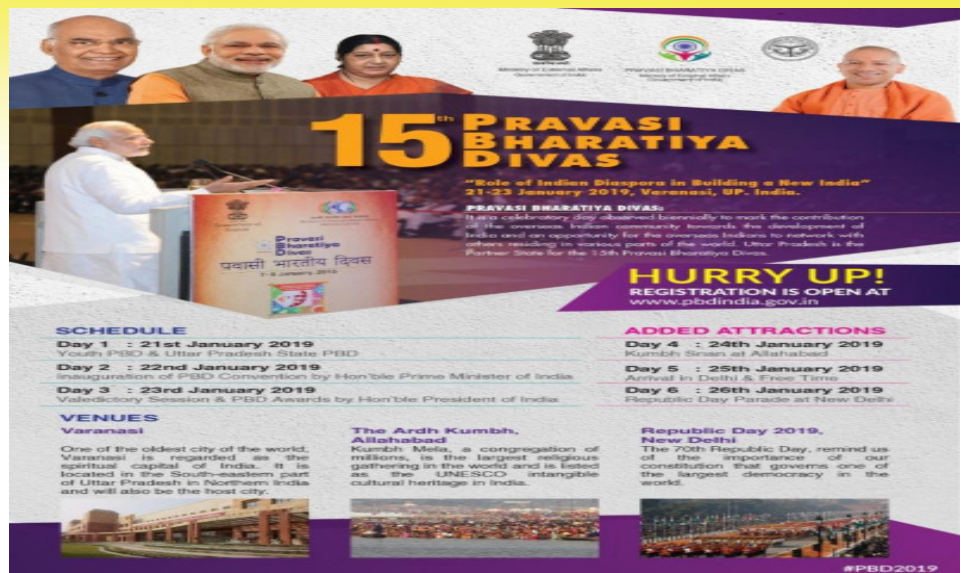
The meeting of the defence ministers followed a meeting between national security advisor (NSA) Ajit D. Advani and his Russian counterpart Nikolai Patrushev, a key advisor to President Vladimir Putin. Patrushev, was in India recently.

The two NSAs discussed the "strategic dimension" of India-Russia relations, including leasing of another Akula Class nuclear-powered attack submarine by, an official in the security establishment who is not authorised to speak to the media said. India previously leased the INS Chakra from Russia for 10 years. The lease comes to an end this year.

On Thursday's meeting between the defence min-

isters, another senior official said India and Russia had "asked officials on either side to work out the framework and the details of the (logistics supply) agreement".

Former admiral Shekar Sinha, who led the Western Naval Fleet, described the logistic supply agreement as a huge "positive." "Apart from the obvious advantages that both forces will have from an agreement, it is also a sign of India balancing its relations with US and Russia," he said. India and Russia also discussed joint manufacturing of the AK-103 Assault Rifles. India and Russia will jointly produce the rifles, which will replace the indigenously made INSAS rifles now used by the military, the second officer said.



In another major development, both sides exchanged a draft agreement on manufacturing spares in India. A majority of India's weapons platforms in the three services – Army, Navy and Air Force – are of Russian origin. Lack of spares has become a major cause of concern for the Indian military. Since Prime Minister Modi announced his ambitious "Make in India" programme

in 2014, India has been pushing Russia to tie up with Indian industry to manufacture spares in India. In a related development, India also asked Russia to increase the Indian components in the Kamov-226T helicopter. India has agreed to buy 200 Kamov 226T helicopters to replace the ageing Cheetah and Chetak helicopters. A joint venture between Hindustan Aeronautics Lim-

ited—the Bengaluru-based defence public sector - unit—and Russian Helicopters has already been put in place. Both sides agreed to increase "military to military cooperation" including war games. Of late, military exercises between the Indian military and NATO countries have increased, and India will look to balance its relations with Russia, its oldest and trusted ally, and the West.

No roving inquiry over perceptions': Supreme Court rejects Rafale probe

The verdict was delivered by a bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi and justice SK Kaul and justice KM Joseph.

(Insider Bureau) - The Supreme Court on Friday declined to order a CBI probe into the purchase of 36 French-made Rafale jets, holding that it was satisfied that there is no reason to doubt the purchase process or the need for the fighter jets. The court said "perceptions of individuals cannot be a basis for a roving inquiry".

"We are satisfied that there is no reason to doubt the process is followed and the need of aircraft is not in doubt," a three-judge bench led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and comprising justice SK Kaul and KM Joseph said. "It is not correct for the court to sit as appellate authority in the aircraft purchase," the bench observed.

The verdict comes as shot in the arm for the NDA government that has come been sharply criticised by the opposition, which ac-

cuses Prime Minister Narendra Modi of single-handedly pushing through the deal to buy overpriced jets without following procedures. The government has also been attacked for buying only 36 aircrafts when the Indian Air Force needed a lot more. The judges said they have examined the price of basic aircrafts according to the request for proposals and inter governmental agreements.

"We can't sit in judgment on the wisdom of purchase of the aircrafts... scrutiny had to be made keeping in mind national security. Our country can't be under-prepared," the top court said, rejecting a bunch of petitions challenging the deal. The petitions challenging the deal were filed by activist and lawyer Prashant Bhushan, former Union ministers Arun Shourie and Yashwant Sinha, Aam

TheNational Democratic

Party Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh and advocates ML Sharma and Vineet Dhanda earlier this year.

The petitions challenging the deal were filed by activist and lawyer Prashant Bhushan, former Union ministers Arun Shourie and Yashwant Sinha, Aam Aadmi Party Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh and advocates ML Sharma and Vineet Dhanda earlier this year.

They had questioned the deal over the lack of transparency over the pricing of the jets; an offsets deal that seemed to favour a private firm; flouting of due process in closing the deal; and that the deal isn't a government-to-government deal at all as it has been pitched because France refused to offer India a sovereign guarantee and instead gave it a letter of comfort.

Alliance (NDA) government has denied most of these charges.

The government said it cannot disclose pricing details publicly on account of a secrecy clause in its agreement with France and to ensure India's enemies do not get to know details of the India-specific enhancements and weaponry of the Rafale. It had submitted details of the price in a sealed envelope to the Supreme Court, though, and the court said it would not get into the pricing issue. The government has also explained the process followed in an affidavit filed to the court, which has also been shared with the petitioners.

The NDA government's decision to enter the \$8.7 billion government-to-government deal with France to buy the warplanes made by Dassault was announced in April 2015, with



an agreement signed a little over a year later. This replaced the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime's decision to buy 126 Rafale aircraft, 108 of which were to be made in India by the state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). It has become controversial, with the opposition, led by the Congress, claiming that the price at which India is buying Rafale aircraft now is Rs 1,670 crore for each, three times the Rs 526 crore, the initial bid by

the company when the UPA was trying to buy the aircraft.

The opposition has also questioned the deal over the fact that one of the offset deals signed by Dassault is with a joint venture it has with Reliance Group of Anil Ambani. The Congress claims the earlier deal was scrapped and a new one signed just to provide Ambani with this opportunity for an offset deal. Both the government and Reliance Group have repeatedly denied this.

Rahul to hold fresh round of discussions with Rajasthan CM hopefuls Gehlot, Pilot

Congress leaders feel once the MLAs in the state have authorised Gandhi to take a decision on the chief minister, leaders should not challenge the high command and accept the decision.

(Insider Bureau) - Congress president Rahul Gandhi is likely to hold a fresh round of discussions Friday with Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot, the two chief ministerial aspirants in Rajasthan, before taking a final call for the top post. The decision of Rajasthan's next chief minister is likely to be taken before noon and will be made public at a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) in state capital Jaipur, sources said.

After several rounds of discussions that lasted till Thursday midnight, Congress veteran Gehlot has emerged as a front runner for the top post, while Pradesh Congress Committee president Pilot is being placated in attempts to broker peace be-

tween the two.

Party's central observer for Rajasthan KC Venugopal told PTI, "It is up to the Congress president to take a final call and the decision is being awaited." Congress leaders feel once the MLAs in the state have authorised Gandhi to take a decision on the chief minister, leaders should not challenge the high command and accept the decision.

Pilot, 41, is still reported not on board on Gehlot's name, which is delaying the announcement, the sources said. The PCC chief has put up a stiff resistance and his staking his own claim for the top post. AICC general secretary in-charge of Rajasthan Avinash Pande told PTI, "Congress president heard everyone and after wide

consultations he will take the final decision which will be acceptable to all." Gandhi is likely to meet Pilot and Gehlot, 67, again at his residence in attempts to broker peace, like he did in the case of Madhya Pradesh where Kamal Nath was declared as the next chief minister amid hectic parleys held by the Congress chief with senior party leaders in the national capital Thursday night.

The Congress leadership want Gehlot and Pilot to be present together at the CLP meet. Sources said the Congress top brass was upset with the manner in which party workers resorted to arson and violence in the state in a bid to exert pressure on the party to



name Pilot.

They said this the first time such incidents have been reported in Rajasthan and the party has taken the matter seriously. The incidents of violence were reported in Jaipur, Dosa and other parts Thursday following which the Congress leadership

asked both Pilot and Gehlot to issue appeal for peace.

The party leaders feel the infighting in Rajasthan should end soon and called an amicable solution in the manner Jyotiraditya Scindia gracefully accepted the Congress's decision in Madhya Pradesh.

Surrendered Maoists in Odisha cheer for India in world cup hockey

(By Our Staff Reporter) - It was not just former Indian opening batsman Virender Sehwag who watched the men's World Cup Hockey quarterfinal match between India and the Netherlands with Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik.

As a jam-packed stadium cheered for the Indian team, there were 30 former Maoists in the audience at Bhubaneswar's Kalinga Stadium on Thursday evening watching the match flanking the chief minister.

Led by Malkangiri' superintendent of police Jagmohan Meena, the

Maoists shook hands with the chief minister before sitting down to watch the knock-out match. Ten of them are from Koraput and 20 from Malkangiri districts and held the ranks of armed cadres and divisional committee members in the Maoist outfits before surrendering to the government. Many of the surrendered Maoists had the Indian Tricolour painted on their cheeks. "I am very happy that these young people have come back to the mainstream and given up Maoism. I am sure a lot more people will come," said

Patnaik. For 30-year-old Ramesh Madkani, who surrendered in 2013 along with his wife Vijaya Hantala, the chance to watch the hockey match was way beyond his expectation. Madkani was involved in at least 14 cases of violence in Malkangiri district before he surrendered after falling out with party leadership. "I never thought I would one day watch the match with the chief minister. We were roaming in the forests fighting the police and Odisha government. But this is a different experience," said Madkani,

crediting Malkangiri SP Jagmohan Meena for his visit. Similarly, Anita Madhi, who had spent over 10 years in a Maoist organisation, said she did not know why they fought the police. "We did just what we were told. Once we surrendered, we found things were not so bad," said Madhi. Odisha started a surrender and rehabilitation policy for Maoists in 2006 after a series of violent incidents involving the rebels. The Maoists, who surrender before the Odisha government, get a one-time financial assistance of Rs

2,50,000 for top-ranked cadres and middle-ranked cadres get Rs 1,50,000. The state also gives Rs 35,000 for any arms deposited and Rs 25,000 equivalent for four decimals of land. Besides, payment of a house building grant of Rs 45,000 at par with Indira Awas Yojana is given. The state government also gives Rs 3,000 per annum for pursuing education. In case the surrendered Maoist is too old to enrol in a formal school, the option of studying through National Institute of Open Schooling is explored.

Man sets himself ablaze at Sabarimala protest, dies; BJP targets Kerala CM

Protesting the Kerala government's "anti-Sabarimala" stand, the man, who was later identified as Venugopalan Nair, suffered 60% burns and was rushed to the Government Medical College hospital in Thiruvananthapuram.

(Insider Bureau) - A 49-year-old man died after setting himself on fire near the venue of BJP leader CK Padmanabhan's sit-down protest, against what he described as the Kerala government's anti-Sabarimala stand, in Thiruvananthapuram early on Thursday.

The man, who was later identified as Venugopalan Nair, suffered 60% burns and was rushed to the Government Medical College hospi-

tal, where he later succumbed to his injuries.

Police said the incident happened around 3 am outside the state secretariat. Pouring petrol over himself and settling himself ablaze, he rushed to the protest site. In flames, Nair was heard chanting the 'swami saranam' hymns.

Workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and police immediately doused the fire and rushed him to the hospital, where doctors had termed his condition as serious.

Nair is reported to be a sympathiser of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and his relatives said he was disturbed over the situation in the Sabarimala temple.

Accusing chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan of being responsible for Nair's death, the BJP has called a 12-hour shutdown in Kerala in protest. "The state government is responsible for the death of the devotee. it is playing with fire," said party general secretary M T Ramesh while an-



nouncing the shutdown, the third since the Supreme Court's Sabarimala verdict. The September 28 verdict allowing women of all ages to enter the hilltop shrine had been bitterly opposed by devotees, as well as the BJP and the Congress.

The ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) district committee has termed the death of Nair an "unfortunate incident" but denied the report that he was associated with any party. "It is sad the RSS-BJP combine is using the unfortunate incident to fan trouble in the state," said party district secretary A Nagappan.

The hilltop shrine has been witnessing violent protests by a section of devotees and right-wing groups since the Supreme Court verdict. Trouble began when the state government rushed to implement the top court's order.

Voters have fired a warning shot

Sri Lanka's top court has ruled that the president's dissolution of parliament last month was unconstitutional, as a political crisis continues to grip the nation. President Maithripala Sirisena dismissed his prime minister and replaced him with former leader Mahinda Rajapaksa in late October.

When that decision was contested, he dissolved parliament.

The ruling could see sacked PM Ranil Wickremesinghe return to office.

The legislature - which has been sitting after a temporary ruling from the Supreme Court - has already passed two no-confidence motions against Mr Rajapaksa.

The controversial but popular leader was president at the end of Sri Lanka's nearly three decade-old civil war in 2009 and is accused of presiding over vast human rights abuses, which he denies. On Wednesday, the parliament passed a vote of confidence in Ranil Wickremesinghe as prime minister.

His party and its allies have a simple majority in parliament - and have argued from the beginning that President Sirisena's actions, including calling a snap election nearly two years ahead of schedule, were unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court on Thursday said the president could not dissolve parliament until it was four-

and-a-half years through its five-year term.

Correspondents say that if the president does not accept the top court's decision, it could lead to impeachment proceedings. However this would require the support of a two-thirds majority in parliament and a special inquiry by the Supreme Court.

In a tweet, Mr Wickremesinghe called on President Sirisena to "promptly respect the judgment of the courts".

He is yet to comment. Namal Rajapaksa, an MP and son of Mahinda Rajapaksa, tweeted: "We respect the decision of [Sri Lanka's] Supreme Court, despite the fact that we have reservations regarding its interpretation."



India's guarded optimism to Pakistan's dubious generosity

If Germany and France who fought several wars, can live in peace, why can't India and Pakistan?" well batted, Imran Khan. To begin with, the occasion that has led to the eastward flow of fresh breeze from Pakistan is the inauguration of Kartarpur Sahib Corridor. This must be celebrated without any political hesitations. It is indeed an occasion that deserves to be celebrated with child-like joy and innocence that results from the deep spiritual moorings of the sub-continent.

Indeed, PM Imran appeared sincere, hopeful and emotional in his speech. However, the world of geopolitics is not all about emotional proclamations and wishful thinking. The world of geopolitics is instead ruled by intelligence agencies, vote-seeking populist politicians, geo-strategic designs of world powers, profit-hungry corporations and hawkish generals.

There is nothing new in India's response. It has followed its old line that 'terror' and 'talks' cannot go together. India's official position has mostly been this for almost the last two decades, albeit interspersed with brief spells of over-generosity and wishful thinking. However, since 2014, with Modi's arrival on the scene, one can witness an element of consistency, clarity, and steadfastness in the

approach. Also, it is explicitly clear in the official statements of Sushma Swaraj and India's army chief that the Kartarpur corridor episode should be seen separately from the dialogue process between the two nations. While India's response to Imran Khan's emotionally charged speech does appear a little harsh, however to this author, the response is not a surprise and is wholly expected. Before deconstructing India's response further, the question that needs an answer is whether Pakistan's peace proposal is honest and sincere? A reasonable and fair analysis from an Indian perspective will reveal that there is a long history of Pakistan supporting proxy terror groups in India. In the Indian security establishment, there is deep sense of skepticism about Pakistan's peace overtures. In the Indian public opinion and media circles, the cross-border support for militancy in Kashmir since 1989 has been a dominant narrative, in addition to the belief that Pakistan supported separatist movement in Punjab in the 1980s. The episode of Kargil, especially after Vajpayee's peace initiatives, further made it difficult for India to go ahead with peace. However, both nations could move forward with peace under Vajpayee and Musharraf, with the credit going to the extraordinary political leadership that both countries

had. However, this did not impact the common man until the terrorist attacks began outside Kashmir. The series of terror attacks outside Kashmir began with the Parliament attack and peaked in its intensity and impact in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

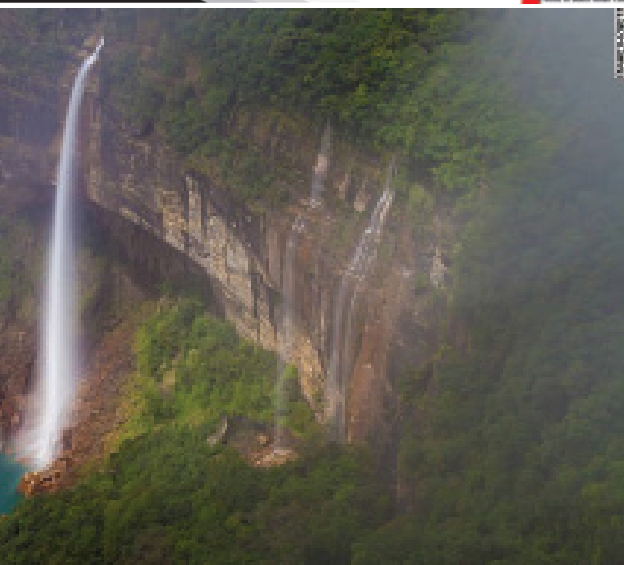
The 26/11 Mumbai attacks left a deep trauma on the psyche of the ordinary Indian citizen. There emerged a strong psychological barrier and a deep sense of pessimism about any peace overture from Pakistan. Hence, cutting across the political and ideological lines, there arose a robust and serious consensus that 'terror' and 'talks' cannot go together. However, that did not mean that the peaceniks had become extinct. One did see an initial episode of dialogue and bonhomie between Nawaz Sharif and PM Modi. Unfortunately, the incidents of fidayeen attacks in Pathankot and Uri happened and militancy spiked in Kashmir with alleged cross-border support. Further, the recent upsurge in the Khalistan activities by Sikh diaspora across the world has given more fodder to India's suspicions. Therefore one witnesses caution with which India is proceeding in the matter of Kartarpur corridor. India's refusal to accept the SAARC invitation reflects a deep sense of mistrust and pessimism. However, that does not mean that India is making war-cries or has



closed its mind to peace proposals. India's response strongly indicates that it would like to see concrete and substantial action on terror. Secondly, India's response needs to be seen in the context of the overall cultural and political milieu of the current times. The country is witnessing the rapid growth of Ayodhya movement which seeks to build a temple over the controversial structure of a demolished mosque. Since 2014, India is also going through

an intense phase of struggle between the forces of Hindu nationalism and the distorted legacy of Nehruvian secularism. India has emerged as a vibrant economic and military power and under Modi's leadership, made great strides in claiming its rightful diplomatic place among global powers. This has led to an increased sense of confidence. It has also led to a revivalist trend in the intellectual, religious and cultural aspects of India's internal politics and foreign policy.

Exploring Meghalaya, India's abode of the clouds



When it comes to aptly named destinations, the northeast Indian state of Meghalaya is up there with the best. Meaning "abode of the clouds," it's home to the top two wettest places on earth, according to Guinness World Records. But across this cool, green state travelers will also find India's cleanest village, the country's highest waterfall and a man who just might be the country's biggest Bob Dylan fan. For those ready to give this up-and-coming Indian destination a try we've put together a short itinerary centered on the Khasi Hills, a central Meghalaya region.

A walk in the clouds to India's highest waterfall

To experience a walk in the clouds, we suggest starting in the town of Cherrapunji (also known as Sohra), which is about an hour and a half drive from Shillong, Meghalaya's capital. With an average annual rainfall of 463 inches, Cherrapunji is the second wettest destination on the planet. It's topped only by the neighboring village of Mawsynram, which gets 467 inches of rain per year. Compare this with the average annual rainfall of India, which is 11-25 inches (300-650 millimeters). Fortunately, most of the state's rain falls during monsoon season, between June and September, making it a great place to explore outside these months. One of the most photogenic spots in the area is Nohkalikai Falls -- the highest waterfall in the country at 1,115 feet (335 meters). Another worth-

while natural attraction less than seven miles away from the falls, the Mawsmai Caves are dripping with stunning limestone stalactites and stalagmites.

Some gnarled, some smooth, they're the result of thousands of years of water erosion.

India's cleanest corner

About 50 miles -- or a 2.5-hour drive -- from Cherrapunji is Mawlynnong, which has been called "Asia's cleanest village" by various publications -- a title its

model for tourism." Home to a population of 600 people, the village is known for its meticulously manicured gardens. Nearly every home has a private plot, with neat flower beds and carefully pruned blooms all year round. Along the bamboo-lined streets, Khasi women -- a matrilineal, ethnic community in Meghalaya -- sell locally produced honey and spices. To see the sprawling plains of Bangladesh across the border nearby, Mawlynnong villag-



residents take seriously. The narrow lanes are spotless and locals can be seen cleaning and sweeping the streets throughout the day. "All this [focus on cleanliness] started with a literacy and sanitation drive a couple of decades ago," John Khongthohrem, owner of a small guesthouse in Mawlynnong, tells CNN. "And soon villagers realized that we can make this a

ers built an 80-foot-high tree platform (known locally as a machan) called Sky View. To reach this tourist attraction, travelers have to climb a series of rickety but firm wooden steps.

Rooted in tradition

One of Meghalaya's biggest attractions, "living root bridges" have been a part of the local landscapes for more than a century. Unlike modern bridges, made of steel and wires, these structures are grown around betel tree trunks using the strong roots of rubber trees. Stretched across rivers, they're supported by stones and boulders. The living root bridges typically take 15 years to mature but after that can carry up to 50 people at a time. Growing stronger with age, these natural wonders do not rot -- despite the perpetually wet



weather. The most famous is a double-decker bridge in Nongriat village, just over seven miles away from Cherrapunji, called Jingkieng Nongriat. Getting there requires an arduous trek up 2,500 undulating steps through lush jungle. An easier, equally picturesque option can be found in Riwai village, next door to Mawlynnong. It's best to arrive early in the morning for a chance to enjoy the stream and bridge in

sprouting from fallen tree trunks and handfuls of rudraksh (seeds used as prayer beads by Hindus). The forest showcases dozens of varieties of orchids, butterflies, medicinal plants and towering trees. Mawphlang has remained untouched for centuries, thanks to a local Khasi legend. A deity known as Labasa is said to protect the area by putting a hex on anyone who takes even



solitude.

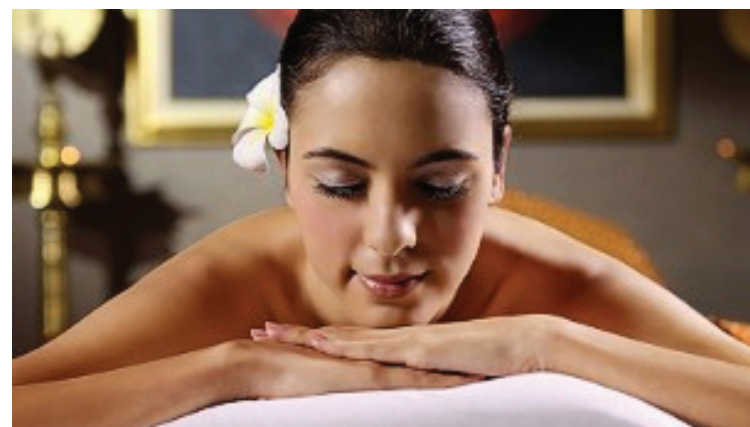
Groves both sacred and cursed

On your way back to Shillong, we

a single leaf out of the forest. "Everybody here believes in this story without question -- but you can also think of it as our elders' way of conservation," says local village guide Andrew Lyngdoh.

Exploring India's rock capital

Apart from consistently producing some of the best music bands in the country, including Soulmate, this small hill town is also home to a dedicated Bob Dylan cafe -- aptly named Dylan's Cafe. Here travelers will find 69-year-old Lou Majaw -- a local rock enthusiast known for his renditions of Dylan's hits. (Something tells us "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" is particularly popular among locals.) There's more to do in Shillong than rock out. The Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures is a great place to learn about India's largely unexplored northeast region. A culture tour around Shillong continues with an early morning visit to the Bara Bazaar. Filled with fresh chicken, pork, and vegetables -- including dozens of varieties of chillies -- the market offers a peek into the everyday lives of Meghalaya residents.



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Donald Trump denies any ties to ex-lawyer Michael Cohen's crimes

Michael Cohen, who once said he would “take a bullet for Trump,” was sentenced in New York on Wednesday to three years in prison after pleading guilty to orchestrating the payments that were part of the “dirty deeds” he did at the behest of Trump.

Cohen, who once said he would “take a bullet for Trump,” was sentenced in New York on Wednesday to three years in prison after pleading guilty to orchestrating the payments that were part of the “dirty deeds” he did at the behest of Trump. Federal prosecutors said Trump ordered the payouts to protect his campaign from allegations of sexual affairs with an adult film actress and a Playboy model.

Trump faces growing political and legal risks from a months’ long investigation into the payments by US prosecutors,

which stemmed from the larger continuing federal probe into alleged Russian interference in the election and possible collusion by Trump’s campaign. Justice Department policy is not to indict a sitting president but some legal experts have said Trump could be charged after leaving office. Democrats and other critics also have raised the issue of impeachment by Congress.

In his tweets, Trump said he had no role in Cohen’s actions. “I never directed Michael Cohen to break the law,” he said. “He was a lawyer and he

is supposed to know the law. It is called ‘advice of counsel,’ and a lawyer has great liability if a mistake is made. That is why they get paid.”

Trump denies Trump has denied the affairs and argued the payments to Playboy model Karen McDougal and adult-film star Stormy Daniels were not campaign contributions.

Trump also has denied collusion with Moscow and called Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation a “witch hunt.” Russia has also denied any interference.

Prosecutors on Wednesday also said the publisher of the National Enquirer tabloid had struck a deal to avoid charges over its role in one of the payments made “in concert” with Trump’s presidential campaign.

Cohen, who also pleaded to tax evasion and lying to Congress about a proposed Trump Organization building in Moscow, in court on Wednesday said his “blind loyalty” led him to cover up for Trump.



Cohen is the latest Trump associate to be swept up in Mueller’s investigation following Trump’s campaign chairman Paul Manafort, former deputy campaign chairman Rick Gates and former White House national security adviser Michael Flynn, among others.

Trump has offered a shifting defence on the payments to the women, first saying in April that he did not know about the payments to later appearing to acknowledge they were unrelated to campaign finances.

In an interview with Reuters this week, he slammed Cohen for cooperating with prosecutors and said he was unconcerned about possible impeachment. He also called any of his potential business dealings with Russia “peanut stuff.”

Leopard kills Indian Buddhist monk meditating in forest

However, there are now plans to capture the leopard. “We have set up two cages and a camera trap, and we will try to tranquilise the animal,” Mr Narawane said.

State government officials have said they will give Mr Walke’s family 1.2m rupees (\$16,762; £13,280). A monk belonging to the same temple told BBC Marathi that he had seen the animal attacking Mr Walke when he visited his meditation spot to give him food on Wednesday morning. He said he went away to seek help but by the time he returned with others, Mr Walke was dead. The Tadoba reserve is home to an estimated 88 tigers. It is also home to a large variety of other animals, including leopards, sloth bears, hyenas and honey badgers.



Canadian Michael Spavor detained in China as Huawei row continues

(Agencies)-A second Canadian has been detained in China on accusations of harming national security, as tension continues between the two countries.

It was confirmed on Thursday that Michael Spavor, a businessman, had been detained in addition to former diplomat Michael Kovrig. Canada drew Chinese protests after it arrested an executive at telecoms giant Huawei at the request of the US.

Meng Wanzhou has been bailed but may face extradition for fraud. She denies violating US sanctions on Iran through Huawei's business dealings. China has threatened unspecified consequences if she is not released.

So high-profile is the case that US President Donald Trump said he could intervene if it helped to avoid a further decline in relations between the US and China, which are locked in a trade war.

However, Mr Trump's own officials frowned on the idea, with US Assistant Attorney General John Demers remarking: "What we do at the justice department is law enforcement. We don't do trade." What is behind China's actions?

Foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang addressed the matter on Thursday, saying the pair were "suspected of engaging in activities that threatened China's national security" and had been put under "compulsory measures", a usual reference to custody.

Mr Lu said the "legal rights and interests of these two Canadians have been safeguarded" and that the two cases were being investigated separately.

Asked if the detentions were in response to Ms Meng's arrest, he said they were part of an "operation taken by China's relevant national security authorities in accordance with the laws".

Mr Lu said Ms Meng's arrest was "wrong practice", adding: "I can point out that, since the Canadian government took the wrong action at the request of the US and took Meng Wanzhou into custody, many Chinese are wondering if their trips to Canada are safe." Some China analysts were in little doubt about the reason for the detentions. Guy Saint-Jacques, Canada's former ambassador to China, told Canadian broadcaster CBC: "In China there

are no coincidences... If they want to send you a message, they will send you a message." One Western diplomat in China told Reuters news agency: "This is a political

Who are the two Canadians?

Michael Spavor, arrested on 12 December, is a businessman based in Dandong, near the Chinese border with North Korea. He has ties to the North Korean government and has met its leader Kim Jong-un many times.

Canadian foreign ministry spokesman Guillaume Bérubé confirmed that Mr Spavor had contacted it earlier in the week because "he was being asked questions by Chinese authorities". One of his most recent Facebook posts, on Sunday, said he was about to travel to Seoul in South Korea but he did not arrive on Monday as planned.

Mr Spavor runs an organisation called the Paektu Cultural Exchange, which organises business, cultural and tourism trips to North Korea.

He is a regular visitor to North Korea and regularly comments in the media on Korean issues.



He is particularly well known for helping to arrange the visit by former NBA star Dennis Rodman to North Korea in 2013. Rodman is a personal friend of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

Ex-diplomat Michael Kovrig currently works for a think-tank, the International Crisis Group (ICG), which has said it is concerned for his health and safety.

He was arrested on 10 December.

Mr Lu said the ICG had not been registered as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in China and therefore it was unlawful for its staff to work there.

Checks by Reuters news agency did not turn up a registration for ICG on government databases for NGOs or social enterprises.

Asked about Mr Kovrig, Canada said there was no "explicit indication" of any link to the Meng case. It said his case had been raised directly with Chinese officials.

Why was Meng arrested?

The former Canadian resident was detained on 1 December in Vancouver, where she has family and property connections.

She was granted bail of C\$10m (£6m; \$7.4m) on Tuesday but could still be extradited to the US. The US has been investigating Huawei, one of the world's largest smartphone makers, since 2016, believing that it used a subsidiary, Skycom, to bring US manufacturing equipment and millions of dollars in transactions to Iran in violation of sanctions.

Australia seizes squirrels 'smuggled on plane from Bali'



(By Our Staff Reporter) -A man was intercepted at an Australian airport after flying from Indonesia with two live squirrels smuggled in his luggage, authorities say. The Australian resident may face criminal charges after the animals were detected at Brisbane Airport last week.

Both squirrels were put down after being deemed a biosecurity risk, Australian authorities said.

The nation has strict quarantine laws that famously caught out actors Johnny Depp and Amber Heard in 2015.

Pests and diseases'

The squirrels allegedly travelled in checked-in luggage from Bali, which is about six hours by plane from Brisbane and a popular holiday destination for Australians. Authorities have not named a possible motive.

"The frightening thing around that case around the two squirrels is that half of his Instagram followers thought it was a great idea to do that," Agriculture Minister David Littleproud told the Australian Associated Press. "These animals bring pests and diseases that could actually hurt many Australians so it's important that we aren't ignorant to biosecurity." People who violate Australia's biosecurity laws face fines or up to five years in prison, according to the Australian Border Force.

In 2016, Depp and Heard had to record an apology video after smuggling their dogs, Pistol and Boo, into Australia and becoming embroiled in a row that drew much attention. Last month, former NBA player Lamar Patterson was also stopped at Brisbane Airport with his pet dog. The dog was seized and deported.

Afghan national trying to smuggle US dollars worth Rs 38 lakh caught at Delhi airport

(By Our Staff Reporter) -Two days ago, in one of their biggest seizures, customs officials at the Delhi airport arrested two Indian passengers and recovered from their checked-in baggage US dollars worth Rs 3.55 crore.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on Wednesday caught an Afghan national for allegedly trying to smuggle out US dollars worth about Rs 38 lakh at the Indira Gandhi International Airport. CISF officers said that the man was travelling to Kabul, Afghanistan.

According to the officers, around 11.50 am, CISF personnel deployed at Terminal 3 of the airport noticed a passenger's suspicious activities in the departure area. On suspicion, two CISF men approached the passenger and asked him to cooperate for a detailed search of his baggage.

"On checking, \$53,700 worth Rs 38 lakh were found between layers of clothes. The passenger was questioned about the source of the money, but he could not give



any satisfactory reply. Customs officials at the airport were then informed and the man, along with the recovered currency, was handed over to them," said Hemendra Singh, assistant inspector general, CISF.

Singh said initial investigation revealed the man was a 'carrier'. "The man said he was told that someone would have contacted him once he landed in Kabul. We are probing the source of the money. Investigation is on."

Two days ago, in one of their biggest seizures, customs officials at the Delhi airport arrested two Indian passengers and recovered from their checked-in baggage US dollars worth Rs 3.55 crore. The two men had arrived at the airport to catch a flight to Dubai.

Butina admits being Russian agent, pleads guilty in U.S. to conspiracy

(Agencies)-A Russian woman pleaded guilty in a U.S. court on Thursday to a single conspiracy charge in a deal with prosecutors and admitted to working with a top Russian official to infiltrate a powerful gun rights group and make inroads with American conservative activists and the Republican Party as an agent for Moscow. Maria Butina, a former graduate student at American University in Washington who publicly advocated for gun rights, entered the plea to a charge of conspiracy to act as a foreign agent at a hearing in Washington. She became the first Russian to be convicted of working to influence U.S. policy during the 2016 presidential race and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors.

Butina admitted to conspiring with a Russian official and two Americans from 2015 until her July arrest to infiltrate the National Rifle

Association, a group closely aligned with U.S. conservatives and Republican politicians including President Donald Trump, and create unofficial lines of communication to try to make Washington's policy toward Moscow more friendly.

Alexander Torshin, who was a deputy governor of Russia's central bank, has been identified by Butina's lawyers as the Russian official. Torshin was hit with U.S. Treasury Department sanctions in April. Paul Erickson, a conservative U.S. political activist with deep Republican ties who was romantically linked to Butina, was one of the two Americans to whom prosecutors referred.

Butina, a 30-year-old native of Siberia, agreed to cooperate "fully, truthfully, completely and forthrightly" with any and all U.S. law enforcement agencies and could provide interviews, sworn statements and lie-detector tests and

participate in under cover law enforcement stings.

She was jailed after being charged in July and initially pleaded not guilty. Other Russian individuals and entities have been charged in a separate investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller regarding Moscow's role in the 2016 election

Clad in a green jumpsuit with her red hair pulled back in a long braid, Butina replied "absolutely" when asked by U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan if her mind was clear as she prepared to plead guilty. Prosecutors dropped one other charge as part of the plea deal.

The actions Butina acknowledged taking occurred during the same time period that U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded Russia engaged in a campaign of propaganda and hacking to sow discord in the United States during the 2016 race and boost Republican candidate Trump's chances against Democratic rival Hillary Clinton.

In a statement of offense read aloud in court, a prosecutor said Butina drafted a March 2015 "Diplomacy Project" calling for establishing unofficial back channels of communication with high-ranking American politicians to help advance Russia's interests. Although there are no U.S. sentencing guidelines for her specific



crime, her lawyer, Robert Driscoll, estimated that under guidelines for similar crimes Butina could face up to six months in prison. Butina faces possible deportation to Russia after finishing her sentence.

Because of Butina's ongoing cooperation, the judge did not set a sentencing date but scheduled a status hearing for Feb. 12.

Leonid Slutsky, head of the lower house of the Russian parliament's foreign affairs committee, reacted to Butina's case by calling it a "modern political inquisition," in comments quoted by the RIA news agency.

Erickson's description appears to match "Person 1" mentioned in the prosecution's statement of offense. Person 1 helped advise Butina on which American politicians she should target for meetings, and her plan was carried out on behalf of the Russian official, the statement said.

The "Diplomacy Project" document was crafted by Butina with help from Person 1, prosecutors said. To carry out the plan, Butina requested \$125,000 from a Russian billionaire to attend conferences and set up "separate meetings with interested parties" such as other Russian businessmen or people with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they added.

Erickson is a well-known figure in Republican and conservative circles and was a senior official in Pat Buchanan's 1992 Republican presidential campaign. Erickson's lawyer William Hurd said in an email, "Paul Erickson is a good American. He has done nothing to harm our country and never would." In April 2015, prosecutors said, Butina traveled to the United States to attend a gun rights event whose description appears to match the NRA's annual meeting.



New York sues Target, Walmart over lead-contaminated toys

(By Our Staff Reporter) -Target Corp (TGT.N), Walmart Inc (WMT.N) and toy importer LaRose Industries were sued on Thursday over the sale of lead-contaminated children's toys, New York Attorney General Barbara Underwood said.

The lawsuit, filed in New York state court in Albany, is over "Cra-Z-Jewelz" jewelry-making kits that were imported by LaRose and sold by Target and Walmart. Tests conducted by the attorney general's office found that the kits contained levels of lead that were up to 10 times higher than the federal limit, according to the complaint.

Although the kits were recalled, the complaint says the companies failed to take "measures sufficient to ensure that they do not again import, distribute, and

sell toys that place New York children at risk of adverse health consequences from lead exposure."

The lawsuit seeks civil penalties collectively ranging from \$70 to \$6,000 for each "Cra-Z-Jewelz" kit the companies sought to sell in New York.

It also seeks an order directing LaRose and Target, when it acts as an importer, to implement a quality control program for overseas manufacturing operations and a testing program for lead levels, and seeks a separate order directing that Target and Walmart, as retailers, confirm compliance certificates for toys imported for sale in New York and a testing program for lead levels. Walmart said it removed the toys from its shelves and online as soon as LaRose informed the re-



call nearly three years ago and it did not sell the products thereafter. "We've discussed this matter with the New York Attorney General's office and will address

the allegations and demands with the court," a Walmart spokesman said.

Target said it stopped selling the toy in April 2016 immediately af-

ter the New York Attorney General informed them about the problems with the product.

LaRose did not respond to Reuters requests for comment.

Mallya repaid loans for 40 yrs, can we call him wilful defaulter: Gadkari

(Agencies)-Gadkari said that Vijay Mallya, who faces extradition from the UK, used to repay his loan for 40 but started facing problems after entering the aviation business.

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday asked if businessman Vijay Mallya, who 'repaid his loans for 40 years', could be called a 'wilful defaulter.'

Gadkari said that long back the Maharashtra government had given a loan to Vijay Mallya through the state PSU Sicom, and he used to repay the interest for 40 years. But after entering aviation, Mallya started facing problems and could not repay loans.

"If a person who was repaying the debt for 40 years, and due to some issues he is not able to meet his debt obligations later, can you declare him a will-

ful defaulter?" Gadkari asked.

"If Nirav Modi or Vijay Mallya have committed fraud then send them to jail, but if we label everyone who is in financial trouble as fraudsters, then the economy will not progress," he warned.

Indirectly blaming the bankers for the NPA mess, Gadkari said our banking system is such that it does not support sick companies.

"When someone is serious then we put him/her in an ICU, but our banking system first puts a sick company in the ICU and then ensures that it dies," he quipped. On RBI, Gadkari asserted that the central bank continues to be by and large an independent body but it should also support the economic vision of the government of the day.

"Even if we accept RBI's autonomy, it is the responsibility of

the central bank to support the vision of the government. We haven't destroyed it (RBI as an institution) in any way," he told an economic summit organised by the Times group.

Asserting that RBI is part and parcel of the government, he asked, "if the finance minister gives an economic vision for the country then isn't it binding on the RBI to support that vision?"

"Everywhere there are ups and downs and we have not destroyed any institutions. We've not politically interfered in it (in the functioning of RBI)," he said and underlined the need to ensure that we have to develop a transparent and corruption-free system that can fast track decision-making process and a system in which key government decisions should be binding on every institution.



If RBI wants to be fully autonomous, then hold it responsible for the ills of the economy and not the finance ministry, he said.

"On one hand you are holding us responsible (for what goes wrong in the economy) and then if we make decisions then you are saying we are putting the autonomy of RBI in danger," the minister, who for long has been critical of the RBI, said.

Gadkari, who handles many key infra ministries, wondered if government is held responsible for the economic situation, then how can RBI work autonomously.

"The Supreme Court can be an autonomous body. RBI is also an autonomous body, but does that mean that RBI will be taking 100 percent policy decisions on its own?" he asked

The 30-year-old gun enthusiast who turned out to be a Russian spy

(Insider Bureau) - Maria Butina pleaded guilty to acting as an undeclared Russian agent in the U.S. and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors.

The 30-year-old gun enthusiast operated as a Kremlin agent as she befriended National Rifle Association leaders and influential conservatives, she admitted Thursday in federal court in Washington.

"Butina sought to establish unofficial lines of communication with Americans having power and influence over U.S. politics," prosecutor Erik Kenerson said at the hearing, reading from the government's statement of facts. "Butina sought to use those unofficial lines of communication for the benefit of the Russian Federation."

Asked by U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan if she agreed with the government's characterization of the conspiracy, Butina said yes.

Cooperation Deal

Butina, who remains jailed, faces a maximum of five years in prison, but she won't be sentenced immediately. Her cooperation could lead to a reduced punishment. The judge scheduled a status hearing for Feb. 12.

The NRA and the Kremlin didn't immediately respond to requests

for comment. The Russian Foreign Ministry said earlier Thursday that any decision Butina took to help free her from detention in the U.S. would be supported by Russia.

Butina was arrested in July. While in the U.S. starting in 2015, she was working to advance Russia's interests, reporting regularly to a senior Russian official, according to her guilty plea.

The charges were filed by the Justice Department's national security unit and U.S. prosecutors in Washington, rather than by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating Russian influence in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

As part of the plea agreement, Butina may provide information about Paul Erickson, her onetime boyfriend. Erickson matches the description of a man referred to as "U.S. Person 1" in Butina's charging documents. The person connected her with influential Republicans and wrote in a message that he had been involved "in securing a VERY private line of communication between the Kremlin" and key officials of the NRA, prosecutors said.

'Good American'

Erickson has visited Butina in jail several times this year, according to her attorney, Robert

Driscoll. Bill Hurd, Erickson's lawyer, said his client is "a good American" who "has never done anything to hurt our country and never would."

Hurd was in the courtroom for the proceedings. He declined to comment afterward.

Butina's admission added to the drumbeat of developments in investigations related to the 2016 presidential election, and there were several signs this week that prosecutors were receiving information from several people close to President Donald Trump.

Trump's longtime fixer was sentenced to three years in prison and said he'd assist prosecutors, and the president's former national security adviser acknowledged he'd sat for 19 interviews with prosecutors and provided thousands of pages of documents. A tabloid publisher with ties to Trump is cooperating, too, after admitting to federal investigators in New York that its CEO talked to people on Trump's nascent campaign about buying and burying damaging stories that could damage the candidate.

Russia says its spy agencies had no knowledge of Butina or her activities.

"When I heard something was going on around her, for a start I asked the heads of our secret



services, 'Who is she?' Nobody knows anything about her," President Vladimir Putin said in a televised appearance in Moscow on Tuesday, the day after Butina said in a filing she wanted to change her plea.

Student Visa

Butina traveled to the U.S. in 2015 and entered the U.S. on a student visa in 2016 to study at American University in Washington. She reported to Alexander Torshin, the former deputy chairman of Russia's central bank, court documents show.

Torshin accompanied Butina to a variety of conservative political events. In 2015 and 2016, the pair attended at least one NRA conference and a National Prayer Breakfast, the filings say. At one conference, they met with Wis-

consin Governor Scott Walker. Butina also attended Walker's announcement that he was running for president.

At a town-hall-style event in Las Vegas in 2015, Butina asked candidate Trump whether he would improve the U.S. relationship with Russia. Trump said he would. Butina, who'd started an NRA-like group in Russia called the Right to Bear Arms, was already a fixture in the American gun-rights community. NRA members traveled to Russia in 2013 to attend an event she organized. Among the attendees were Torshin and David Keene, then president of the NRA.

Driscoll, Butina's lawyer, has said his client was a legitimate university student.

6 Lessons For BJP From This Big Defeat - By Yashwant Sinha

(Insider Bureau) - Are the results of the assembly elections in the five states of Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Mizoram as expected or as predicted? Yes and no. The people have given decisive verdicts in the smaller states of Telangana, Chhattisgarh and Mizoram and all three results there are a surprise. Everyone predicted that Chhattisgarh would be a close contest between the Congress and BJP. Some felt that it could even produce a hung assembly and Ajit Jogi felt forget being a king-maker, he would in fact be king. Today, he must be, along with his ally Mayawati, disappointed at the results because it has been a clean sweep for the Congress. Analysts will now mull over the reasons for the massive defeat of the BJP in Chhattisgarh. I am personally aware of the organisational strength of the BJP in the state, but clearly if the people change their mind, nothing and absolutely nothing can prevent them

neously in 2019. The people of Mizoram, which has a small assembly of 40 members, have also returned a decisive verdict in favor of the MNF led by Zoramthanga. Here again, the Congress party, along with its allies, was supposed to pose a challenge to the MNF, but the Congress party and its allies are way behind. The MNF is a member of the North-East Democratic Alliance set up by the BJP and though its leader has issues with the BJP, he is not enamoured of the Congress party either. In any case, the rulers of the smaller states in the Northeast have a tradition of aligning with whoever

nounced their support, so the formation of a Congress government is not in doubt any more. One only hopes that the Governor will not indulge in any sort of (mis)adventure as the Governor in Karnataka did. A few general comments:

First, there is no doubt that the verdict in all five states is against the BJP, especially in the three Hindi heartland states. Even more than Rajasthan, the other two states of MP and Chhattisgarh have always been regarded as strongholds of the BJP where it has an efficient party machine created over the years by the likes of Kushabhau Thakre. Yet,



hard put to save his own bastion in UP. Five: the dream of the Prime Minister that he would create a 'Congress-Mukt Bharat' has been dashed to the ground. It was a silly thing to say to begin with. I have been a vocal critic of the Congress party throughout and when Modi was enjoy-

a bang. People will call him Pappu at their own peril in future. Whatever the BJP's spokespersons might say, there is no doubt that the Modi Magic is over. He is not invincible any more as he appeared to be when I challenged him on his government's performance in September 2017. In the three Hindi heartland states, the total number of Lok Sabha seats is 65 out of which the BJP had won 62 in the last Lok Sabha elections. The BJP's spokespersons might argue that there is a world of difference between a Lok Sabha election and an assembly election, but the results of these elections are not good news for the BJP. There is also no doubt that these results are as much a verdict on the central government as they are on the performance of the state governments.



is in the BJP has lost massively in power in Chhattisgarh and in Madhya Pradesh compared to the number of seats it had won in the 2013 elections. From that point of view, its defeat is resounding. Second, the exit polls have once again generally been off the mark. Firstly, they're not as scientific as in other countries they also come with dressed-up figures under the influence of the ruling party. This is a dangerous trend and deserves to be nipped in the bud. The third point which I would like to make is that with each election, the standard of public discourse is touching a new low and the Prime Minister is personally responsible for this. The kind of issues that he has raised in these and earlier elections, the kind of language he has used, hardly be- hooves the PM of a country like India. Vajpayee would never have done that, whatever the provocation. The BJP cannot say that some other political party leaders used deplorable language against it to which the PM was duty-bound to reply. The Prime Minister of India cannot be compared to these leaders.

from expressing their view, as election after election has always shown in the past. It was said that Chief Minister Raman Singh had generally been non-controversial and a committed worker of the BJP for long. He is also credited with doing a number of good things in the state but even his luck has run out after 15 years.

The results of Telangana are also surprising. I think everyone underestimated the appeal of the TRS which has swept the state. The alliance between the Congress and the TDP has not cut much ice with the voters and they are a distant second. We should wait and see what impact it has on the national scene where KCR will now plead more strongly for a non-BJP, non-Congress alliance at the national level to take on both the parties simulta-

by proxy in Mizoram. Between the two bigger states of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, while the script has held as far as MP is concerned, it seems to have gone wrong in Rajasthan, where everyone predicted a sweep for the Congress - that has not happened and the party has ended up winning only 99 seats out of 199. The BJP might well claim that it was the powerful personality of the Prime Minister and his campaigning in Rajasthan in the final stretch which improved the BJP's performance. I will not be surprised if the BJP claims this to be a victory of sorts despite losing a massive number of seats which it held earlier in Rajasthan. In MP, the Congress party has fallen short of the majority mark by two seats. The BSP with two seats and the SP with one seat have already an-

Fourth, both the Yogi factor and the Hindu card have failed woefully to cut any ice with the voters. Yogi Adityanath will now be



Rahul Gandhi's Press Conference Should Concern His Supporters

(Insider Bureau) - Congratulations, politics junkies: the state assembly elections are over, but the general election campaign has begun. We now know the parameters of this fight. We know that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is on the defensive in the north and west, the regions of the country that it swept in 2014. We know that the Congress plans to serve as a magnet for opposition parties of all stripes who have been alienated or driven away from the BJP over the course of Narendra Modi's tenure. And we know that regional politics and parties are not going away.

The Congress' revival in the three Hindi-speaking states that have just voted is perhaps the biggest and important development of the past couple of years. In Gujarat, the party tried hard but eventually only won that much-mocked "moral victory". In Karnataka, it held on to power thanks to timely alliance-building and its sacrifice of the chief

the lines of attack for the opposition would be. Modi was elected to provide jobs, fight corruption, and protect farmers - and had failed on all three, according to Gandhi. But on the one occasion in recent memory when he had a largely friendly media audience following clear victories for his party, the Congress president stepped back from elucidating what the Congress' own solutions were. He insisted that vision would be created with inputs from every section of society - but is that enough? Surely he himself, having campaigned now almost constantly since the Gujarat elec-



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He was absolutely clear and accurate about how the Modi government had fallen short and thus what the lines of attack for the opposition would be. Modi was elected to provide jobs, fight corruption, and protect farmers - and

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tion, has an ideal direction for the country, concrete and popular policies, that he could have spent a few minutes on? You can't run an entire campaign on being anti-Modi - especially given that the Prime Minister is expert at suddenly becoming the opposite of what

we know that regional politics and parties are not going away. The Congress' revival in the three Hindi-speaking states that have just voted is perhaps the biggest and important development of the past couple of years. In Gujarat, the party tried hard but eventually only



minister's post. But here, in a head-to-head with Modi's BJP, it has demonstrated that it is still a contender. The Congress, the Grand Old Party, declared dead on departure in 2014, has risen once again from the grave to which we had all consigned it. But that does not mean it has a positive vision, one sufficient to map a general election campaign around. The Indian voting public has been spoiled by Narendra Modi: it expects every politician now to be able to do what the late George Bush called "that vision thing". Rahul Gandhi's press conference on the evening of results day was typical of the man: gracious but ultimately falling short. He was absolutely clear and accurate about how the Modi government had fallen short and thus what

was. Once the lion of Hindu assertion, he can swiftly become the man who insists that the Constitution is his only scripture; once the most business-friendly Chief Minister in the country, he can swiftly pivot to claiming to be the farmer's greatest friend. The Congress President may have overcome the disadvantages of his public image to emerge successful over the past year, but he has to put aside his diffidence and craft a positive vision that can compare with Modi's own if he is to compete on the grandest stage of all.

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won that much-mocked "moral victory". In Karnataka, it held on to power thanks to timely alliance-building and its sacrifice of the chief minister's post. But here, in a head-to-head with Modi's BJP, it has demonstrated that it is still a contender. The Congress, the Grand Old Party, declared dead on departure in 2014, has risen once again from the grave to which we had all consigned it.

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gress' own solutions were. He insisted that vision would be created with inputs from every section of society - but is that enough? Surely he himself, having campaigned now almost constantly since the Gujarat election, has an ideal direction for the country, concrete and popular policies, that he could have spent a few minutes on? You can't run an entire campaign on being anti-

it comes to alliance formation. It is clear to all concerned that the Congress will be the central pillar of any non-BJP government and its decimation of the Ajit Jogi-Bahujan Samaj Party alliance in Chhattisgarh will have shown smaller parties and putative rebels the danger of going off on your own in this environment.



Classroom friendships may offset effects of harsh parenting

Angry, threatening and highly critical parenting is more likely to result in children with defiant, non-compliant and revengeful behaviour that spills over to adulthood and impacts relationships with all authority figures.



Having warm teachers and friends in kindergarten can prevent children of highly critical parents from exhibiting argumentative and defiant behaviours, a study has found.

Angry, threatening and highly critical parenting is more likely to result in children with defiant, non-compliant and revengeful behaviour that spills over to adulthood and impacts relationships with all authority figures.

Researchers at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) in the US confirmed this link, and found that kindergarten may provide a unique opportunity for these children to retool negative behaviour.

In the study published in the journal *Development and Psychopathology*, researchers looked at 338 kindergartners in six public schools.

They found that 10% of the children met the criteria for oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). Among this group, 71% had been exposed to high levels of harsh parenting, versus 29% who had been raised with lower levels of harsh parenting. ODD is characterised by angry and irritable mood, argumentative and defiant behaviour, and spiteful or vindictive outbursts, according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. In young children, the condition is linked with an

elevated risk in adolescence and adulthood for antisocial behaviour, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, criminal offenses and incarceration, the study authors noted.

The researchers discovered that when harshly parented children were liked and accepted by their classmates - according to interviews with their peers and teacher reports - they exhibited fewer undesirable traits. This subset was found to have 64% lower symptoms of ODD than those who were not liked. "Acceptance within one's peer group creates opportunities for socialisation and a sense of belonging that acts as a buffer against the impact of harsh

parenting," said Danielle Roubinov, an assistant professor at UCSF. "Healthy peer relationships may have an attenuating influence by modelling or providing children with feedback about the inappropriate nature of oppositional behaviours acquired from harsh interactions with parents," he said. Researchers also found that a warm relationship with classroom teachers mitigated adverse behaviour in these harshly parented kindergartners. Symptoms of ODD were 29% lower in this group if the teacher-student relationship was close, according to student reports.

This confirms previous studies by other researchers that reported that positive teacher-student relationships were linked with less aggressive behaviour in children.

"The teacher-child relationship has frequently been framed in terms of extended attachment theory, and a high-quality teacher-child relationship may function in a manner analogous to the secure base of a child's primary attachment, the parent," said Roubinov. "Warm relationships may improve children's self-regulation, positive emotionality and responsiveness to warnings about oppositional behaviour," she said.

This study proves if marital status alters our physical activity

The changes in relationships affect the physical activity of men and women differently



While a divorce or a new relationship brings many changes in a person's life, a new study shows an association with reduced physical activity levels. The findings showed that men who divorced and women who found a new partner reduced their physical exercises.

The total number of non-exercise steps was reduced for men who divorced, whereas for women who found a new spouse, the total steps decreased significantly when compared to women married throughout.

According to the researchers, it is difficult to provide a single explanatory factor about the effects of changes in marital status on physical activity.

"It seems that the changes in relationships affect the physical activity of men and women differently," said Kasper Salin, postdoctoral researcher from the University of Jyväskylä in Finland.

For the study, published in the *Journal of Public Health*, the team included 1,051 participants aged

between 34 and 49. They also investigated the relationship between socioeconomic position and changes in physical activity.

They found that among the men and women with the highest socioeconomic status, the number of aerobic steps increased significantly over the four years. Here, aerobic steps refers to steps taken during activities that last

for at least 10 minutes without interruption at a pace of 60 or more steps per minute.

"The rise in the number of steps focused on the highest social classes, especially in aerobic steps," says Salin. "From the point of view of maintaining physical fitness and working ability, it is important to add aerobic steps."



Parental involvement essential in a child's school life

A recent study suggests that children tend to perform better when parents are involved in their school life. Many studies have proven that a parent's income and education levels, that is, their socioeconomic status, impact their child's success. School children from families with a higher socioeconomic status typically have better academic performance and, as a result, end up going to college.

Conversely, children from lower income families have a lesser chance of getting education at the same level as their wealthier classmates. It is less common for such students to continue

their education after graduating, and they ultimately become less qualified specialists in their field. A vicious cycle arises whereby inequality is reproduced.

This study, however, has shown that the cycle can be broken and a child can be given a better future. A lot depends on how involved the child's family is with his or her studies. The more active a parent is, the better a student's performance will be. This means a broader educational opportunity. The research suggests that a family's interest in a student's school life helps the child overcome educational inequality.

Shedding clothes and taboos, Mexican women learn to sext safely

Sponsored by the Mexican government, the free workshop organized by women's rights group Luchadoras is called "I sext,



Marytrini Aguilar, a 43-year-old Mexican woman with a stable marriage and two grown children, may not be what most people have in mind when they think of the word 'sexting'.

But she is proud to be part of a small but enthusiastic group of women shedding their clothes -- and their taboos -- to explore their sexuality and spice up their relationships by sharing racy selfies snapped on their cell phones.

"Sexting makes me feel free to express my sensuality. It flatters my vanity and makes me feel secure. It pleases me to please the person I'm sending the picture to," Aguilar says.

Aguilar joined seven other women recently for a workshop in Mexico City on sexting safely and responsibly. Sponsored by the Mexican government, the free workshop -- organized by women's rights group Luchadoras -- is called "I sext, do you?" It encourages participants to view sexting as a form of freedom of speech and sexual liberation, but also to be aware of the dangers. "I haven't told anyone about it yet," says Aguilar, who takes pride in subverting the stereotype of a 40-something Mexican mom.

Fitness apps may help you stay committed to your workout

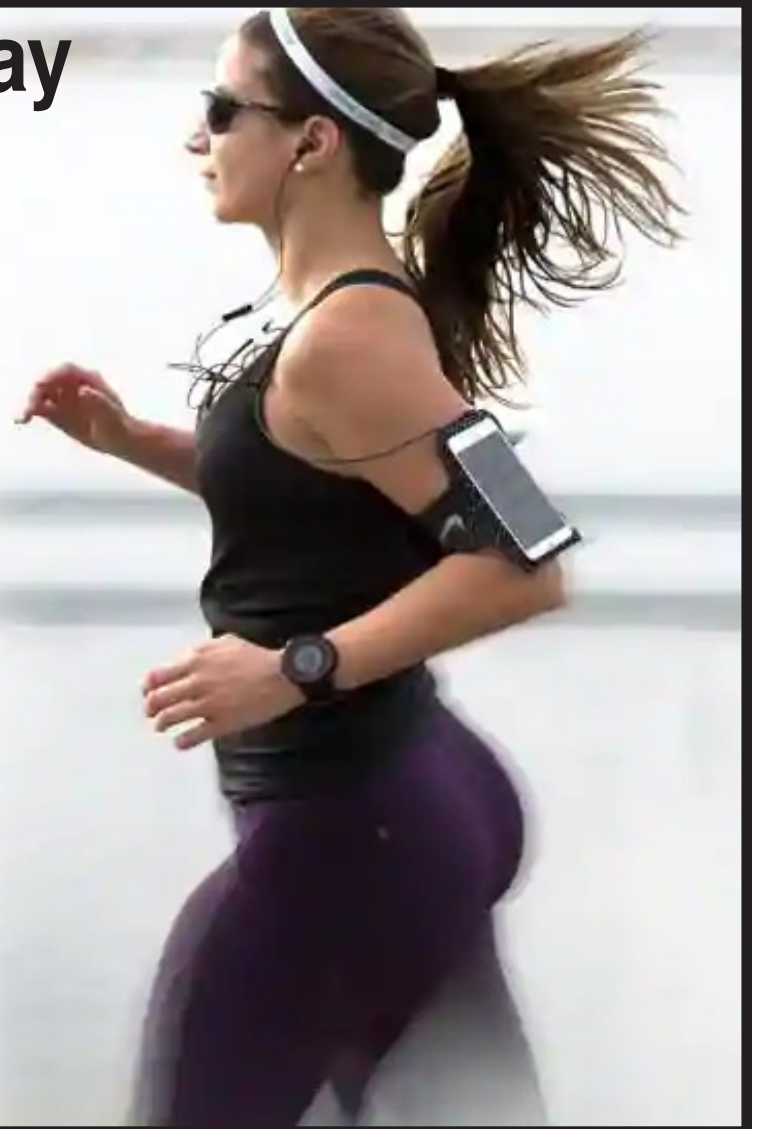
Fitness app users often struggle with maintaining a fitness routine.

Fitness apps are easy to download and motivate people to start workout routines, but that may not be enough to sustain those routines in the long run. However, a new research suggests that there may be ways to tweak those apps to inspire a deeper commitment to a fitness routine and help users reach their fitness goals.

The study was published in the journal 'Health Communication'. In the study, researchers found that certain app features that boosted inner, or intrinsic, motivation particularly feelings of autonomy, community and competence, boosted a user's chance of sticking with his or her workout routine.

Fitness app users often struggle with maintaining a fitness routine, according to the researchers. Rock Health, a technology and healthcare venture fund, reported that about 47.5 percent of people who started to use a health app eventually stopped participating. "A major challenge for this industry is to keep people using the app after the novelty has worn off. The bottom line of our project is to find ways that we think will help people sustain interest in their workouts," said S. Shyam Sundar. The researchers said that customization features that inspire autonomy such as the number of workouts that users can follow and the amount of personal details they added to their app corresponded to the

number of tracked workouts and the amount of weight lifted. For each workout program the user followed, the weight they lifted went up by 3.2 percent and the number of workouts they tracked went up 3.8 percent, according to lead author Maria Molina. She added that a unit increase in information disclosed by the user resulted in a 22.3 percent increase in tracked workouts. Similarly, when the user added more personal data to their profile, they reported lifting about 36.8 percent more weight. The researchers said that relatedness, which they measured by analysing a few factors, including the number of people users follow and the number of people who follow the users, significantly predicted the number of workouts the users tracked and the amount of weight they lifted.



Breast cancer survivors, exercise to lose weight, reduce risk of recurrence

Getting regular exercise is important for breast cancer survivors' continued health. Physical activity can help lessen certain side effects of treatment and has been shown to reduce risk of recurrence and improve survival.



Survivors of early-stage breast cancer who exercise and eat a healthy diet are more likely to lose weight and experience higher rates of disease-free survival, a new study suggests. The research is based on an examination of a lifestyle intervention that included exercise, diet, and at least one other component such as counselling, stress management, and discontinuing tobacco smoking. The study showed that obesity and low physical activity are associated with higher risks of developing breast cancer, as well as an increased risk of recurrence and reduced survival. "Lifestyle intervention might improve the prognosis of breast cancer patients if adherence is high," said Wolfgang Janni from the University of Ulm in Germany. "Many breast cancer survivors would like to contribute actively to improving their prognosis, and guiding them on lifestyle factors that can help them control weight is one possible way to positively impact patient outcomes," said Janni.

Pageants for married women raise difficult questions about gender

The most unfortunate part about such pageants is that it takes the original problems about women's beauty pageants and compounds them with another issue: classifying women into categories based on their marital status

It's 9 am on a Sunday and I'm at a hotel in Pune. As I make my bleary-eyed way to the breakfast buffet – which always leaves me in all kinds of spiritual agony before and after, but never during – I come upon an unusual sight. A group of women who look about my age are dancing in the bar adjoining the breakfast lounge. I wonder if they have been dancing all night, but 9 am is too late even by hardcore party standards. And these ladies look quite sober. Allowing myself a longer glance, I notice they are wearing sashes across their torsos. "Mrs Maharashtra", they proclaim, followed by a serial number. I proceed to the eggs and bacon, thoughts whizzing as quickly as a Neeta Volvo bus from Dadar to Aundh.

Victoria's open secrets

I recently read an article about the Victoria Secret's annual fashion show, where sculpted "angels" strut about a stage in their underwear. This is a celebration of beauty and style – much like many other pageants in the Miss World vein – except without the pretence of all-round "beauty". It is about skin and curves, now emended to skin and bones, framed in leather and lace. The case against the objectification of women's bodies doesn't need support, one would think. But as recently as last year, when Hugh Hefner left for that great bordello in the sky, voices rose in



celebration of a benevolent liberator of women. It's like calling a piranha a liberator of small fish. I'm regularly appalled by adolescent girls posing sexily on social media feeds, encouraged, even pressured, by a deeply sexist culture that positions itself as free and equal. Pout all you like, I want to say to each one of the posers, but after you've thought a bit about whom you're pouting for and why. In this scenario, one of the responses one can have about a pageant such as Mrs Maharashtra is: How nice that married women are

granted a stage to shine on. The unfortunate part is, a pageant such as this takes the original problems about women's beauty pageants and compounds them with another issue: classifying women into categories based on their marital status. Single. Married. Divorced. Widowed. As far as categories go, these are pretty exhaustive. Within them, there are sub-categories like the loose single girl, the married woman who won't change her surname, the divorcee who won't take the blame, the merry widow, etc.



Priyanka Chopra reveals she's in 'marital bliss' as she shares romantic snaps with Nick Jonas



She tied the knot two weeks ago. And Priyanka Chopra revealed she was in 'marital bliss' as she shared snaps with her new husband Nick Jonas on Tuesday. Although the 36-year-old actress previously revealed they were putting their honeymoon on hold due to work commitments, it seems the pair managed to squeeze in some time at the beach. One snap showed the duo cuddled up together whilst out soaking up the sun on the beach, with Priyanka flashing her dazzling wedding ring as she rested

her hand on Nick's chest. The Quantico star also shared a cute picture from the beach, where the pair had traced out their initials on the sand inside a love heart. The pair have been sharing snippets from their lavish multi-day ceremony with fans, and on Sunday, Nick finally shared a photo of his and Priyanka's extremely decadent towering wedding cake as he celebrated the anniversary. The image posted to his Instagram showed the newly-weds slicing into the edifice using a ceremonial sword and he writes in the caption: 'One week ago today.' The cake's design was inspired by the art deco architecture of the Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur where the wedding was held. It was part of the reception following their Christian marriage service officiated by



Nick's dad who is a pastor. That was followed the next day by a traditional Hindu wedding. In the cake-cutting photo, the Indian actress can be seen in her Ralph Lauren wedding dress which, according to People, took 1,826 hours to complete and featured two million mother of pearl sequins. Musician Nick wore a custom tuxedo also from the American designer.

Kate adds some colour!

Duchess of Cambridge gets creative with youngsters on visit to London's Evelina children's hospital on the day she became patron

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are getting into the Christmas spirit today as they visit a children's hospital and a homeless resource centre. William and Kate met youngsters receiving care and their parents when they toured the Evelina London Children's Hospital this morning, less than an hour after she was announced as its new patron. Later they will travel to The Passage, where they will hear from frontline workers about the challenges relating to street homelessness, including drug addiction and mental health issues. At the Evelina, which is part of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, they joined

children as they took part in Christmas themed activities, before enjoying celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the hospital. The hospital provides comprehensive health services to children and families from before birth, throughout childhood and into adult life, and also offers specialist services for youngsters with rare and complex conditions. Kensington Palace said Kate's patronage 'provides an opportunity to champion the medical professionals working on the front-line in children's healthcare, and shine a light on their work supporting children in their early years'. Marian Ridley, director of Evelina

London, said: 'We are absolutely delighted and deeply honoured The Duchess of Cambridge has chosen to become our Patron.

'The Duchess shares our passion for giving children and young people the very best start in life and Her Royal Highness's support will help champion the life-saving care our staff are providing to our patients.' 'It is a huge pleasure to welcome Their Royal Highnesses back to our hospital and we are absolutely delighted that they are able to join us as we begin to celebrate our milestone 150th anniversary.'

At The Passage's St Vincent centre in Victoria, William and Kate will meet people using its services when they join an arts and crafts workshop preparing gifts ahead of centre's Christmas party. Established in 1980, The Passage provides resources to encourage, inspire and challenge homeless people to make lasting and long-term changes to their lives. William first visited the charity in 1994 with his younger brother Harry when the pair were 12 and 10, alongside their mother Diana, Princess of Wales. In 2016 the duke reopened the newly refurbished St Vincent's Centre.



Life Style™



Will they ever grow up?

Millennials don't consider themselves adults until they are



moved out of their parents' home, has a job, and pays their own bills.'

Previous generations would have settled down and had a few children by 30, they found.

However, this is happening later and later these days and the age range for millennials is now 22 to 40.

High housing costs have reduced the stigma of living at home and the recession made finding work harder, which meant that people take longer to feel like adults, according to Mr Poltrack.

'More controversial is the whole idea that their baby boomer parents have really coddled them,' Poltrack told TheWrap.

'They've made it too good for them. Why would you



leave?' The study was part of three years of research carried out the CBS Campaign Performance Audit programme on what makes effective TV advertising.

Mr Poltrack carried out the survey in order to provide advertisers with information on the effectiveness of advertising.

He looked at what type of programmes different age groups were watching.

Researchers found that millennials are a demographic

that is older than people think - TV companies who target millennials are looking to capture the 18-34 age range. 'All previous generations would have probably said 22 or 23,' said Mr Poltrack. As millennials delay major events, such as buying a home, getting a job and paying bills, so too they delay watching television and buying appliances. When people start getting married and having children they really start to feel like adults, Mr Poltrack explained.

(Agencies) Many millennials don't consider themselves as adults until 30 years old, and some don't believe they are one until 40, according to a new study.

As more millennials delay moving out of their parents' home, getting a job and are paying their own bills, the age of adulthood has been pushed back.

One expert suggests that millennials stay children for so long because they have been coddled by their parents and have had things 'too good'. The research was carried out by David Poltrack, chief research officer at CBS, and Nielsen Catalina Solutions, a New York-based media company.

Mr Poltrack says an adult is defined as 'someone who has

How Peanut Butter is the only cleaning and DIY tool you'll ever need

(Agencies) Peanut butter is traditionally eaten on toast, or in a sandwich - not used as a cleaning product.

But this store cupboard staple is surprisingly one of the most versatile tools you can have in your home, according to kitchen experts.


From cleaning leather to using it as a shaving cream, these are the very surprising ways you can use peanut butter around the house that could earn the spread the title of most useful household product ever - if you're not allergic to nuts, that is.

It's best to use a natural and smooth peanut butter to try out these tricks, rather than the crunchy kind or a spread with lots of added ingredients.

HOME & GARDEN


1 ODOR REMOVER

If you've cooked up a particularly potent dish and the smell is lingering, you can get rid of the smell by putting some peanut butter in a frying pan and frying it up for a minute or two! Try it!




2 SQUEAK ELIMINATOR

Peanut butter contains natural oils, and this means it can actually be used instead of WD-40 if you're in a pinch. Use it to lubricate squeaky hinges, lawn mower blades, or all sorts of tools.




3 MOUSE TRAP BAIT

Another type of squeak you may need to get rid of - mice. Turns out they're actually not that keen on cheese after all. We're as shocked as you are! But apparently what they do love is peanut butter, so pop some in a (humane) mouse trap and they won't be able to resist.




4 REMOVE GUM

If you've ever got gum stuck in your hair, or trodden it into the carpet, you'll know what a nightmare it is to get out again. Next time this happens, grab the peanut butter! Gum and peanut butter are both hydrophobic, which is apparently the science behind why this one works.



5 REMOVE STICKER GLUE

This one is a similar concept to the gum removal tip we just told you, but peanut butter is also capable of getting that annoying glue off that stickers always leave behind. Smear a bit of peanut butter on, and rub it off with a cloth.



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'There are ground rules...but we have lots of fun'

People in open relationships share exactly how they make their very complicated love lives work



(Agencies) For many people, an open relationship sounds like the ideal; an ongoing partnership that allows you to date other people.

However, the reality is often more complicated, with jealousy rearing its head. A new thread on social media site Reddit sheds some light on to how open relationships

really work...with posts by those who are in, or have been in, them.

One user who claimed he'd dated women who'd been in open relationships said that more often than not, it was men who initiated the less than conventional set-up but women who actually ended up having more fun.

The most lavish wedding ever?

Hillary Clinton, Huma Abedin, Priyanka Chopra and Bollywood royalty watch the daughter of India's richest man tie the knot at the family's 27-storey home in \$100m celebrations

Guests including Hillary Clinton, Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas have arrived to watch the daughter of India's richest man tie the knot after enjoying days of lavish pre-wedding events.

Bride Isha Ambani, 27, is tying the knot with 33-year-old real estate mogul Anand Piramal, a childhood friend and the son of another uber-wealthy businessman, in a wedding that is thought to cost \$100million (£74.9million), according to Bloomberg. Other estimates put the cost at \$15million (£12million).

The wedding is being hosted by the bride's father, businessman Mukesh Ambani, 61, who has an estimated fortune of \$41.5 billion (£33.1 billion), at his towering 27-storey Mumbai home.

Today, following two days of discos, brunches and a private concert from Beyonce in the northwestern city of Udaipur, Rajasthan, hundreds of guests arrived at the Ambani residence, which has been decked out in hundreds of metres of twinkling fairy lights and thousands of fresh flowers. In scenes that could have been taken from a Hollywood

award show, newlyweds Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas posed on the red carpet outside as cameras flashed and fans waved. The bride is a close friend of Priyanka and acted as bridesmaid when she married Nick in their own extravagant Indian wedding last night. Other guests include model Natalia Vodianova, former US Secretary of State John Kerry and Bollywood superstars Aishwarya Rai, Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan. The entire street was decorated with elaborate floral arrangements and crowds of residents turned out to line road and watch the arrivals. Hilary Clinton, who is understood to have stayed with the Ambani family at the Mumbai tower on previous visits to the city, did not stop to pose and dashed inside the building, accompanied by her aide Huma Abedin.

Both women were dressed in stunning Indian attire, with the former US Secretary of State opting for a long-sleeved beaded ensemble, while Ms Abedin, 42, chose a sleeveless dress with similar embellishment. Elsewhere Miss Ambanis

brothers were seated on horseback as they waited to welcome Mr Piramal's family.

It has been reported that Miss Ambani, a Yale graduate, and Mr Piramal, have requested guests do not share photos from inside the wedding itself in a bid to keep it as personal and intimate as possible. However there has been plenty shared on social media from the pre-wedding receptions, with Beyonce among those who have taken to Instagram to offer a look inside the lavish events.

The first hint of the nuptials' lavishness was the elaborate embroidered and gold plated Dolce & Gabbana box guests received as invitations. Each exquisite rose printed package contained a series of luxury cards which folded out to reveal details of the events that would be held across the five-day affair.

As per Indian tradition, the party kicked off with the Sangeet, which typically sees the bride, groom and their families come together to sing and dance in stage performances celebrating their unions. But Mr Ambani, whose business interests cover oil,



telecoms, chemicals, textiles, technology and food, did not hold back when it came to the entertainment for his little girl. Beyoncé was flown in especially for the a 45-minute private concert, which saw her make several costume changes and sing hit songs Perfect and Crazy In Love. The pop star pocketed \$6 million for her last private gig back in 2014. It is unlikely another musical act will perform today as this is usually reserved for the opening night's festivities. Bollywood superstars including Aishwarya Rai partied the night away as laser lights criss-crossed the sky. Among

them were newlyweds Deepika Padukone, 32, and Ranveer Singh, 33, who married in Lake Como last month. Other reported VIP wedding guests included former Huffington Post editor-in-chief Arianna Huffington, 21st Century Fox CEO James Murdoch, BP Group CEO Bob Dudley, and cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar Mr Piramal and Yale graduate Miss Ambani selected the finest locations in Udaipur, known as the 'city of lakes', for the weekend, taking over the five-star Oberoi Udaivilas hotel and the 18th century City Palace for two night-time events.



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