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# Trump administration goes to war with states over Immigration

## The Justice Department sues California and New Jersey to overcome enforcement roadblocks.



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ICE officers look on after executing search warrants and making some arrests.

Attorney General William Barr

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# Arvind Kejriwal appointed Delhi CM, 6 ministers to take oath

The 6 ministers who will take oath along with Arvind Kejriwal on 16 Feb are Manish Sisodia, Satyender Jain, Gopal Rai, Kailash Gehlot, Imran Hussain and Rajendra Gautam

The AAP recorded a massive victory winning 62 of the 70 seats while the BJP bagged the remaining eight seats



New Delhi: President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday appointed Arvind Kejriwal as the new Chief Minister of Delhi after his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) bagged 62 of the 70 seats in the recent Delhi Assembly elections. According to an official notification, the President has also appointed six MLAs as ministers of the Delhi government following the advice of the chief minister. The six ministers who will take oath along with Kejriwal on February 16 are: Manish Sisodia, Satyender Jain, Gopal Rai, Kailash Gehlot, Imran Hussain and Rajendra Gautam. "The President has been pleased to appoint Shri Arvind Kejriwal to be the Chief Minister, National Capital Territory of Delhi with effect from the date he is sworn in," the notification said. In the Delhi polls, the AAP recorded a massive victory winning 62 of the 70 seats while the BJP bagged the remaining eight seats. The Congress drew a blank for the second consecutive time.

## AAP invites 'Little Mufflerman' to Arvind Kejriwal's oath-taking ceremony

**Arvind Kejriwal will take oath as chief minister for the third consecutive time on February 16 at Ramlila Maidan**

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Convener Arvind Kejriwal, who spearheaded his party's landslide victory in Delhi Assembly polls, will take oath as chief minister for the third consecutive time on February 16 at Ramlila Maidan. Though the party has clearly stated that they will not invite political leaders from other states, AAP has given its affirmation to one special invitation for the swearing-in ceremony. AAP revealed on Thursday it had invited "Little Mufflerman" to the oath-taking ceremony of Kejriwal. The one-year-old "Mufflerman", whose original name is Ayaan Tomar was first spotted at the AAP headquarters at ITO on the result day of the

Delhi Assembly election on February 11. The one-year-old was declared "cutest child of the day" by netizens on February 11. Little Tomar had donned CM Kejriwal's maroon-coloured sweater, mufflers, a fake moustache as well as spectacles on result's day. AAP on Tuesday convincingly managed to claim a third stint in power by



winning 62 out of 70 seats in the Delhi polls. The BJP was confined to single-digit score of 8 seats. The Congress party could not win a single seat this time either. Meanwhile, AAP has claimed over 10 lakh people joined the party within 24 hours of victory.

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# Politics is shifting to the centre-right. Delhi proves it

**Endorsing the religious practices of the majority, a strong nationalist pitch and populist welfarism is the new normal.**

Delhi is a riddle wrapped in an enigma for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Everything about the city makes it a natural BJP territory - it is largely urban; it has a substantial middle class and upper caste population; many families trace their roots to pre-Partition Pakistan; and the education level and media exposure of the average Delhi voter is high. All these groups are more likely to vote for the BJP. Moreover, this is where the party got its first big electoral success in the form of running the municipal government under the leadership of LK Advani in the 1960s. The party also won the elections, and then, completed a five-year term in government when Delhi was accorded a legislative assembly in 1993. Yet, since then, while the party has done exceptionally well in the Lok Sabha elections (and in municipal elections), it has always fared poorly during the

assembly polls.

Why do Delhi voters dodge the BJP in assembly elections? After the party's rather infamous defeat over soaring onion prices in 1998, the then BJP chief minister Sushma Swaraj, who reluctantly took over the position two months before the election, returned to national politics. Since then, the BJP has never been able to develop a leader with a mass base in the city-state. The party may have leaders who represent their specific communities or their respective localities, but they do not have the stature of the late Sheila Dikshit or Arvind Kejriwal, who could simultaneously appeal to the affluent, the middle classes and the poor. The diversity of Delhi demands a charismatic leader who can connect with migrants, resonate with Delhi's villages, and fulfil the aspirations of those living in upper class localities.

The Aam Aadmi Party

(AAP) must celebrate this much-deserved victory. The party had not won a single election since 2015 and, thus in many ways, this election was a do-or-die battle. The party had lost in the Punjab assembly elections in 2017, performed poorly in the Delhi municipal elections, and came third in five of the seven seats during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. It ran a positive campaign, highlighting its performance in improving the quality of government schools and mohalla clinics, providing subsidised water and electricity, and ensuring free public transport for women. It stayed clear of making this election a personality contest between Narendra Modi and Kejriwal, or challenging the ideological narrative set by the BJP leadership.

The BJP may take solace in the fact that it managed to increase its vote share, and, less significantly, its seat tally. However, it must



realise the limits of a high-pitched campaign on the party's ideological plank. This may keep the cadre enthused, but it is unlikely to bring middle-of-the-road voters into the party's fold. This swing constituency seeks more - credible leadership, government performance, delivery of public services, and access to public servants. In the absence of this, ideologically-neutral and non-partisan voters will maximise their calculus and split their loyalties - vote Modi and the BJP for the Lok Sabha, and Kejriwal and the AAP for

the assembly elections. This is the most pertinent electoral trend in post-2019 India.

Should the result be seen as a rejection of the BJP's ideological platform? It is natural for the Opposition parties and civil society activists to paint the AAP's overwhelming victory in Delhi as a negation of the BJP's position on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act-National Register of Citizens-National Population Register issue, and its stand on protest sites like Shaheen

Bagh. The BJP's failure in this election should not be considered a referendum on these issues. The AAP did not campaign and challenge the BJP on its ideological platform. Neither did the AAP take on Modi's leadership nor did it take firm positions on the unrest in Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jamia Millia Islamia, or Shaheen Bagh. The AAP may have been forced to adopt an electorally pragmatic posture, but in some ways, the party's victory has moved the fulcrum of Indian politics further to the Centre-Right.

## The meaning of AAP's capital success

**Arvind Kejriwal did in 2020 what the BJP had done in 2019.**

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) retained power in Delhi after a bitterly fought election, but quite easily in the end, becoming a rare incumbent to hold its vote share from one landslide election (the party's share in 2015 was 54.3% and it is around 53.5% this time) to the next. Indeed, the most recent parallel would perhaps be the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) performance in the 2019 national elections, where it bettered its 2014 vote share of 31% by around six percentage points. Sure, the BJP also managed to increase its seat share, while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) won 62 of the 70

seats in the Delhi assembly this time, as compared to 67 last time. This minor fall can be attributed more to the nature of the contests - multipolar but with one hegemonic pole in the national election, and strongly bipolar in Delhi - than anything else.

And much like the BJP won 2019 on the back of Narendra Modi's larger-than-life image and charisma, and its welfare programmes, the AAP won 2020 on the strength of Arvind Kejriwal's personality - none of the other parties even put up chief ministerial candidates - and its own welfare schemes. In 2019,

the fact that national elections are not state elections worked for Mr Modi and the BJP. And in 2020, the fact that state elections are not national elections has worked for Mr Kejriwal and the AAP.

There are four broad takeaways from the outcome and Mr Kejriwal's return to power. The first two are what the win isn't. One, over the past few years, it has become the norm to see any BJP loss as a template on how the party can be defeated nationally. It has been clear for some time that the BJP is vulnerable at the state level. It should also, by now, be equally clear that defeating the party at the



national level will take something else - something that none of the parties or combinations seem to possess at this point. Interestingly, if there is any learning here, it is actually for the BJP. Just like its opponents have discovered that national

elections are not state elections, the BJP is discovering that state elections are not national elections. And just as its opponents have to draft a national narrative that captures the electorate's imagination, the BJP needs to come up with

local narratives, and, importantly, partnerships, that work. In the case of elections in states such as Delhi - where the party is not in power - that includes finding and reposing faith in strong local leaders who can be presented as viable alternatives.



# The interplay between politics and the military

In his inaugural address on February 5 at the DefExpo 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi set an ambitious and aspirational target for India: "We must ensure defence exports cross ~35,000 crores." The visual of the PM holding a rifle and taking aim, with a resolute gaze, added to the perception of a leader committed to national security - a theme that Modi repeatedly dwelt upon in his pre-poll campaigning for the Delhi elections. Noting that India had exported military hardware worth ~17,000 crore over the last two years, the PM was, in effect, seeking a doubling of this figure. Realising this target in the stipulated time will be arduous and call for a concerted mission-mode approach. Modi claimed confidently that defence manufacturing would be boosted by the newly-created department of military affairs (DMA), headed by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). Earlier, on February 4, General Bipin Rawat, the first CDS, shared some of his preliminary thoughts with a select group of journalists on the restructuring of the military edifice and, in passing, dwelt on the need to focus on enhancing indigenous defence capacities. Inter alia, the CDS made some other statements that seemed intriguing. Taken together, the DefExpo 2020, PM Modi's assertions, and the statements of the CDS point to an anomalous pattern that is evolving in India - the gradual prioritisation of domestic political compulsions over normative national security imperatives. The DefExpo, which showcases India both as a nascent exporter of military inventory and among the world's top arms importers, was traditionally held in Delhi since inception but from the 9th edition in 2016, the venue has moved to other locations - perhaps related to constituency considerations. Former defence minister, Manohar Parrikar, moved the expo to Goa in 2016. His successor, Nirmala Sitharaman, shifted it to Chennai in 2018. And now, under Rajnath Singh's watch, the event has moved to Lucknow. Whether Uttar Pradesh has the requisite ecosystem and infrastructure to emerge as a viable defence manufacturing hub remains moot. The compulsions of politics were discernible in the first term of the National Democratic Alliance government, wherein the PM was unable to retain a dedicated defence minister despite the earnest statements underlining his commitment to security and defence reforms. Thus in Modi 1.0, India had four incumbents as defence ministers: Arun Jaitley, Manohar

Parrikar, Jaitley again, and then Sitharaman. At the time, internal political developments in Goa saw Parrikar assuming charge as Goa chief minister almost overnight.

In the 2019 general election, the Pulwama-Balakot episode allowed the Modi government to project its military resolve as a winning card, and this strategy has been again invoked in the run-up to the Delhi elections. Pakistan is cast as the abiding enemy and more recent domestic political protests over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act have been packaged in an adroit, but potentially dangerous manner, as being "anti-national", supportive of jihadi terrorism, and an insult to the memory of the brave soldier. In summary - the citizen who either engages in peaceful protest, or decides to vote for a party other than the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is now cast as a security threat and the deplorable exhortation "goli maaro saalon ko (shoot the scoundrels)" is part of the militarisation of the prevailing political discourse. The observations by the CDS, however freewheeling, are perplexing and indicative of this nascent internalising of the political discourse by the military apex. Specific to the fiscal allocation for the armed forces, General Rawat averred that the budget allocated to the military was adequate, and added: "Management of budget is critical. Budget is more a management issue than an issue of adequate funds." This goes against the guarded statements made by successive service chiefs for decades that the overall allocation is inadequate to maintain the operational edge that the security environment warrants. It may be recalled that in Modi 1.0, the military inventory inadequacies were highlighted by the parliamentary standing committee on defence, headed by Major General BC Khanduri (retired), a BJP veteran, in 2016. The report cautioned: "It can be averred that the budget cuts leave the possibility of having adverse implications on the country's security." Similar cautionary observations were made by the Khanduri committee in 2018 about capital budget allocations for military modernisation. One presumes that General Rawat as the Army chief would have been more than aware of the cannibalisation of major platforms that now prevails in the Indian forces to maintain minimum operational readiness. The prioritisation of the political compulsion was evident in the fact that despite his objective and painstaking review of the inadequacies in the national security apparatus, General Khanduri was eased out of his job. Is there a cue here about the line not to be crossed?

## The SC's order on Internet shutdown is wrong

On January 10, the Supreme Court (SC) wrote a 130-page judgment laying down the principles that would be used to determine whether an Internet shutdown is permissible or not. It held boldly that the freedom of speech and the freedom of trade on the Internet are fundamental rights. It mandated that any restriction to such fundamental rights, even if in the interest of national security or law and order, would only be valid if there was no other less restrictive way of achieving that objective. But in an astonishing act of self-abnegation, it refused to apply its own principles to the shutdown in Kashmir, which was the set of facts that was brought before the court. Instead, it directed the government to review all its orders in accordance with these principles.

The overwhelming response to the judgment has been to praise its principles and criticise its refusal to apply them. This is grossly misleading. It is precisely in the lofty principles it enumerates that the judgment gets it wholly wrong.

The entire foundation for the judgment is that a complete prohibition on the Internet is permissible as long as it can be demonstrated that the measure is proportionate to the interest sought to be achieved, and there are no other means less intrusive on fundamental rights that could have been used. But this is a logical fallacy. If a complete prohibition on the Internet (say, on the ground of national security, as was the case in Jammu and Kashmir) is to satisfy these tests, it would have to be demonstrated that a significant majority of websites that are accessed on the Internet or messages that are sent over

the Internet could be a threat to national security. This is a warrantless proposition.

If the judges were serious about the proportionality doctrine, on which they spent 36 pages of their judgment, they should have been equally serious about its natural corollary - that a complete shutdown of the Internet can never be proportionate without deeming the entire population to be a threat.

Instead, they make a second logical fallacy in saying that complete bans have been accepted previously as constitutional. While correct, there is a crucial difference that they miss - the shutdown of the Internet is not like the complete ban of a book which has previously been held valid. Instead it is like the banning of books. Whatever may be the reasons for banning of a book, there can be no constitutional reason for banning the medium of books entirely.

For governments which now have been directed to implement this judgment, and follow its directions before contemplating any Internet shutdowns in the future, the quandary is this: While the SC has laid down the principle of proportionality which is to be followed, it has however not applied the principle itself. Further, it has said (wrongly) that were the principle to be applied, the validity of complete Internet shutdowns in the future would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis. To make sense of this internally contradictory set of holdings, it is no surprise that governments will find the lowest common denominator - that every future suspension will be determined on a case-by-case basis.



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# End the protest at Shaheen Bagh

It will go down as historic. Now, find other ways to dissent



Shaheen Bagh in Delhi has emerged as an iconic site of resistance against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), and a possible National Register of Citizens (NRC)? Citizens (which, the government has clarified, isn't in the works for now). Over the past two months, women - particularly Muslim women - have led the sit-in at Shaheen Bagh. The protest has given the issue of CAA-NRC significant space in the national consciousness. This is also among the most successful Occupy movements anywhere globally. It speaks of the agency and power of Muslim women, who have exercised their democratic rights, and broken several stereotypes in the

process. The movement has also been non-violent, despite attempts to inflame the situation. It has brought alive questions of citizen rights, the place of Muslims in modern India, and constitutional values. And it is a reminder to the government about the need to win the trust of India's minorities. But it is important for any movement to take into account changing circumstances. The government has shown no indications that it will withdraw the CAA or even engage on the issue - and, therefore, a key objective of the protest is not likely to be met. The protest has caused inconvenience to residents of Delhi, leading to a degree of local resentment. The

Supreme Court has observed that protests must happen in designated areas and cannot be indefinite - this prompted some protesters to say that they are open to shifting to another area. The electoral outcome in Delhi has been a resounding mandate for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which walked a fine line on the protest, neither embracing it nor rejecting it, and a defeat of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which was sharply critical of the protest. But this should not be read as an endorsement of the Shaheen Bagh protest, for several other issues went into making the AAP the winner. Still, after the protest became a key issue in the polls, it was reasonable for the organisers not to withdraw - for it may have seemed as a surrender in the face of a political onslaught. Now that the polls are over, the protesters have the political room to take a decision on its own independent merit. They must also consider the fact that the situation, due to elements which want to undermine the protest, can turn violent, and, possibly, cause communal unrest.

## The Democratic quest to find a challenger to Trump

The United States (US) presidential election campaign is officially in full swing, but all the debates are taking place on one side. They indicate a deep divide within the Democratic Party about how to address the social ills of the US and how to defeat Donald Trump. The results of the Iowa caucus and the New Hampshire primary have consolidated Bernie Sanders as the front-runner for the left-wing of the party. The surprise has been the rise of Pete Buttigieg as a favourite of the party's centrist supporters. While

former vice-president Joe Biden is not out of the running, it will take a small miracle for him to resurrect himself. Added to the mix is the intrusion of billionaire Michael Bloomberg, who is not yet on any ballot but is spending his way up the poll rankings. The goal of Democratic voters is to choose a candidate who can defeat Mr Trump. If Mr Sanders wins a few more primaries, the Left-wing will

have settled on a candidate. Mr Buttigieg's path is longer, but so long as he comes first or second in most of the remaining primaries, the only other centrist alternative will be Mr Bloomberg. The polling totals of all the centrist candidates are roughly equal to



those of the leftists. The intra-party fissures within the Democrats perfectly reflect those existing in American society today. While New Delhi is obviously neutral in all this, it would probably wince if a left-wing candidate wins the Democratic nomination. Democratic primaries may seem boringly parochial but they are not without global significance.

# Jammu and Kashmir: Detention is not the answer

Booking the former chief ministers under PSA is counterproductive



The decision to book former Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti under the Public Safety Act (PSA), which allows for detention up to two years, is ethically questionable, legally flawed, and politically counterproductive. The two leaders were booked under PSA soon after completing six months in preventive detention. Omar's father, former CM Farooq Abdullah, is also detained under PSA. Sections of the media have cited a government dossier

outlining the charges. If these reports are accurate, Omar Abdullah has been accused of espousing radical ideology, of having the capacity to influence people and encouraging an agitation, and of instigating people against India. Ms Mufti,

too, has been reportedly accused of promoting separatism, and making provocative statements which have led to violence.

The government's approach over the detention of leaders is disconcerting. For one, it violates the spirit of the Constitution. Individual liberty is at the heart of the democratic constitution. The government has shown no tangible evidence which suggests that the Abdullachs or Ms Mufti had done anything to stir violence or seek to break up the Union. Yes, these leaders have been critical of the government's decision to effectively nullify Article 370 in the state and divide it. Yes, they run parties which can organise demonstrations in opposition to these moves. But this is their fundamental right as Indian citizens. If the government truly wants to integrate J&K with the Union, it cannot do so without giving to the citizens in J&K the same rights exercised by Indians elsewhere. It also cannot do so unless democratic activity gets restored, which can truly happen only when these leaders get released. The move also undermines the Indian State's interests. The Abdullachs and Ms Mufti, in the most difficult of times, when the street mood was laced with resentment against Delhi, and when terror groups from Pakistan wreaked havoc, have stood up for the Union. The current charges against them defy common sense - for it is almost an implicit suggestion that their backing of the Constitution and democracy merits punishment. Will this not strengthen those who are against India? The Centre may want to encourage a new force in Kashmir's polity - but it must not happen by curtailing individual rights. Delhi is weakening its own political and diplomatic case on Kashmir.



# Can Arvind Kejriwal go national, asks Rajdeep Sardesai



**There is a vacuum in the Opposition leadership space. But the Delhi CM has his own limitations**

The emergence of Arvind Kejriwal has undoubtedly been the start-up story of Indian politics in the last decade, just as the inexorable rise of Narendra Modi has been the biggest brand revolution over this period.

For their devout followers, both symbolise hope and change, albeit in starkly different ways. If the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader represents the dream of a more socially conscious, egalitarian India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) mascot is the flag-bearer of unalloyed Hindutva politics, where religio-nationalist zeal is at the core of a new India vision. Both leaders swear by a good governance model

premised on populist welfarism and, yes, both are fiercely individualistic and are their own respective party high commands. So, as Kejriwal storms back to power with another remarkable majority in the Delhi Vidhan Sabha elections, the question might inevitably be asked: Can the AAP leader be a future challenger to Prime Minister Modi? Well, yes and no. As the widely contrasting results of the Delhi Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha in the last year have shown, the voter is making a sharp distinction between state and national elections. The near-complete identification of every state government scheme with

the chief minister has meant that the same voter who is attracted by Modi's muscular leadership at a national level is unhesitatingly willing to make the switch to Kejriwal in a state contest. This easy swap - we saw it in Delhi 2014-15 as well - reflects a transactional voter who is less likely to be swayed by high-pitched emotional rhetoric in a more localised "bijli-paani-school-mohalla clinic" election milieu. In effect, Kejriwal is recognised and now trusted as the face of Delhi. But this also limits his potential to expand his brand value beyond the national capital which, after all, is ultimately a city-state with just seven Lok Sabha Members of Parliament. In Mumbai, for example, the Shiv Sena, for decades, has played the role of benefactor at the local level; its network of shakha pramukhs (branch heads) has created a regional connect that ensures the party's dominance in the cash-

rich Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). Can a Kejriwal, with his focused service delivery model, offer an alternative to a corruption-tainted BMC? Not unless the AAP is able to create a local organisation that can identify with the unique ethos of the city - an agenda for civic governance needs a distinct regional dimension in different parts of the country. The limitations of the AAP were exposed in 2017 in Goa and Punjab, two states where the party made a concerted attempt to expand. In Punjab, the AAP's original anti-corruption agenda resonated for a while, but the failure to identify and empower a local Sikh leadership prevented the party from taking advantage of the initial momentum. In Goa too, the complex nature of panchayat-driven village societies meant that the AAP was seen as a party of outsiders in a starkly parochial political

environment. Moreover, while the AAP has established itself as Delhi's premier political party, it hasn't been able to change the political ethos in a manner that would make it an attractive option for those fatigued with mainstream politics. The list of winning AAP legislators includes some bright, young minds, but it is also populated by defectors and moneybags. The idealism of the Anna Hazare anti-corruption movement has been compromised by the harsh realities of electoral politics. Kejriwal's reluctance to build a second line of leadership outside the shadow of the Supreme Leader has meant that the AAP is still burdened, like many regional outfits, with the one-leader show tag. And yet, politics often does offer a second innings for those willing to learn from past mistakes. Kejriwal 2.0 appears a more sober avatar of his earlier perpetually angry man image.

## How the AAP won, with some help from the BJP

**Despite a patchy track record, the AAP captured the narrative. The Delhi BJP? had nothing to offer voters**

Delhi's outsized influence on the national polity upsets people outside the city. Arvind Kejriwal's emphatic victory is seen by many political analysts as yet another opportunity for him to emerge on the national scene, even though Delhi has only 14 million voters and seven members of Parliament. Whether Kejriwal does emerge as a serious challenger to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s virtually hegemonistic control over the national polity is anybody's guess, but his success in defending his fortress in Delhi needs to be understood, even if a binary election has the effect of exaggerating the winning margin.

Kejriwal's stupendous success is somewhat surprising if one looks at his party's performance in the last two elections in Delhi, the municipal elections in 2017 and the Lok Sabha elections in mid-

2019. In both, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) performed miserably and the BJP had a clean sweep, with even greater margins than before.

The AAP's victory, therefore, goes against the grain. It can be argued that though the BJP had, similarly, swept the 2014 Lok Sabha elections in Delhi, winning not just the seven seats, but also leading in 60 assembly segments, the AAP swept the assembly elections held just nine months later. There are, however, differences between the two situations.

One, though it led in only 10 assembly segments in the 2014 elections, the AAP polled almost 33% of the votes while the BJP polled 46%. The gap widened substantially in 2019, with the AAP's vote share falling to just 18%, while that of the BJP ballooning to 54%, a substantial lead. Even the Congress did better with over 22% of the votes

in 2019, coming second in five of the seven seats. What was particularly worrying for the AAP was that it came in second only in two constituencies, with three of its candidates losing their deposits.

The second important change was that in 2015, the AAP was the challenger, untested but full of enthusiasm, while, this time around, it was the incumbent, being tested on its promise of good governance. And it is this which has yielded rich dividends for Kejriwal. By concentrating on only a few areas - electricity pricing, free water, schools and health issues, the AAP has come out looking much better than its challengers.

Objectively speaking, the performance in these spheres is both patchy and at the cost of long-term growth, but its approach seems to hit the right notes with the electorate. The fact that the vast majority of



students who fail in Class 9 are now thrown out of the system means that the pass percentage at the board levels has gone up, though at the cost of the poor, first-generation learner. But a number of the better-performing government schools have been spruced up and exposed to improved pedagogies, which has added to the image of improved school performance. Similarly, in health, the numbers of mohalla clinics set up in three years is less than the target set in the first year, and their performance is often substandard. Similarly, major government hospitals have

seen shortages that prevented operation theatres from functioning for long periods, but the overall image was of innovation and sincerity. What has helped Kejriwal is that with the effective privatisation of health and school education, large segments of vocal and active voters are not users of government facilities, and have not seen the changes themselves, but go along with the prevailing narrative. Kejriwal's ability to reach out to the people directly, bypassing the role of the bureaucracy, has also endeared him to the voters.



# In AAP's victory, a lesson in transformative politics

The extraordinary political process that Delhi has witnessed this past month represents at once the maturing of the electorate within this "ordinary city" with all its diversity, complexity and peculiarities. With a clear mandate in favour of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), citizens have affirmed that issues matter, and that their vote has a particular meaning, which is not subject to identity-based polarisation.

Delhi is a city that has been an epitome of historical aspirations of a post-colonial society, as also a space for poor migrants in search of better opportunities. Its assembly is among the smallest in the country with 70 legislators, and has severely truncated powers. Without power over public order, police and land, the AAP has sought to make a mark for itself by working on schools, affordable electricity and water. It asked the electorate to judge it on this performance. In a very unevenly poised challenge, its key electoral opponent was the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP),

armed with a massive national mandate. The key plank for the BJP was to ask Delhi voters to choose between the "Mughal Raj, or Modi".

That AAP victories have been registered in all parts of the city - from Chandni Chowk, Rajendra Nagar, and New Delhi to the wealthy areas of South Delhi with large populations of Punjabi Hindu migrants, from the unauthorised colonies of Sangam Vihar-Deoli to the outlying nearly rural areas of Burari, and much more decidedly among the poorer sections of the population - will be the subject of extended political study. This is all the more so since the AAP outwitted the Opposition's charge that it was distributing freebies among the poor, or that there was more publicity than substance on its educational endeavours, or even that it was implicitly aligned with the protesters of Shaheen Bagh. Three distinct aspects emerge from the AAP's victory. First, closely focused on its governance of the city, the AAP broke down the city binaries, between its wealthy and poorer



areas. The power subsidy, for example, was far from being a dole for the poor. It touched nearly 90% of the city's population, with the most benefits going to the least advantaged. As per data available with the distribution companies, nearly 4.8 million were getting subsidised power bills in December 2019. The subsidy was organised such that there were cuts in fixed costs, which benefited an array of the relatively well-off sections, and those consuming between 0-200

units were given 100% subsidy. In non-peak electricity demand months (October-December), many more households got zero bills, ensuring a mixed distribution of benefits.

Second, the AAP increased State capacity to build the capabilities of its poor and vulnerable citizens in health, but even more in education. It increased its education spending to over one-fourth of its gross budgetary spend (26%), and delivered quality education. I met

parents (mothers) and students, who came from a Scheduled Caste background, in schools at Sangam Vihar. Students enjoyed new facilities such computer classes, laboratories, and sports clubs. Their parents were in precarious modes of employment such as household cleaners, cooks, or office support staff. Some had lost their jobs. Good quality education builds what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai calls the "capacity to aspire" among the young.

## VP Menon: An unsung hero of modern India

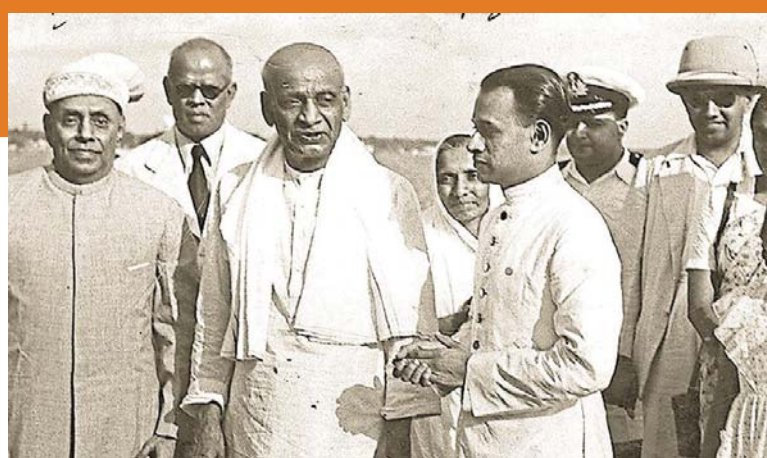
**He left a rich legacy - expanding suffrage, pushing federalism, and, of course, integrating princely states**

On a sunny spring day in 1914, a young Malayali walked into the Government of India's summer offices in Gorton Castle (in the then Simla). Nobody knew who Vappala Pangunni Menon was then. He was all of 19-years-old, and he came with nothing but a letter recommending him for a typist's job in the home department. Over the course of the next four decades, VP - as he would come to be known - would be at the frontline of India's progress towards Independence. He was the principal typist of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. In 1924, he would join the Reforms Office, a branch of the government of India, which would shepherd India along the path to self-governance. He would remain with the Reforms Office until 1947. Today, VP Menon is remembered for being Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's right-hand man, for assisting in the integration of the princely states

into the Indian Union. But, between 1914-1951, VP's contributions to modern India were both immense and immensely understated.

In 1930, a trip (his first overseas) as part of the secretariat to London for the First Round Table Conference brought home to VP the importance of the ongoing suffragette movement. Five years later, when he was working on the electoral rolls for the upcoming provincial elections of 1937, VP would give women - including those whose marriages had been dissolved - the right to vote. He would also provide a space for the multitudes of India's uneducated on the voters' list, by providing symbols and coloured boxes on ballot papers and insisting that provincial governments lower their educational standards for the average voter. His was the voice that ensured the inclusion of such diverse clauses as the

enfranchisement of the residents of India's numerous railway settlements, and the estimation of the representatives from urban and rural areas. He was in his mid-forties then, and alone, for the first time, at the helm of constitutional change in the country. It is a contribution that has got lost in the dryness of the technicalities of constitutional semantics, but it deserves to be richly highlighted. This was just the beginning. The exposure to debates around a prospective federal future for the country gave VP the idea that India would do well as a federation. He would, in fact, put forward three plans for the transfer of power from the Raj to an independent India - in 1936, in 1941, and in 1946. Each plan hinged on one concept: A unified, federal India could well be achieved if the Centre took defence, foreign affairs and communications from the princely states, and left all the



other powers with the royal houses. It would mean no extreme humiliation for the princes, but it would allow the overall authority to be held by the Government of India. Two different Viceroys heard his plan - and each time, the plan was shelved. It would be June 1947 before the Menon Plan for Indian Independence would finally see the light of day. The constant thwarting of his ideas never prevented VP from trying to save India from the Partition. He strongly believed in trying to get all the political stakeholders at the same table in order to stitch

together a coalition. The last desperate stab at this came in 1945, when VP pushed the then viceroy, Lord Wavell, into calling, what would become known as the Simla Conference. The failure of the conference is generally attributed to the clash of the personalities and egos that sat around the table in the Viceregal Lodge in Simla. But it is not well-known that VP Menon was the man who not only laid out the blueprint of the conference but insisted that it was Wavell's duty to try to gain a political consensus about the future of India.



## AAP's 'Jai Hanuman' Riposte To BJP's 'Jai Shri Ram' Is Here To Stay

**A key aide of Kejriwal told Outlook that the party plans to 'seriously adopt Hanuman ji as its mascot the same way as the BJP has co-opted Bhagwan Ram over the past three decades.'**

(News Agencies)- As leads returned into results for the Delhi Assembly polls on Tuesday, giving the Aam Aadmi Party a near encore of its unprecedented 2015 electoral victory, Arvind Kejriwal told his followers: "This is the day of Lord Hanuman who has blessed the people of Delhi." A few days earlier, Kejriwal had stumped many, including leaders of the BJP, by declaring to a TV News channel that he was a "kattar Hanuman bhakt", following which he recited the Hanuman Chalisa. Days later, the Delhi CM paid a visit to a Hanuman temple, riling the

Hindutvavadi BJP further. Now, armed with the "blessings of Hanuman ji", who he credited for ensuring his party's second consecutive win in the national capital, Kejriwal said he prayed to the main lieutenant of Lord Ram to "show us the right path" to serve Delhiites for the next five years. Kejriwal's decision to project himself as a "kattar Hanuman bhakt" was not sudden, say AAP sources. In fact, Jai Bajrangbali or Jai Hanuman is likely to become the AAP's riposte to BJP's decades-old Jai Shri Ram chant from now on whenever political

slugfests between Delhi's re-elected ruling party and its saffron rival turn into a match of competitive Hindutva.

A key aide of Kejriwal told Outlook the party plans to "seriously adopt Hanuman ji as its mascot the same way that the BJP has co-opted Bhagwan Ram over the past three decades". The reason: "The BJP can't brand AAP as anti-Hindu or anti-national if our leader positions himself as a staunch disciple of Hanuman ji who was the staunchest ally of the very god (Lord Ram) around whom the BJP's entire politics revolves."



Whether or not Kejriwal's Hanuman gambit will pay off in endearing himself and his party to the BJP voter in the years to come is too premature a prediction to make. Equally unclear is whether this competitive bhakti between the AAP and BJP could upset the former's liberal or left-of-centre vote bank, which has been instrumental in propelling the party to its present status. The Congress party, as the assembly poll results have once again shown, is a dead alternative in

Delhi for the non-BJP voter. The Muslims, AAP sources say, "have no other option" but to vote for Kejriwal despite his overt soft Hindutva pitch, which forced the party to remain silent on the Citizenship Amendment Act, support the abrogation of Article 370 and not just maintain a calculated distance from the Shaheen Bagh protests but saw the chief minister vocalize that he would have had the protest hotspot cleared "within 2 hours" if the Delhi police were under his control.

## After AAP's massive win in Delhi, KCR revives Federal Front idea

(News Agencies)- The third straight victory of the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party in the assembly elections in New Delhi has rekindled the hopes of Telangana Rashtra Samithi president and chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to revive his plans to float a federal front of regional parties at the national level as an alternative to the two national parties - the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress. The TRS chief told reporters in Hyderabad on January 25 that the AAP was likely to win the elections, reflecting the people's opinion against the BJP's divisive politics at the national level. He announced that he would soon conduct a meeting of all regional parties and like-minded chief

ministers in Hyderabad opposing the CAA and NRC, which are anti-constitutional. A TRS leader familiar with the development said KCR would use the meeting as an opportunity to revive the concept of the federal front with a common national agenda, as an alternative to the BJP and the Congress. "It may not materialize immediately, but it would definitely be a beginning in that direction," he said. In fact, KCR mooted the idea of a federal front before the general elections last year. He flew from one state to another to discuss the idea with regional satraps like H D Deve Gowda of the Janata Dal (Secular) in Karnataka, M K Stalin of the Dravidra Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu, Naveen Patnaik of the

Biju Janata Dal in Odisha, Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, Hemanth Soren of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in Jharkhand and Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh. Back home, he also held talks with Asaduddin Owaisi of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) and Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy of the YSR Congress party. Though some leaders evinced interest in his federal front concept, it did not work out and many of them preferred to join hands with the Congress under the umbrella of the Maha Gatbandhan at the initiation of Telugu Desam Party president N Chandrababu Naidu to fight against the BJP. However,



with the BJP returning to power with a massive mandate in May 2019, the ideas of a grand alliance as well as a federal front fell flat. Now, the TRS chief has seen an opportunity to revive the federal front, with BJP losing one state after the other to regional parties in the last few months and the Congress still unable to gain

strength on its own completely. The TRS leadership is of the view that after Arvind Kejriwal in Delhi, there is every possibility that regional leaders will hold sway in next year's assembly elections in different states, like Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal and DMK in Tamil Nadu and Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar.

## TN govt recommends release of all 7 life convicts in Rajiv Gandhi assassination case



(News Agencies)- The Tamil Nadu government on Wednesday informed the Madras High Court that the state has recommended release of all the seven life

convicts of Rajiv Gandhi assassination case to the Governor as it lacks the power to order such remission. "The state cabinet has only

made a recommendation to the governor. Only the governor has to take a decision. The Governor cannot be questioned by the state for not acting on its recommendation, public prosecutor A Natarajan said.

The PP made the submission on a plea by a life convict Nalini Sriharan, seeking to declare her detention as illegal since the Governor had failed to order her release based on the September 9, 2018 recommendation of the state cabinet. When the Habeas Corpus Petition came up for hearing before a division bench

comprising Justices R Subbiah and R Pongiappan, the court directed the PP to file a reply by February 18 on whether Nalini's incarceration after the state's recommendation for release would amount to illegal detention. The petitioner submitted that as per the Supreme Court judgement in the Maru Rams case, the advice of the state government under Article 161 of the Constitution is binding on the Governor. She contended that as the power under Article 161 (power of

the Governor to grant pardons and suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases), has already been exercised by Tamil Nadu, the Governor has no discretion, but to act on the advice of the council of ministers. Since she has not been released as per the advice of the council of ministers, the continuous detention was illegal and violative of Article 14 and 21 of the Constitution, she claimed. Nalini is the longest serving prisoner in the country, who is behind the bars for over 27 years.



# Why the Delhi election matters

**The AAP-BJP battle reinforced a pattern. Secularism is getting redefined in Indian politics**



(News Agencies)- The verdict of Delhi's assembly election will be out today. The results will not only determine who governs the city for five years, but will also leave a new imprint on the canvas of Indian democracy. The vitriol unleashed during the election campaigning is still fresh. Though the campaign was for the Delhi elections, the

manner in which issues were taken up suggested that it was a national election. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) fielded an entire brigade of "nationalists". In the seven-decade-long history of Indian democracy, this was perhaps for the first time a party had deputed almost 250 Members of Parliament for a contest which involved 70

assembly seats. During the campaigning, the party's former president and home minister Amit Shah led the charge. He went door to door, addressed various gatherings in support of the party's candidates, and tried to convey his message through several rallies. The chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, also addressed 12 election rallies. The attempt, as is characteristic of the BJP's electoral strategy elsewhere, was aimed at winning a significant section of votes from the majority community.

The BJP has made prime

minister Narendra Modi its face in this election. But this time, he addressed only two public rallies. This indicated that the party was exercising a degree of caution to ensure that if the result was unfavourable, Brand Modi would remain untarnished. This is despite the fact that the BJP has tried to pass the electoral test by riding on the PM's far-reaching decisions on issues such as triple talaq, Article 370 and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

Its leaders also mentioned the dharna at Shaheen Bagh repeatedly, accusing political rivals of supporting it. In response, the senior leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)

argued that those in charge of law and order in the city had the power, and thus, the responsibility, to clear the dharna at Shaheen Bagh. The law and order machinery of Delhi comes under the Union home ministry. The results will tell which argument resonated with the people of Delhi.

But irrespective of the outcome, the polls have once again proved that India is chalking out a new definition of secularism. Arvind Kejriwal reciting the Hanuman Chalisa only reaffirms that. Later, in a public gathering, he was also seen carrying a mace. Earlier too, various political leaders have visited temples, mosques, and other places of religious significance.

## 'Gangotri Of Terror': BJP's Giriraj Singh Says Islamic Seminary In UP Produces Terrorists

(News Agencies)-Union minister Giriraj Singh has once again triggered a controversy by claiming that Islamic seminary Deoband in Saharanpur is a factory producing terrorists. He termed the seminary as "Aatankvaad ki Gangotri".

Talking to the media persons in Saharanpur on Tuesday, Singh said that Deoband produces terrorists like Hafiz Saeed.

"I have said earlier that Deoband is the Gangotri of terrorists. All most wanted terrorists of the

world came from Deoband, including Hafiz Saeed or any of the others," said Singh.

These people are not against CAA, they are against India. This is a kind of a Khilafat movement," said Giriraj Singh while attacking

the ongoing anti-CAA protests in Deoband.

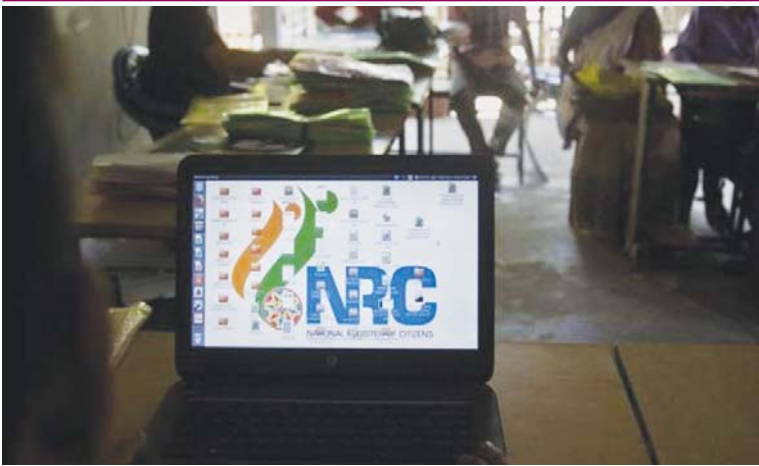
Deoband has seen fierce anti-CAA protests by Muslim women over the past months and has faced attack from BJP leaders.

The Union Minister had earlier alleged that 'suicide bombers' were being raised in Shaheen Bagh.

Referring to a video, in which a few children and Burqa-clad women were purportedly making anti-CAA and anti-BJP speeches, the BJP leader said poison is being drilled into the minds of kids. "This Shaheen Bagh protest is no longer a movement. It has become a breeding ground of suicide bombers and place where conspiracy against the country is being hatched," he had claimed. Singh had made a similar statement in December too.



**Assam NRC goes offline, company points to contract that wasn't renewed**



(News Agencies)- Wipro, the company tasked with providing storage space on cloud for keeping National Register of Citizenship (NRC) data in Assam, has said that the contract was not renewed by the government due to which the data went offline. "The IT services contract was not renewed by the authorities upon its expiry in October, 2019. However, as a gesture of goodwill, Wipro continued to pay the hosting service fee until January-end, 2020," Wipro Limited said in a statement on Wednesday. "Wipro is willing to continue providing these services if the IT services agreement is renewed by the authorities," it further said. The NRC data for Assam went

offline from December 15 last year after it was suspended by Wipro. The data contains information on applicants included and missing from the list released in August last year. "The contract with Wipro for cloud storage of the data expired in October last year. The data went offline from December 15 after the company suspended its usage," said a senior official at the state NRC coordinator's office on condition of anonymity as he is not authorised to speak to media. The official said the lapse happened after previous NRC state coordinator Prateek Hajela, who was transferred from the post of Madhya Pradesh following a Supreme Court directive, failed to renew the contract.

## Delhi Police arrests 10 students in Gargi college molestation case

**A case was registered against the ten accused under sections 452, 354, 509, 34 of the IPC at Hauz Khas Police Station.**

(News Agencies)-The Delhi Police on Wednesday arrested ten students in connection with the alleged molestation of girls in Gargi college.

A case was registered against the ten accused under sections 452, 354, 509, 34 of the IPC at Hauz Khas Police Station. Over 11 teams are working on the case, officials said. These teams are looking at

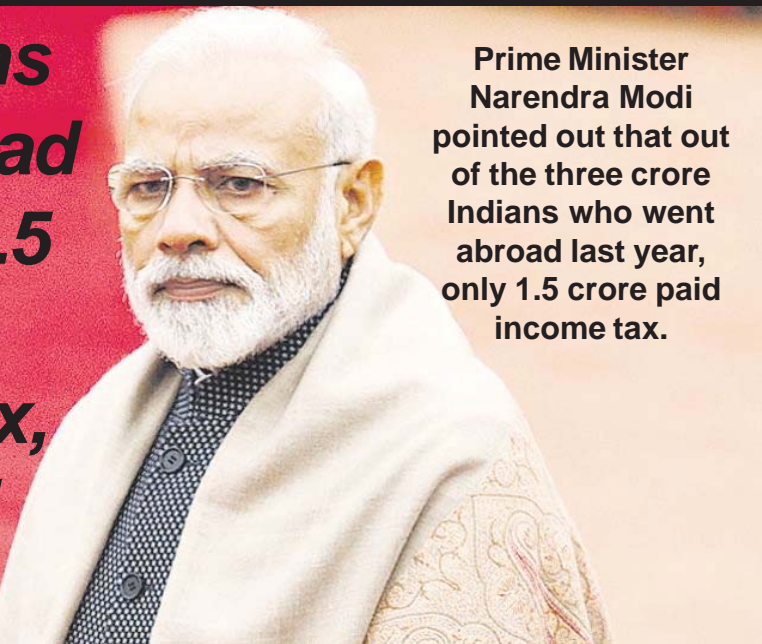


The investigating teams also spoke to college authorities, the officials informed.

technical details available and are also visiting various sites in NCR in connection with the identification of the suspects and investigation of the case, they said. Several people are being questioned by police and multiple suspects have been identified, officials said.



# 3 cr Indians travel abroad but only 1.5 cr pay income tax, says PM Modi



## Prime Minister Narendra Modi pointed out that out of the three crore Indians who went abroad last year, only 1.5 crore paid income tax.

(News Agencies)- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday urged citizens to pay their dues for the country's development and underlined that his government was making the taxation system more citizen-centric. The Prime Minister pointed out that out of the three crore Indians who went abroad last year, only 1.5 crore paid income tax. "More than three crore people went abroad for business or as tourists. Many people also bought cars. But the situation is such that out of a population of more than 130 crore,

only 1.5 crore have paid income tax," Modi said at the Times Now Summit. He also said that it was unbelievable that only 2,200 people in the country had declared earnings of Rs one crore per annum. The PM said the government is keen to ensure that tax payers are not burdened. "Until now, process-centric tax system has been predominant in India. Now, it is being made public-centric. Income tax is necessary for development and tax payers should not be burdened," Modi said at the Times Now

Summit. He acknowledged that there is concern that some people managed to evade taxes while the honest were penalised. "When a number of people do not pay tax, find ways to evade it, the burden falls on those who honestly pay their dues," he said. In the Union Budget earlier this month, individual taxpayers were given major relief with Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announcing sharp reduction in tax rates for those who do not avail of any exemptions.

# Punjabi TV actor, 29, goes to Nainital with husband; he kills her, burns body

(News Agencies)- A 29-year-old television (TV) actor from Punjab was strangled and her body burnt by her husband and his friend in Uttarakhand's Nainital over suspicions that she had an extra-marital affair, a senior Uttarakhand police officer said on Wednesday. TV actor Anita Singh's charred body was found in Kaladhungi area

with a rope and burnt her body before fleeing from the spot at around 1.30 in the night. After the murder, Kuldeep went home (a short distance away in Kaladhungi) while Ravinder went to Delhi," said Meena. It turned out that Ravinder Pal Singh had long suspected that his wife had an affair with a man from Kashmir. When Anita Singh told him that she wanted to move to Mumbai to work in movies, he conspired to murder her, the police alleged.



ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀਅਤ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾਨ

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# In tears again, victim's mother pleads for death warrant for 4 convicts

**Demanding fresh death warrant, Asha Devi said, "I am here from one and half years, I am here and waiting for them to avail their legal remedies. However, even I am victim's mother, and even I have some rights."**

(News Agencies)-The mother of 2012 Delhi gangrape victim broke down in court on Wednesday as she demanded fresh death warrant for the four convicts in the case.

"I am here from one and a half years, I am here and waiting for them to avail their legal remedies. However, even I am victim's mother, and even I have some rights. I would request you to please issue the death warrant," said Asha Devi as the court offered to give one of the convicts Pawan Gupta the legal aid.

Gupta's father pleaded before the court that no lawyer is willing to take the case of his son and

sought time. The father of the 23-year-old victim objected to the offer of legal representation to Gupta, but Additional Sessions Judge Dharmender Rana said he has to follow the law. "This court is of the opinion that any of the condemned convict is entitled for legal aid till his last breath," said the judge. After asking for a lawyer to be finalised for Gupta, the court posted the matter for hearing on Thursday following which an angry Asha Devi left the court. Public prosecutor Irfan Ahmed and amicus curiae Vrinda Grover, meanwhile, were of the view that death warrant can be issued. "Since there is nothing

pending in the court of law, the execution date can be fixed," said Grover. The application was moved after the Supreme Court on Tuesday granted liberty to the authorities to approach the trial court for issuance of fresh date for the execution of these convicts. The Tihar jail authorities had also filed a status report before the trial court on Tuesday stating that no legal option was preferred by any of the four convicts - Mukesh Kumar Singh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Kumar Sharma (26) and Akshay Kumar (31) - in the last seven day period, granted by the Delhi High Court. The trial court had on



February 7 dismissed the petitions of Delhi government and Tihar jail authorities seeking fresh date for execution of the four death row convicts in the case. They had taken note of the high court's February 5 order permitting the convicts to exercise their legal remedies

within one week. "It is criminally sinful to execute the convicts when law permits them to live. The High Court on February 5 has permitted the convicts, in the interest of justice, to exercise their legal remedies within one week from the same order," the court had said.

## Delhi verdict buoys AAP in Punjab but can it bounce back

**Arvind Kejriwal's AAP will need to sort out its Punjab leadership mess, revitalise cadres and amplify public issues to be in the reckoning as a potent third alternative when the border state goes to the polls two years from now.**



(News Agencies)-A resounding electoral triumph inevitably sets off a ripple effect beyond Ground Zero. Therein lies the real import of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s spectacular second sweep in Delhi for its politics elsewhere. Will it rekindle the party's ambitions of power beyond the national capital? Nowhere will that urge

be more intense than in Punjab, the only other state where the party has a political base. That is, after all, where the fledgling party had come tantalisingly close to taking a shot at power in public perception. It won 20 of 117 seats, an unprecedented feat for any third party in the border state's long history of a two-party system in which the Akalis and

the Congress ruled by rotation. It stumbled and lost to the Congress, but not before shattering the bipolar mould and catapulting itself on the podium as the official opposition ahead of the Akalis. The Punjab assembly elections are still two years away, but the Delhi verdict has the potential to alter the state's political landscape. It will surely buoy the AAP, which has been plagued with a host of debilitating challenges: internal squabbles, desertions, dejected and depleted cadres, and a dispirited leadership. Bouncing back The party proved to be its own worst enemy. So stark has

been its unravelling in the past two years that even its national convener and Delhi chief minister, Arvind Kejriwal, appeared to have taken a distant attitude to the party's Punjab affairs. A dismal showing in the summer Lok Sabha elections last year in which the party could retain only one of 13 contests and lost deposits in all the others was the last proof, if any were needed, of the erosion of the AAP base, which, in any case, was limited to Malwa region. The party today is a pale shadow of its pre-2017 self. In such a backdrop, the Delhi dividend couldn't have come at a more opportune time for the

Punjab AAP. State Congress chief, Sunil Jakhar, was the first to read the political tea leaves when he said that the AAP will get a second chance in Punjab if it wins in Delhi. The crucial question is: Can the AAP bounce back and re-brand itself, again, as a potent third alternative?

The road ahead is arduous, more than it was in post-2014 Punjab when the AAP, having caught the popular imagination, was ascendant. Clearly, the party will need to sort out the leadership mess, revitalise its cadres and amplify public issues through street mobilisation to be in the reckoning.

## Ahead of Trump's visit, US defence major Boeing mulls offering F-15EX fighter jets to India

(News Agencies)- Ahead of US President Donald Trump's maiden visit to India, the two countries are eyeing to finalise a raft of mega defence deals including procurement of a batch of military helicopters by Indian Navy from American defence major Lockheed Martin at a cost of USD 2.6 billion. Official sources said talks were underway to wrap up negotiations on procurement of a missile defence system by India from the US for USD 1.86 billion.

As India prepares to receive

Trump and First Lady Melania Trump, US defence major Boeing indicated that it was considering to offer its F-15EX Eagle fighter jets to Indian Air Force.

The company has already sought a licence from the US authorities for its possible export to India, eyeing a USD 18 billion contract by the IAF to procure 114 fighter jets.

Government and industry sources said the two sides are likely to finalise the USD 2.6 billion deal under which the US will supply 24 multi-role MH-60R Seahawk maritime helicopters to

India. The Cabinet Committee on Security is likely to clear it in the next few days.

"We are attempting to close the deal soon," said a source. The US approved the sale of the Seahawk helicopters to India in April last year. The helicopters are expected to boost the Indian Navy's anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare operations. The chopper is designed to hunt down submarines. The fleet would replace aging British-made Sea King helicopters.

Ahead of Trump's visit, the US

approved the sale of an Integrated Air Defence Weapon System to India (IADWS) at an estimated cost of USD 1.9 billion. The Trump Administration notified to the US Congress of its decision to supply IADWS to India. Officials said the two sides may finalise the deal during the US president's visit to India.

Defence and security ties between India and the US have been on an upswing in the last six years. The bilateral defence trade touched USD 18 billion mark in 2019, reflecting growing defence cooperation between

the two sides. There has been indication that two sides may announce further deepening of defence ties during Trump's visit on February 24 and 25.

Both sides have also been pushing for joint venture and collaboration between private sectors of the two countries in defence manufacturing.

In June 2016, the US had designated India a "Major Defence Partner," intending to elevate defence trade and technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.



# Delhi-Colombo ties are on the right path

(News Agencies)- Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa sent out a message by choosing India as the destination for his first trip abroad after assuming office, and also struck the right notes in New Delhi by saying the changes made by the Indian government in Jammu and Kashmir last year were the country's internal affair. Mr Rajapaksa also discussed cooperation in counterterrorism with his Indian counterpart, Mr Narendra Modi, and ways to take forward the use of two lines of credit totalling \$450 million offered by India last year. However, Mr Rajapaksa sought to strike a balance between Sri Lanka's ties with India, and

those with other regional players, such as China and Pakistan, describing India as a "relation" and the others as friends. He also noted Pakistan's help in the war with the Tamil Tiger rebels and China's help in rebuilding Sri Lanka after the war, which ended when the Sri Lankan Army launched a massive offensive under Mr Rajapaksa's leadership. Mr Modi used Mr Rajapaksa's visit to raise India's concerns about the incomplete process of reconciliation and the devolution of powers to Sri Lanka's Tamil minority, saying the government in Colombo must rise to the occasion to meet the Tamil people's expectations for equality, justice, peace and respect by implementing the 13th amendment to the

constitution, which envisages giving more powers to Tamil-inhabited areas of the island nation. Mr Rajapaksa and his brother, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, however, have shied away from committing to the full implementation of the 13th amendment. The Sri Lankan president has even said there couldn't be full devolution of powers against the wishes of the Sinhala majority and Mr Rajapaksa, while speaking to a section of the Indian media, too, ruled out any resolution in the Tamil-inhabited areas that isn't acceptable to Sri Lanka's majority community. Clearly, both sides will have to do some manoeuvring to ensure they reach common ground on this touchy issue.

**But Sri Lanka must now commit to meeting the demands of its Tamil minority**



## Pakistan court convicts Mumbai 'mastermind' in terrorism case



**LeT founder Hafiz Saeed sentenced to five and a half years in prison for terror financing by a court in Lahore.**

(News Agencies)-A Pakistani anti-terrorism court has sentenced Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, the founder of the Lashkar-e-Taiba armed group, to five and a half years' prison in a case related to terrorism financing, his lawyer says. Saeed was convicted and

sentenced on two counts by a court in the eastern city of Lahore on Wednesday, Imran Gill, the lawyer, told Al Jazeera. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for being a member of a "proscribed organisation" under Pakistani law, and another five years for a

charge related to "illegal property", Gill said.

Abdur Rauf Wattoo, the government's prosecutor in the case, confirmed the verdict, adding that Saeed's associate Zafar Iqbal had also been convicted and sentenced to the same term.

The arrest and charging of Saeed, the alleged mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks that killed more than 160 people, has been a long-standing demand of the United States and Pakistan's neighbour India.

The 70-year-old says he is not linked to any armed group, although he heads Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), the charitable arm of the LeT group. Both the JuD and LeT are "banned organisations" under Pakistani anti-terrorism law. Saeed's conviction comes days ahead of a key meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental watchdog that monitors terrorism and criminal financing laws, in Paris. FATF will be issuing a decision on whether Pakistan has taken sufficient steps to avoid being

"blacklisted", a designation that would come as a blow to the South Asian nation's struggling economy.

A FATF blacklisting would put in place barriers that would serve to isolate Pakistan's economy from the international banking system, introducing stricter checks and safeguards on transactions involving the country.

Saeed was indicted in December on six charges under anti-terrorism laws, with verdicts still due in four cases.

## As Foreigners Flee China, Pakistan Tells Its Citizens to Stay

**Pakistan has refused to evacuate 800 citizens in Wuhan, fearing an outbreak at home. Some stuck in the hot zone worry they are part of a larger geopolitical game.**

(News Agencies)-For days, Nadeem Bhatti, a university student in Wuhan, China, watched as his foreign classmates fled the center of the coronavirus outbreak - lines of Indians, Nepalis and others filed somberly onto buses as their governments evacuated them from the hot zone. But Mr. Bhatti, like hundreds of other Pakistani students, was left behind. The Pakistani government has asked Mr. Bhatti and the 800

other Pakistani students in Wuhan to stay put, the result of a grim government calculus. Pakistan's health care system is in shambles. Already strained hospitals lack trained doctors and supplies. If infected nationals return home, the virus would likely spread unabated across the country. Pakistan is one of the last places in the world still battling polio, and incidents of dengue fever and H.I.V. are on the rise. "Believe me - at first I thought that

we must go back because we could be infected by the virus," said Mr. Bhatti, a 25-year-old civil engineering student at the Huazhong University of Science and Technology. "Some nights I couldn't sleep because of the stress."

"But now we are thinking no. There are no good hospitals to treat coronavirus back home and the Chinese are working very hard to beat this," he said. But other Pakistanis wonder whether they are pawns in a



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larger geopolitical game. China is one of Pakistan's most important allies, and as the weaker of the two partners, Pakistan may be under pressure to keep its citizens in China so as not to embarrass Beijing. China is

struggling to contain the new coronavirus and has come under intense global scrutiny for its slow initial response to the virus. On Wednesday, the government announced that 1,113 people had died from the virus since December. At least 94 of those deaths occurred on Tuesday in Hubei Province, the capital of which is Wuhan. Suspicions that Pakistan was being overly obsequious grew last week after the country resumed commercial flights to China. Pakistani citizens with the means can return home if they test negative for coronavirus.



# Boat Packed With Rohingya Refugees Capsizes Off Bangladesh

**At least 15 people drowned, reports said. One official said the 50-person boat was carrying 130 away from refugee camps.**



(News Agencies)-At least 15 Rohingya refugees, including four children, drowned when the overcrowded boat they were in capsized off the coast of Bangladesh on Tuesday, according to the Bangladesh Coast Guard. A Bangladesh Coast Guard official, Hamidul Islam, told Reuters that the boat was filled with people trying to leave camps near Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where hundreds of thousands of refugees have been living since a scorched-earth ethnic cleansing campaign by Myanmar's military in 2017. "It was inhumane," he said. "The boat was carrying roughly 130 people, while it had a capacity of 50." Coast Guard officials said that at least 40 people were still listed

as missing. More than 730,000 Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group, have fled Myanmar to Bangladesh since a campaign of killing, rape and arson began against them in 2017. Though both governments have promised the refugees would imminently return to Myanmar, the promise has not been kept. Instead, the Rohingya live in miserable conditions near the Myanmar border at the world's largest refugee camp. Human trafficking runs rampant, with women sold into sex slavery and men sent away for indentured servitude. In January, the International Court of Justice at The Hague ruled that Myanmar must take action to protect the Rohingya, the first time an international court has ruled against the country over its treatment of the minority population. But the court has no enforcement power, and Myanmar rejected the ruling.

Thousands have been killed in Afghanistan 'reconstruction,' stunning watchdog report reveals



(News Agencies)-A total of 5,135 casualties in first-of-its-kind report on the "human costs" of U.S. efforts toward reconstruction in Afghanistan reveals that thousands have been killed or wounded in the process of trying to stabilize the region. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report, released Tuesday, notes that they have long been calculating the financial costs of reconstruction, but that "little effort" had previously been made to examine casualties. "Based on a review of casualty information available to us, we identified a

## Sex workers finally get 'honourable' funerals in Bangladesh



(News Agencies)-Often treated as less than human in life, there has been little dignity in death for the sex workers of one of the world's biggest brothels: their bodies frequently tossed into unmarked graves or dumped in the river. Until now. On Thursday, Hamida Begum became the first sex worker from Bangladesh bordello Daulatdia to receive a formal Islamic funeral, breaking a longstanding taboo in Muslim majority Bangladesh where prostitution is legal but regarded by many as immoral. Scores of women gathered at the graveside, weeping for the 65-year-old's passing but also because of the symbolic breakthrough her burial represented. "I never dreamed that she would get such an honourable farewell," said Begum's daughter Laxmi, who followed her mother into the trade. "My mother was treated like a human being," she added. Islamic spiritual leaders have for decades rejected funeral prayers for sex workers because they view prostitution as immoral. When Begum died, her family planned to put her in an unmarked grave - standard practice for women like her -- but a coalition of sex workers persuaded the local police to talk religious leaders into giving her a proper burial. "The Imam was initially reluctant to lead the prayers. But we asked him whether Islam forbids anyone from taking part in the Janaza (funeral prayers) of a sex worker.

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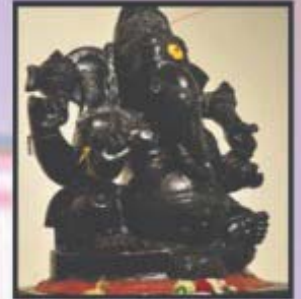
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# Trump administration goes to war with states over immigration

The Trump administration dramatically escalated its war with so-called sanctuary states Monday, filing suit against California and New Jersey over laws that federal officials say undermine immigration enforcement.

The Justice Department suits target a California law banning privately run detention centers and a New Jersey law limiting cooperation with federal immigration authorities. The new barrage of litigation also included a suit against a county in Washington state that effectively prohibits federal contractors from using the Seattle airport to carry out deportations.

"In various jurisdictions, so-called 'progressive' politicians are jeopardizing the public's safety

by putting the interests of criminal aliens before those of law-abiding citizens," Attorney General Bill Barr said as he announced the moves during a speech to a sheriffs' group in Washington.

"They have put in place policies and laws designed to thwart the ability of federal officers to take custody of these criminals and thereby help them escape back into the community. They often proudly brand their jurisdictions as 'sanctuaries,' and package their obstructive policies in idealistic and misleading rhetoric about "protecting the immigrant community."

Barr said the actions by the state and local governments run afoul of the Constitution, which has been interpreted to give the

federal government control over immigration policy.

The new lawsuits against the states appear to be part of a growing assertiveness on the part of the Trump administration against so-called sanctuary cities and states. Last week, the Department of Homeland Security announced that it would no longer enroll New York residents in trusted traveler programs like Global Entry and Nexus because of a new state law limiting DHS officials' access to drivers license and vehicle registration information. The law was enacted as part of legislation aimed at granting drivers licenses to undocumented immigrants.

State officials have branded the Trump administration moves as political ones aimed at firing up

Trump's base as he battles to be re-elected this November.

"Once again, the Trump administration is sacrificing public safety for political expedience," New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said in a statement. "It's no surprise that the President, facing re-election, has suddenly decided to challenge a policy we first announced in 2018. What's disappointing is that my former colleagues at the Justice Department have agreed to go along with this election-year stunt." The litigation over the immigration-related conflicts is intensifying and flowing in both directions. Earlier Monday, New York State Attorney General Letitia James filed suit over the DHS move against her state,

saying Empire State residents were being targeted for arbitrary and political reasons.

"New Yorkers will not be held hostage by an administration intent on restraining the sovereign rights of states, while it simultaneously enacts discriminatory policies across the country," James said.

The suits filed Monday are not the first such actions by the Trump administration. In March 2018, the Justice Department sued California over three sanctuary-related state laws.

A federal district judge in Sacramento largely sided with the state. Last year, an appeals court panel backed most of the judge's ruling, while sending one issue back to the lower court for reconsideration.

## Sanctuary cities value 'polarized politics' over national security: Former NYC police commissioner

Former New York City Police Commissioner Bernie Kerik hammered America's liberal city leaders for defending sanctuary city policies that he said prioritize "partisan politics" over national security.

"The immigration issue -- it's a political issue," said Kerik on Fox Nation's "Deep Dive" on Thursday. "[It] shouldn't be a political issue. ... The polarized politics of the country is leading the argument versus the reality of national security."

U.S. Attorney General William Barr announced on Monday that the Justice Department will sue U.S. states that flout federal immigration law by refusing to cooperate with federal law

enforcement. Specifically, the DOJ rolled out new legal actions against the states of California and New Jersey and King County in Washington state.

On Thursday, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) subpoenaed the state of Connecticut for information on multiple illegal aliens arrested there. In his remarks, Barr said "so-called progressive politicians" are "jeopardizing the public's safety by putting the interests of criminal aliens before those of law-abiding citizens."

"What we're seeing here that we've never really seen before, other than maybe in the '60s certain protest movements, is chief law enforcement officers of

the state, attorney generals or police chiefs or even mayors ... saying let's make an exception - playing on the heartstring issue here," said federal criminal defense and civil right attorney David Schoen. Schoen argued that sanctuary city leaders are guilty of the "emotionalization" of the immigration issue, by suggesting that they are protecting illegal immigrants from harm, by effectively shielding them from federal law enforcement. Fox Nation host and Fox News contributor Tammy Bruce observed that, in fact, sanctuary cities may make immigrant communities more dangerous. "What has perplexed me about the position of

sanctuary cities is that those are the communities that are victimized first," she said. "So if we're really concerned about illegal aliens, undocumented workers, particularly women and children as well, that thinking about the impact on those individuals has to come first and foremost."

The U.S. Attorney for Arizona, Michael Bailey, held a news conference on Tuesday to announce the findings of his office's review of illegal immigrants, who were captured reentering the U.S. after they've already been deported. Bailey said in that last month, there were 1,047 cases of illegal reentries. Of those cases, 336

individuals had criminal histories, including 67 convictions for violent crime, 107 DUIs, and 119 drug crime convictions.

"If we don't have the cooperation of state and local authorities, some large number of illegal aliens with a criminal history are going to be walking free on the streets of our community," Bailey said. "Can you explain what the benefit is or why there is this resistance to actually following the law?" Bruce asked Fox News contributor and Democratic strategist Jessica Tarlov. "And if that is a good political position for the Democrats to be taking?" "It's a tricky political position," said Tarlov, "as is talking about open borders, for instance. ...

## As the Trump administration cracks down on sanctuary cities, Boston navigates protections for immigrants

In the basement of an East Boston Church, a dozen local advocates, city employees and volunteers sat around a plastic folding table beside Boston City Councilor Julia Mejia.

Her head of public policy, Jacob deBlecourt, stood at a whiteboard taking questions and suggestions from the group. The questions ranged from how they would increase transparency in schools to how they would bring opponents to the table to discuss Mejia's own question, how would they hold themselves accountable?

If we don't have a rubric or a measurable tool, then we can't hold the city accountable to itself, it's just lip service," said Mejia, a

Dorchester-raised Democrat. Boston is already seen as a so-called sanctuary city by immigration hardliners, but Mejia is pressing forward with plans to increase protections for locals regardless of their immigration status. Her push to create protections with teeth - sparked by news that more than 100 student incident reports had been made available to Immigration and Customs Enforcement - comes as the Trump administration ramps up its campaign against sanctuary jurisdictions.

In his State of the Union address, President Donald Trump called on Congress to pass legislation that would let

someone sue a so-called sanctuary city or state when a loved one is hurt or killed at the hands of an undocumented immigrant.

U.S. Attorney Andrew Lelling criticized the city's recently updated Trust Act, which clarifies restrictions on how local law enforcement interacts with immigration authorities.

"Yes, we are a nation of immigrants, but of immigrants who came here legally," Lelling wrote in an op-ed for the Boston Herald. "Opponents of immigration enforcement have turned these law-abiding visitors into suckers: why wait in line at an embassy, do all that paperwork, wait months or years

for a visa - why play by the rules at all when you can just hire a coyote and sneak over the border?"

Mejia, who grew up with an undocumented mother, tells critics that immigrants who came here without legal permission or whose visas expired seek a better, safer life for themselves and their loved ones, just as previous generations of immigrants did. "All means all," she often says when explaining why she's focusing on constituents who historically have been overlooked by her predecessors.

So as Mejia pushes to create "safe spaces," such as libraries

or community centers, where immigrants wouldn't be detained by ICE, her first stops have been in places where foreign-born residents feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, miles away from the Boston City Council chamber.

On Saturday, Mejia met with a small group of community organizers, staffers and activists in the basement of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in East Boston. At least one organizer had once been undocumented, and several had worked with immigrants with varying levels of status.

She met with the Hyde Square Task Force in Jamaica Plain on Monday.



## No Safe Place **Cities trying to balance American ideals with a broken federal immigration system have found themselves in Donald Trump's political crosshairs.**

On a Wednesday evening in July - fifteen days after Donald Trump launched his presidential campaign by painting a picture of the United States besieged by crime and illegal immigration - shots rang out along the San Francisco pier. Kate Steinle, 32, was walking along the city's touristy promenade when a bullet struck her in the back. She screamed for her father, Jim, as she collapsed to the ground. He tried to save her by performing CPR until help arrived, but it was too late. Kate Steinle died in the hospital hours later.

Authorities would later find that an undocumented immigrant with a long criminal record had pulled the trigger. Police arrested and charged Juan Francisco Lopez-Sanchez, a man with seven felony convictions to his name and who had been deported back to Mexico five times. He had even been in police custody for a separate crime just months before the shooting. But Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) never took Lopez-Sanchez into custody once he was released from jail. Instead of being

deported, Lopez-Sanchez was able to stand at a crowded U.S. landmark with a gun in his hand.

Critics said that the city of San Francisco could have prevented Kate Steinle's death. For more than three decades, it had billed itself as a safe haven for immigrants. Known to immigration advocates as a "sanctuary city," San Francisco barred local police from helping federal authorities kick out any immigrants that came to the U.S. illegally.

The policy was largely symbolic. City officials didn't have the power to

outright stop the federal government from deporting people in their community. But in the spirit of America's founding principles as a nation of immigrants, sanctuary cities act as a protective shield, standing in the way of federal efforts to pinpoint and deport people at random. Before Kate Steinle's death, the term "sanctuary city" had been hardly known outside the advocacy world. But now it was at the forefront of a bitter public debate over immigration. In Washington, D.C., Congressional Republicans attempted to

pass a pair of bills to force sanctuary cities to detain undocumented immigrants until the ICE could deport them. They threatened to take away federal funding from police departments that refused to cooperate. A handful of state legislatures were willing to do the same. Fox News host Bill O'Reilly took the issue mainstream. For nearly the entire summer, he railed against sanctuary cities almost daily to his roughly three million nightly viewers. Even Democrats were starting to have second thoughts about whether

sanctuary protections for immigrants were worth the potential costs. Steinle's death played into a central pillar of Trump's bid for the Republican nomination - that crime and violence justify shutting down the border and deporting America's 11 million undocumented immigrants, despite statistics that show immigrants are far less likely to commit crimes than people born in United States. For Trump, Steinle's death was all the evidence he needed to show that Americans were paying the ultimate price for illegal immigration.

## What Trump administration's pledge to 'punish' immigrant-friendly cities means for Maine

A pledge by U.S. Attorney General William Barr to punish so-called sanctuary cities was quickly echoed by Maine's top federal law enforcement official this week, resurfacing concerns about whether liberal-leaning cities such as Portland are being targeted for their work with refugees, asylum seekers and other immigrants.

Barr said that the Department of Justice has

filed lawsuits against state and local governments in New York, New Jersey, California and Washington described as "sanctuaries," an informal term for local governments that do not share information about undocumented immigrants with federal officials.

Barr said this week that the department "would be reviewing the practices, policies and laws of other jurisdictions around the

country," as well as "progressive politicians" who obstruct enforcement of federal immigration law. U.S. Attorney for Maine Halsey B. Frank, the top federal law enforcement official in the state, quickly followed suit.

"Jurisdictions with these policies prevent or limit their law enforcement officials from working with their federal law enforcement partners," Frank said in a statement.

Though informally described as a "welcoming city" for immigrant populations, Portland is not a sanctuary city - no city in Maine is. According to Portland city code, law enforcement personnel are to cooperate with federal officials. It also states that city employees are not to ask the immigration status of individuals who are seeking city services, unless ordered to do so by a court or law.

Why the tough talk, then? "The U.S. attorney wasn't discussing any specific jurisdictions in Maine regarding sanctuary policies," said a spokesperson for Frank. "Halsey wanted to make his views known as the top federal law enforcement official in the state." But there is still perception among some that Portland is being targeted for its immigration-friendly

policies. Some point to an increased presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, in the area. The agency is tasked with detaining and removing immigrants who violate immigration policies. Those who work in the city's social service circles, cite a policy change that they suspect was designed to intentionally overwhelm social service networks in liberal cities.

## The cheating wife, her rich lover and a court case for 'immoral' Pakistan TV hit

**Creators of Meray Paas Tum Ho could be facing legal suit amid accusations the hugely popular show was 'misogynistic'**

A court in Pakistan has summoned the creators of a wildly popular television series after a petition was filed demanding they apologise for portraying Pakistani women as "greedy, selfish and non-professional". In the petition filed at the Sindh high court last month, lawyer Sana Saleem said the television series Meray Paas Tum Ho (I Have You) was "ridiculing a woman who makes the same decision as every other man in society".

The series followed the story of a married couple whose relationship falls apart when the woman has an affair with a wealthy

man. Pakistani television dramas routinely show women forgiving cheating husbands, but this series presented a fresh question: should a man forgive his unfaithful wife? The show polarised the country. Women turned to Facebook and Twitter to call out the show and the writer, Khalilur ur Rehman Qamar, for his misogynistic storytelling. As the show gained popularity, Qamar courted controversy when he appeared on talk shows to justify the script and made statements such as "women should gang rape men if they want equality", and "women are able to resist temptation, but men

cannot".

The 23 episodes ran from August 2019 to January this year on channel ARY Digital, becoming the most watched TV show in Pakistan. The finale was watched by 80 million viewers and was screened in cinemas across the country, raking in a record-breaking 38 million rupees (£414,231) on the first day in ticket sales.

Television critic and journalist Mahwash Ajaz said: "These characters are unrealistic: overtly beautiful and modern, but also astoundingly stupid. Only a man could write such a script."

However, many viewers sided with the character of



the male lead, the victim of the infidelity, and praised him for one particularly controversial scene in which he tells his wife's lover that she's "barely worth spare change" and not the 50 million rupees the businessman had offered him for a divorce. The court has summoned

the producer, Humayun Saeed, who also plays the lead role, to appear on Thursday along with the lawyers of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar has said if the bench finds that the show features immoral

discourse, action will be taken against the producers.

The case is significant. Although it is not uncommon in Pakistan for people to ask the courts to mediate in this way, it is unusual for the petitioner to demand justice for women.



# NY Gov. Cuomo expected to concede to Trump on Global Entry fight in order to call President's 'bluff'

On another radio program he said: "I'm calling their bluff by saying, you said you want access to the DMV database for TTP? I'll give it to you." "I don't believe that's what they want," he continued "I believe they just want political noise because they really want to make their argument about immigration." Cuomo is expected to offer federal access to the DMV database specifically for those applying to the Trusted Traveler Program, on a case-by-case basis, at a meeting with the President Thursday. White House deputy press secretary Judd Deere also confirmed the meeting but did not

provide additional details. The law, which went into effect in December, allows undocumented immigrants to apply for New York driver's licenses while protecting applicants' information from immigration enforcement agencies. The state's attorney general said New York would sue the administration over the decision to suspend the programs. "DHS claimed they wanted this information to determine qualifications for the TTP, but it is a sham because they just want access to undocumented immigrants' personal information, and as the Governor said, we are never going to give

them that," said Dani Lever, Cuomo's communications director. Since taking office, the President has become an outspoken critic of Cuomo and his own home state of New York following the Manhattan district attorney's ongoing lawsuit in pursuit of his tax returns. The native New Yorker officially declared himself a Florida resident last year, according to court documents, saying he was leaving the Empire State because he had been "treated very badly" by its politicians. The change was primarily for tax purposes, a person close to the President told The New York Times. Florida does not collect

income tax. "I cherish New York, and the people of New York, and always will, but unfortunately, despite the fact that I pay millions of dollars in city, state and local taxes each year, I have been treated very badly by the political leaders of both the city and state. Few have been treated worse. I hated having to make this decision, but in the end it will be best for all concerned. As President, I will always be there to help New York and the great people of New York. It will always have a special place in my heart!" Trump tweeted. Cuomo fired back. "Good riddance. It's not like @realDonaldTrump paid taxes here anyway," the governor tweeted. "He's all yours, Florida." Trump has also tweeted that Cuomo has "lost control, and lost his mind," and said that the state can "never be great again" under his leadership. When the two do meet face to face, Trump has set a low bar for working together. On Saturday,

he tweeted that Cuomo cancelled a meeting initially planned last weekend. "Governor Cuomo wanted to see me this weekend. He just canceled. Very hard to work with New York - So stupid. All they do is sue me all the time!" he wrote. Cuomo said in a statement he didn't cancel any meeting, that his office had reached out to request a meeting and was waiting to hear back. For his part, Cuomo said Wednesday that he would put his personal feelings aside. "Look, first of all I do not have the luxury of personal feelings Jay. I represent the people of the State of New York. You have to work with Democrats. You have to work with Republicans. And that is my job. I am not going to put my personal feelings first. I would not do that. It would be disrespectful to the people of this State. I will work with anyone who will help New York -- period," he said.

## Bernie Sanders Is The Front-Runner For Democratic Nomination

ballots in Nevada, South Carolina and in a host of states on Super Tuesday, on March 3. In a crowded field, Sanders ? a democratic socialist who long declined to officially join the Democratic Party and is running on a platform of Medicare For All, a massive infrastructure program to combat climate change and a \$15 minimum wage ? is assembling a diverse coalition beyond his base of the youngest and most liberal Democratic primary voters, according to public polling. "We are putting together an unprecedented multicultural, multigenerational political movement," Sanders told a roaring crowd here at the Southern New Hampshire University Fieldhouse. A Quinnipiac University poll found him leading the field among "somewhat liberal voters" and placing third among Democrats who considered themselves "moderate or conservative." He is third among Black voters. Among white voters without a college degree, he has a large lead and is essentially tied for the lead among college-educated white voters. Though the poll does not break out Latino voters, other surveys show him as one of the top two candidates competing for their votes. There are still ways the party's moderate wing could attempt to stop Sanders, and there are weaknesses in his coalition. In the Quinnipiac poll, Sanders is the only candidate with a significant gender gap: He has

the support of 32% of men and just 20% of women. And the oldest voters in the field remain resistant to him: His support among voters ages 18 to 34 is nearly seven times greater than his support among voters older than 65. Women make up the majority of the Democratic primary electorate, and the oldest voters turn out at the most reliable levels. And though Sanders won the most votes in Iowa, Democratic Majority for Israel, a pro-Israel group whose affiliated super PAC ran ads attacking him, asserted that their ad, which questioned Sanders's electability and health, provided a blueprint for stopping his momentum, noting he performed much worse among voters who decided late. Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who has already spent more than \$300 million of his own money on the election, obviously dwarfs the financial resources of Sanders. But no other candidate comes close. That will provide Sanders with a potentially key advantage as the race moves into more expensive states, including California, Texas, Massachusetts and Virginia, on Super Tuesday. Sanders's other rivals at the moment ? Klobuchar and Buttigieg ? are both poorly positioned to capitalize on Biden's struggles. Buttigieg, despite months in the national spotlight, is still polling in the single digits among Black

voters. Quinnipiac's poll didn't find a single Black supporter for Klobuchar. Klobuchar may present a more significant threat than Buttigieg. Unlike Buttigieg, she is only now fully entering the national spotlight, and primary voters who have been following the race only casually could discover her in the coming days. While her fundraising so far has paled in comparison to Buttigieg and Sanders, she has raised \$4.5 million in the days since Friday n i g h t ' s Democratic primary debate. Her campaign plans to deploy additional staffers to Nevada, South Carolina and key Super Tuesday states. But if the race does turn into a showdown b e t w e e n Bloomberg and Sanders, there's evidence most Democratic voters would lean in Sanders's direction.

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## AAPquake in Delhi : Kejriwal's third sweep shows bijli-paani in Aam Aadmi heart

and the Congress just 9.7 %. According to the results declared on Tuesday, the AAP got 53.64 %, the BJP 38.43 % and the Congress 4.27 %. As the final results started pouring in, Arvind Kejriwal, who was following the poll trends with top leaders and poll strategist Prashant Kishor in the party headquarters at ITO, addressed thousands of supporters by describing

the victory as a 'new kind of politics'.

"The people of Delhi have given a message that they will vote for schools, mohalla clinics, 24-hour electricity and free water. This is a great message for the country," Arvind Kejriwal said in a brief speech before heading towards Hanuman Temple in a road show, "Today is Tuesday, Hanuman-ji's day. Hanuman-ji has showered

Delhi with blessings," said the Chief Minister, who was mocked by the BJP after he recited verses in praise of Lord Hanuman on live television. Among the winners are a string of AAP leaders including Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Atishi and Raghav Chadha. Manish Sisodia witnessed a see-saw battle in his constituency before eventually emerging victorious by more than

2,000 votes over his nearest rival, the BJP's Ravinder Singh Negi.

"The BJP tried to do politics of hate but the people of Delhi chose a government that works for the people," Manish Sisodia said after he won from Patparganj seat.

In the high-stakes poll which eventually turned out to be bipolar, AAP focused its campaign on its work while the BJP tried to shift

focus on polarising issues such as the ongoing protest against the citizenship law. The high-decibel campaign was marred by three firing incidents in the Okhla constituency at Shaheen Bagh and Jamia Nagar.

AAP lawmaker Amanatullah Khan retained Okhla, with a record 71,000 votes. "People of Okhla have given an electric shock," Amanatullah Khan

said, taking a shot at Union Home Minister Amit Shah's "current" remark. Most exit polls expected the BJP to improve its performance from the last assembly elections in 2015, when it won just three seats, but the party was far behind the incumbent. Among the seats BJP won are Rohini and Vishwas Nagar that the party had won in 2015 as well.

## Student's dad arrested on sex trafficking charges after magazine's revelations

decade, federal prosecutors said.

Lawrence Ray "exploited and abused young women and men emotionally, physically and sexually for his own financial gain," ultimately extorting approximately \$1 million from five victims, Geoffrey Berman, the US attorney for the Southern District of New York, said Tuesday. Ray, 60, is charged in an indictment with extortion, sex trafficking, forced labor trafficking, money laundering and more.

Prosecutors said the investigation was prompted by an April 2019 magazine article, an apparent reference to an article titled "The Stolen Kids of Sarah Lawrence," published on New York magazine's The Cut. The private liberal arts college has about 1,700 students and is located in Yonkers, New York.

Ray allegedly ensnared many of his victims while they were teenagers, Berman said, and his alleged initial victims were his daughter's college roommates. He moved into on-campus housing with his daughter and her roommates during

their sophomore year in late 2010 and began "therapy" sessions with some roommates in which he presented himself as a father figure who could solve their psychological problems, the indictment states.

In the summer of 2011, several of the roommates lived with Ray at his Manhattan apartment, where he worked to gain their trust and alienate

payments to him and directed them to obtain money for him by draining their parents' savings, opening credit lines, soliciting contributions from acquaintances, selling real estate ownership, and performing forced labor and even prostitution, Berman said. "Over nearly a decade Ray coerced and extorted nearly \$1 million in payments from five different

prostitute for more than four years, and Ray allegedly collected more than \$500,000 from her, Berman said. Berman said Ray allegedly "sexually groomed" that victim beginning when she was a college student, collecting sexually explicit photos and other personal information he then used to coerce her into engaging in commercial sex acts.

He also used violence; in one instance, he tied her to a chair, placed a bag over her head and nearly suffocated her, prosecutors said. In 2013, Ray forced some of the victims to do manual labor at a family member's home in Pinehurst, North Carolina, to pay off these fictional debts, the indictment says.

When Ray was arrested

Tuesday morning in Piscataway, New Jersey, one of his daughter's roommates and another female victim were in the residence, Berman said.

Ray pleaded not guilty to multiple charges against him during his arraignment Wednesday in a federal court in Manhattan.

Prosecutors told the judge they executed a search warrant Tuesday at a storage facility associated with Ray. Authorities recovered journals and electronic devices that Ray would allegedly have tied to the victims take sexually explicit photos and video on. He would then use that to extort them, prosecutors said.

Assistant US Attorney Danielle Sassoon said her team has issued more than 100 subpoenas for evidence ranging from email accounts to financial information, and "Backpage" prostitution ads. Authorities have interviewed 17 witnesses and obtained IRS records that show that Ray did not pay taxes during the period of his alleged criminal conduct, Sassoon said.

Ray is currently being

represented by federal public defenders. His attorneys declined to comment Wednesday.

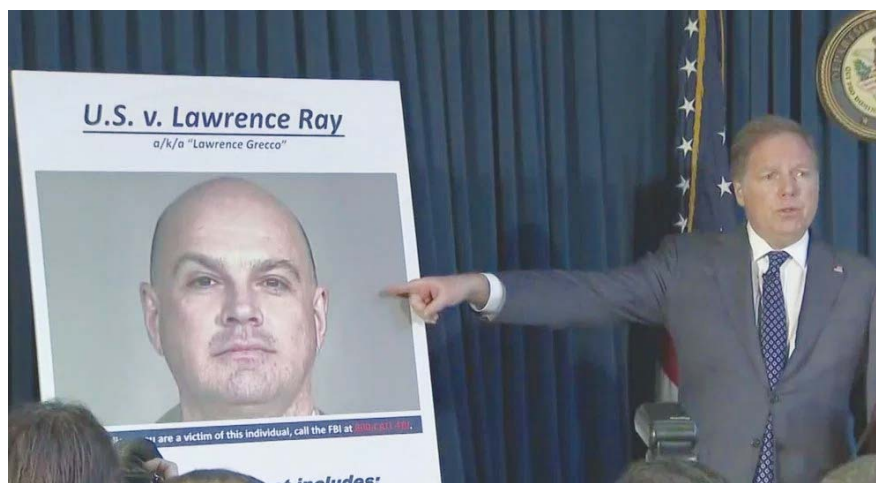
Sarah Lawrence College spokeswoman Patricia Pasquale confirmed that Ray is the parent of a former student.

"The charges contained in the indictment are serious, wide-ranging, disturbing, and upsetting. As always the safety and well-being of our students and alumni is a priority for the College," Pasquale said.

"In April 2019, New York Magazine published a range of accusations about this former parent. At that time, the College undertook an internal investigation regarding the specific activities alleged in the article to have occurred on our campus in 2011; the investigation did not substantiate those specific claims."

The indictment did not detail which, if any, of the alleged criminal activity occurred on campus.

Pasquale said the college has not been contacted by the Southern District of New York but will cooperate in the investigation.



## UP: Man shot dead by daughter's rapist, kin say cops ignored repeated threats

The incident happened in Tilak Nagar police station area of Firozabad, Uttar Pradesh. Achman Sharma killed the father of the rape victim as he was vocal about seeking justice for his daughter. The SSP

suspended three police officers after Achman Sharma absconded.

THE RAPE AND MURDER Six months ago, his daughter was raped by Achman Sharma in Shikohabad, where the

victim lived with her grandmother. A case was registered in Shikohabad but no action was taken for six months. Achman Sharma roamed free and on Monday, he killed the rape victim's father. The

rape victim's father worked as an electrician. On Monday, Achman Sharma killed him on his way back home from work. The rape victim's father was rushed to a hospital but he was

declared brought dead. Achman was constantly threatening the victim's family to drop the 'rape case against him. Last week, Achman told the family of the victim that he would kill one of the

family members if they did not take back the rape case. The family had informed the police about Achman's threat but no action was taken, according to an NDTV report.



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## With an eye on China & Russia, Trump proposes USD 740 billion as the defence budget



**A key aspect of his defence budget proposals are a massive nuclear modernisation worth USD 28.9 billion.**

(News Agencies)- President Donald Trump on Monday proposed USD 740 billion as the country's national security budget for 2021, with an eye on China and Russia that are on a military modernisation programme that poses a challenge to the United States. A key aspect of his defence budget proposals are a massive nuclear

modernisation worth USD 28.9 billion, missile defeat and defence budget USD20.3 billion. He has also proposed USD 18 billion for the space sector, USD 9.8 billion for the cyber sector and USD 56.9 billion in the air domain. In his budget proposals, as released by the White House and by the Pentagon, the Trump administration has underscored the threat posed by its two main adversaries, Russia

and China, which it alleges are on a military modernisation spree and coercing its neighbours. "While the American people still face dangers posed by Islamist terrorists and transnational criminals, America also faces challenges by resurgent rival nation-states, including China and Russia. The Budget reflects the need for a new American posture to match the realities faced in this new era," says the budget proposal sent by the White House to the Congress. Unlike India, where the Union finance minister tables the budgetary proposals and delivers a speech in the Parliament, the US president send his annual budgetary suggestions in

document format to the Congress, which, over the next few months, debates, deliberates and votes on it."The Budget prioritizes funding for programs that would deliver warfighting advantages against China and Russia and sustains efforts over the last three years to focus defense investments in modernization, lethality, and innovation that provides the Nation's troops a competitive advantage over all adversaries," the White House said. Underpinned by the 2018 National Defense Strategy, the budget sustains and builds on efforts over the last three years to prioritise investments in modernisation, lethality, and

innovation. The budget continues the administration's work to rebuild the military and improve readiness while balancing the need for reform, efficiency, and accountability at every level, the White House said. The Pentagon, in its budget proposal, said the security environment continued to change in dangerous ways, China and Russia continue to employ aggressive tactics to coerce neighbours, suppress dissent and undermine freedom. "They present existential challenges to United States interests and global norms," it said, adding that Iran and North Korea continued to pursue weapons of mass destruction.

## All 4 federal prosecutors quit Stone case after DOJ overrules prosecutors on sentencing request

(News Agencies)- In an extraordinary move, all four federal prosecutors who took the case against longtime Donald Trump confidant Roger Stone to trial withdrew Tuesday after top Justice Department officials undercut them and disavowed the government's recommended sentence against Stone.

The mass withdrawal of the career prosecutors on the case was a stunning response to the controversial and politically charged decision by Attorney General William Barr and other top Justice Department officials to reduce prosecutors' recommended sentence of up to nine years, which came just hours after Trump publicly

criticized it on Twitter.

The rapid-fire developments in the case -- the prosecutors' withdrawals came one by one through court filings over the course of two hours Tuesday afternoon -- spilled tensions between Justice Department brass and the career prosecutors into the open, raising questions about the Justice Department's independence from political pressure. In a new filing Tuesday, the US Attorney's Office in Washington revised the sentencing recommendation to be "far less" than the seven-to-nine years recommended on Monday. It was not signed by any of the prosecutors who worked the case.

Ultimately, the presiding judge in

the case will have the final say on Stone's sentence.

Trump denied any involvement in the sentencing revision, but the turnaround drew howls from congressional Democrats, who called for the Justice Department inspector general to investigate. "It is outrageous that DOJ has deeply damaged the rule of law by withdrawing its recommendation," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a California Democrat, tweeted Tuesday. "Stepping down of prosecutors should be commended & actions of DOJ should be investigated."

Of the four prosecutors who withdrew from the case -- Aaron S.J. Zelinsky, Jonathan Kravis, Adam Jed and Mike Marando --



Zelinsky and Kravis also resigned from the DC US attorney's office. Zelinsky, who worked on former special counsel Robert Mueller's team, did not resign from the Baltimore US attorney's office, where he is based. The mass withdrawal was set in motion on Monday when the prosecutors from the DC US

Attorney's office, who are Justice Department employees, wrote in a filing that Stone should be sentenced seven to nine years in prison after he was convicted on seven charges last year that came out of Mueller's investigation, including lying to Congress and witness tampering.

## 5 takeaways from the New Hampshire Democratic primary



(News Agencies)- In New Hampshire, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders got the televised celebration that eluded him a week earlier.

But once again, former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg made him sweat. Sanders' victory solidified his status in the race as a national

front-runner, with his poll numbers and fundraising outpacing his rivals. But Buttigieg pulled even with him in the New Hampshire delegate count, CNN estimates, giving the former mayor a slight edge in the overall delegate count so far.

Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar turned in a much stronger than expected third-place finish, opening up a new two-person race with Buttigieg for the moderate lane in the Democratic presidential primary.

Now, the race shifts to Nevada, and then South Carolina --

bringing the party's diverse base of Latino and African American voters into the fold. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and former Vice President Joe Biden are left to retool and figure out how they can mount comebacks in those states before their fundraising dries up and the delegate race moves out of reach. Here are five takeaways from Tuesday's New Hampshire primary: Sanders got what he needed Sanders did what he needed to in New Hampshire: win. There's no narrative war this time around.

The vote was simple and, though close, decisive. The Sanders campaign got the celebration -- and likely the fundraising boost that comes with a primetime victory speech -- that it missed out on in Iowa. Now they're off to Nevada, which might be his strongest state of the first four, after making a few stops in Super Tuesday states on the way. If there's any reason for concern among Sanders supporters, it will be his margin of victory here. Sanders was never going to win by 22 percentage points, like he did in 2016, in such a deep field.





## Why the odds are so stacked against Joe Biden now

(News Agencies)-"It ain't over man," Joe Biden told a crowd of supporters in South Carolina on Tuesday night. "We're just getting started." That appears to be wishful thinking on the part of the former vice president of the United States -- particularly after

finishing 4th in the Iowa caucuses on February 3 and following that up with a fifth-place finish in New Hampshire on Tuesday. Or, put another way: No one in Biden's current situation has won the Democratic nomination -- or even come close to winning it -- over the past four decades.

I went through every contested nomination fight over those 40 years -- there have been eight -- and found this: The eventual nominee finished either first or second in one (or both) of Iowa and New Hampshire. Every. Single. Time. The closest analog to Biden's

current position is 1992 when Bill Clinton finished 4th in Iowa then second in New Hampshire and went on to win the nomination. But that comparison breaks down for a number of reasons, most importantly: 1) Iowa wasn't seriously contested by any candidates in 1992 because of the presence of homestate Sen. Tom Harkin on the ballot and 2) Clinton's 2nd place finish in New Hampshire came after a series of allegations of marital infidelity that many people predicted would doom his campaign. Clinton's surprise runner-up showing allowed him to declare himself the "Comeback Kid" and use New Hampshire as a momentum springboard to the nomination. And that's it. In each of the other

seven races, the eventual nominee won either Iowa or New Hampshire. Check this out: 2016: Hillary Clinton first in Iowa, second in New Hampshire 2008: Barack Obama first in Iowa, second in New Hampshire 2004: John Kerry first in Iowa, first in New Hampshire 2000: Al Gore first in Iowa, first in New Hampshire 1992: See above 1988: Michael Dukakis third in Iowa, first in New Hampshire 1984: Walter Mondale first in Iowa, second in New Hampshire 1980: Jimmy Carter first in Iowa, first in New Hampshire To be even more clear about all of this: We aren't talking about Biden finishing third in Iowa and New Hampshire.

## UK woman jailed for trying to open plane door mid-flight

(News Agencies)-A British woman who tried to open the door of a plane mid-flight was sentenced to two years in jail Wednesday. Chloe Haines, 26, was on a flight from London Stansted Airport to Dalaman in Turkey in June 2019 when crew members and fellow passengers had to stop her from opening the door. "Ms. Haines' behaviour was one of the most serious cases of disruptive passenger behaviour that we have experienced, and we have banned her from flying with us for life," said Steve Heapy,

CEO of Jet2.com and Jet2holidays in a statement. Two Royal Air Force fighter jets were scrambled to escort the jet back to Stansted Airport following the incident. Jet2 billed Haines, from High Wycombe, west of London, more than £85,000 (\$110,000) after her "extremely disruptive behavior" caused the flight to be diverted. Chelmsford Crown Court heard how Haines had mixed alcohol and medication before the incident, which she didn't really



remember, the UK's PA Media news agency reports. Prosecutor Michael Crimp told the court how Haines "lunged" to open the door of the plane, which was carrying 206 passengers. Haines had earlier

pleaded guilty to endangering the safety of an aircraft and assaulting Jet2 crew member Charley Coombe. "Those that are trapped in the confined space of the aircraft will inevitably be distressed, frightened and petrified by the actions of those who in a drunken state endanger their lives," Judge Charles Gratwicke said during sentencing, according to PA. "For some it will be their worst nightmare come true." Haines said "I want to die" and

"I'm going to kill you all" as others struggled to restrain her. Her lawyer, Oliver Saxby QC, said Haines had not drunk alcohol since the incident and had been attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings up to four times a week. "She wasn't just drunk, she was unwell," he said, adding that Haines has been diagnosed with mental health problems. "She's disgusted with herself." Jet2 CEO Heapy said alcohol was clearly a contributing factor in the incident, and the airline is working to crack down on unruly behavior.

## High-level murder investigation grips tiny mountain kingdom of Lesotho



(News Agencies)-Maesaiah Thabane, the first lady of the tiny mountain kingdom of Lesotho, always knew how to make an entrance. After weeks in hiding in South Africa, allegedly helped by a recently appointed spokesman who snuck her away in a government-issue car, Thabane crossed back into Lesotho last Tuesday, passing a phalanx of security forces, and promptly

handed herself over to special police. Later that evening, crown prosecutors charged Thabane with the 2017 murder of Lesotho's previous first lady -- her husband's previous wife -- Lipolelo Thabane, and the attempted murder of another woman. Maesaiah Thabane was taken into custody. The first lady's legal team didn't respond to phone calls and text

messages from CNN over several days. The shocking details of the case have gripped this country of fewer than 2 million people, which is entirely surrounded by South Africa, forced the Prime Minister Thomas Thabane to promise his resignation and opened the lid on the murky power politics that have long dominated Lesotho's culture. A funeral, then a wedding Unknown assailants gunned down Lipolelo Thabane outside her house in June 2017, just two days before her estranged husband was inaugurated for his second term as PM. The couple had been separated for some time, but had never formally divorced, and a court had ruled that Lipolelo should keep the benefits and perks that came with the position of first lady.

## Trump seeks billions more for NASA to get US astronauts on the moon by 2024

(News Agencies)-The Trump administration is seeking a big boost to NASA's annual funding in order to fulfill its mission to put a man and woman on the moon by 2024. In its annual budget request released Monday, the White House asked Congress to allocate more than \$25 billion for NASA in the 2021 fiscal year, with \$12.4 billion earmarked specifically for the moon landing program. That would be another significant increase to the space agency's financing, which has seen its annual budget climb from less than \$20 billion in 2017, the year President Donald Trump took office, to \$22.6 billion for the 2020 fiscal year, which ends on September 30. The document also maps out a series of future budget bumps for NASA that would raise its annual budget to \$26.3 billion in fiscal 2025.

There are no guarantees that Congress will comply with the administration's request. The White House's budget proposal is primarily a statement of its priorities, and lawmakers virtually never follow it. Congress has traditionally funded NASA at or above the levels requested by the White House. Though, Congress has ignored specific requests, such as Trump's calls to cancel certain science programs, including NASA's WFIRST telescope. The space agency was allocated most, but not all, of the money it requested for its moon program, dubbed Artemis, in the spending bill lawmakers passed in mid-December. The White House's proposal gives lawmakers a more detailed look at how much money the Artemis program would cost and how the space agency plans to spend it.



# Currentjriwal, Kejri wali Dilli: How Indian newspapers captured AAP's historic victory in Delhi

Arvind Kejriwal is set to be back as the Delhi chief minister for the third straight time. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) registered historic victory in Delhi as it trounced BJP. Here is how newspapers in India captured AAP's success, yet again.

Arvind Kejriwal led the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to a stupendous victory yet again in the Delhi Assembly poll, dealing a body blow to the BJP and completely decimating the Congress in a keenly watched battle in the midst of anti-CAA protests.

The AAP swept the by securing more than 60 seats - marginally short of the 67 seats it won in the elections held five years ago - paving the way for Arvind Kejriwal to be sworn in as Chief Minister of Delhi for the third time in a row. As the AAP cruised to victory, leaders cutting across party lines including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Rahul

Gandhi (Congress) congratulated Kejriwal for the historic win.

A day after this historic win, the AAPquake in Delhi made it to front pages across India with newspapers acknowledging victory of the disruptor-in-chief Arvind Kejriwal.

'Delivered' declared The Indian Express on Wednesday morning as it quoted Arvind Kejriwal from his victory speech: 'gazab kar diya aap logon ne...I love you...this is also a win for Bharat Mata'. In reference to BJP's divisive campaign in Delhi, another headline in The Indian Express read, 'AAP landslide after BJP's goli maro call,

Shaheen Bagh current'.

Describing the results as a testimony to AAP's invincibility in Delhi, The Time of India said 'AAP proves it's bullet-proof in Delhi'. As the daily referred to AAP's win as another landslide, it noted how "Arvind Kejriwal's aim never wavered as he stayed focused on AAP's track record - while BJP missed the target yet again, and Congress fired a blank".

Bitterly contested under the shadow of the two-month-long anti-CAA protests at Shaheen Bagh, violence on campuses, chants of "goli maaro" at a Union minister's rally, and gunfire, it was billed by many



as a virtual referendum on nationalism," the Tol report said. The Hindustan Times, meanwhile, announced 'Kejri wali Dilli' as it wrote how 'others bite the dust as AAP sweeps Delhi again'.

'Bharat Mata ki Jai, Inquilab Zindabad, Vande Mataram': The Hindustan Times wrote how Arvind Kejriwal chanted these slogans as the crowd cheered

him on to mark his party's spectacular victory in the assembly election, and capturing the essence of his political campaign. "The first and the third slogan are often heard in Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rallies, the second in protest rallies against the regime," the report noted, and added, "Kejriwal walked a fine line between the two, and it paid off."

# Police Imperil The People They Are Supposed To Protect



Politicisation has drained the police of public trust and made them into a partisan tool, writes Editor-in-chief Ruben Banerjee. I got a lesson about how badly the police are politicised quite early in life,

having spent two hours in a stinking Calcutta Police lockup on being falsely implicated by CPI(M) apparatchiks in a neighbourhood brawl. Yet, nothing could have prepared me for what has been playing out in

the aftermath of the violence in JNU in recent days. If the brutal assault on some students of what is otherwise supposed to be a preeminent seat of learning was atrocious, the brazenness with which Delhi Police apparently sought to foist a false narrative on how the attack unfolded is simply appalling. That the police of this country try to please, as a principle, their political masters is no surprise. Almost every Indian institution has over the years been compromised to varying degrees and the police have not been immune to this worrying trend. But in no time, perhaps, has the decline in policing standards been this stark and this shocking. Masked goons gain

unfettered entry into a university right in the middle of the national capital and go about breaking whatever came within their sight, including a few skulls. Rampage over, they troop out in full view of the police as if they were returning from a carefree walk in the park. The worst followed when the police lodged FIRs, naming several victims as perpetrators of the assault. Broken glass panes and limbs apart, the other big casualty of the episode has undoubtedly been the police's credibility, or whatever is left of it. The notoriety of the force is at an all-time high and it's a national phenomenon, rather than just being a problem with

Delhi Police alone. Politicisation of the police is complete in West Bengal with chief minister Mamata Banerjee staging public demonstrations in support of a former police commissioner under CBI scrutiny. In Naveen Patnaik's Odisha, pliant police seize three helicopters belonging to an opponent of their political master on flimsy charges to ground and embarrass him. In Rajasthan, assailants of cattle trader Pehlu Khan are absolved of murder despite overwhelming visual evidence since the police had deliberately botched up case records. In more ways than one, the police defy logic and accountability with impunity.

# China's hero doctor was punished for telling truth about coronavirus

In their botched handling of the tragic death of Li Wenliang, the Chinese doctor who sounded the alarm on the Wuhan coronavirus, authorities in Beijing seem to want it both ways.

On the one hand, officials have expressed their sorrow over his death and encouraged people to tell the truth about the outbreak. On the other hand, government censors are hard at work scrubbing online posts that call for freedom of speech in the wake of Li's death. When millions of people are denied the opportunity to grieve

collectively over someone widely regarded as a hero, their trust in government can only further erode. As Li recently told the Chinese magazine Caixin before his death: "I think a healthy society should not only have one kind of voice." Li is credited with being the first medical professional to sound the alarm on the Wuhan coronavirus weeks before he contracted the illness himself and died. In late December, he messaged his medical school alumni group on WeChat, informing them that seven people from a local seafood market who showed



signs of a SARS-like illness were quarantined in his hospital in Wuhan. When screenshots of his post went viral with his name in plain view, Li said, "I realized it was out of my control and I would

probably be punished." As he told CNN, "I only wanted to remind my university classmates to be careful."

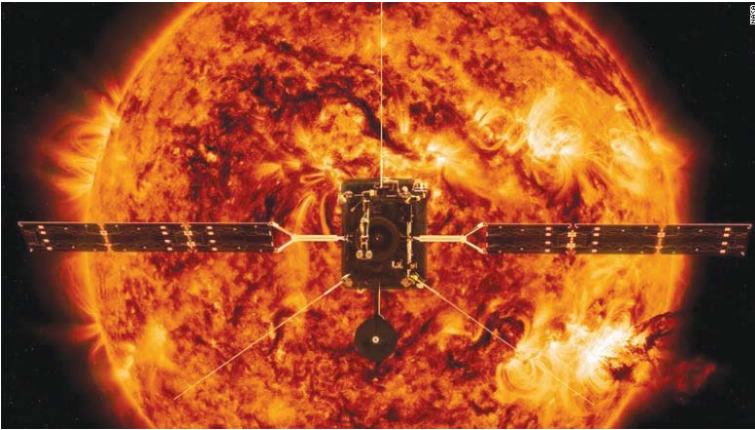
Li was later called to a police station, reprimanded for spreading rumors online, and forced to sign a statement acknowledging his "misdemeanor" before he was allowed to leave. Weeks later, China's Supreme Court vindicated him and other "rumormongers" by saying, "It might have been a fortunate thing ... if the public had listened to this 'rumor' at the time..." Not just a statistic On Friday, Li became one of more than 700

casualties of the Wuhan coronavirus. But he is much more than a statistic. While Li may not be immortalized to the same degree as the lone protester who faced off against a column of tanks in Tiananmen Square during the 1989 anti-government protests, his "normal guy" persona, and sense of duty has transformed him into an overnight hero -- and his death has unleashed an unprecedented tsunami of grief and anger that probably has not been seen since President Xi Jinping rose to power.



# The Solar Orbiter mission has launched.

## It will give an unprecedented look at our sun



The Solar Orbiter launched from Cape Canaveral and began its journey to get a close, unprecedented look at our star. The mission, which is a joint collaboration between NASA and the European Space Agency, launched at 11:03 p.m. ET Sunday.

This is the first mission that will provide images of the sun's north and south poles using a suite of six instruments on board that will capture the spacecraft's view. Having a visual understanding of the sun's poles is important because it can provide more insight about the sun's powerful magnetic field and how it affects

Earth.

It will take Solar Orbiter about two years to reach its highly elliptical orbit around the sun. Gravity assists from Earth and Venus will help swing the spacecraft out of the ecliptic plane, or the space that aligns with the sun's equator, so it can study the sun's poles from above and below.

This follows the Ulysses spacecraft, another collaboration between ESA and NASA that launched in 1990 and also flew over the sun's poles. Ulysses completed three passes of the sun before its mission ended in 2009, but its view was limited to what it could see from the sun's equator.

"Up until Solar Orbiter, all solar imaging instruments have been

within the ecliptic plane or very close to it," said Russell Howard, space scientist at the Naval Research Lab in Washington, D.C. and principal investigator for one of Solar Orbiter's ten instruments. "Now, we'll be able to look down on the sun from above."

"It will be terra incognita," said Daniel Müller, ESA project scientist for the mission at the Agency's European Space Research and Technology Centre in the Netherlands. "This is really exploratory science."

Solar Orbiter is equipped with ten instruments that can capture observations of the sun's corona (which is its atmosphere), the poles and the solar disk. It can also use its variety of instruments to measure the sun's magnetic

fields and solar wind, or the energized stream of particles emitted by the sun that reach across our solar system.

Understanding the sun's magnetic field and solar wind are key because they contribute to space weather, which impacts Earth by interfering with networked systems like GPS, communications and even astronauts on the International Space Station. The sun's magnetic field is so massive that it stretches beyond Pluto, providing a pathway for solar wind to travel directly across the solar system. The mission will work in tandem with NASA's Parker Solar Probe, which is currently orbiting the sun on a seven-year mission and just completed its fourth close approach of the star.

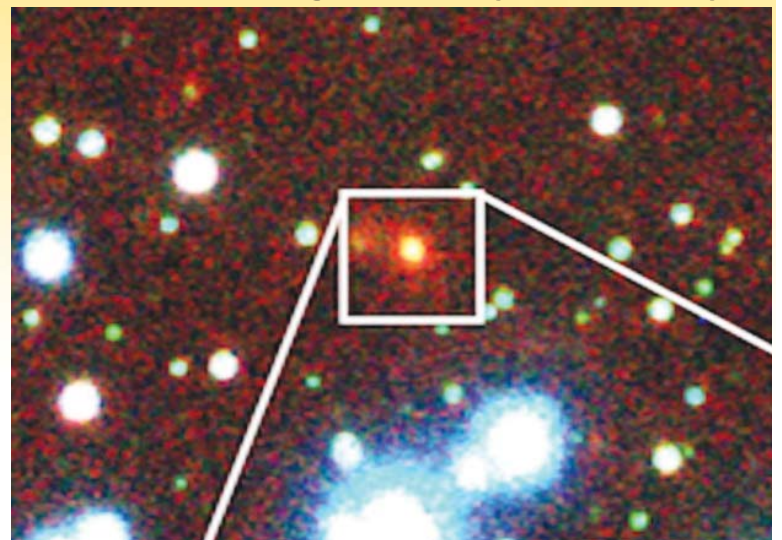
## Mysterious radio signal from space is repeating every 16 days

Mysterious radio signals from space have been known to repeat, but for the first time, researchers have noticed a pattern in a series of bursts coming from a single source half a billion light-years from Earth. Fast radio bursts, or FRBs, are millisecond-long bursts of radio waves in space. Individual radio bursts emit once and don't repeat. But repeating fast radio bursts are known to send out short, energetic radio waves multiple times. And usually when they repeat, it's sporadic or in a cluster, according to previous observations. Between September 16, 2018 and October 30, 2019, researchers with the

Canadian Hydrogen Intensity Mapping Experiment/Fast Radio Burst Project collaboration detected a pattern in bursts occurring every 16.35 days. Over the course of four days, the signal would release a burst or two each hour. Then, it would go silent for another 12 days. The findings are included in the pre-print of a paper on arXiv, meaning the paper has been moderated but not fully peer reviewed. The authors of the paper are part of the CHIME/FRB collaboration, which has published a multitude of fast radio burst studies in recent years. The signal is a known repeating fast radio burst, FRB 180916.J0158+65. Last year, the

CHIME/FRB collaboration detected the sources of eight new repeating fast radio bursts, including this signal. The repeating signal was traced to a massive spiral galaxy around 500 million light-years away.

Researchers hope that by tracing the origin of these mysterious bursts, they can determine what caused them. So far, they have traced single and repeating fast radio bursts back to very different sources, which deepens the mystery. The first repeating fast radio burst traced, FRB 121102, linked back to a small dwarf galaxy containing stars and metals. FRB 180916 was traced to one of the spiral arms of a



Milky Way-esque galaxy. It was also within a star-forming region of the arm, the researchers said.

Now, the evidence of a pattern in the signal adds to the question of what could cause these bursts to emit the way that they do.

## Two stars fight, and the image is stunning

Stars that have companions aren't always friendly to them, as evidenced by a stellar confrontation witnessed by astronomers.

They studied the binary star system, HD101584, using the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array of telescopes in Chile to find out what happened.

They discovered that the stars violently lashed out at each other. And it makes for a beautiful image.

The main star in the system

inflated as it burned through its hydrogen stores and became a red giant, one of the last phases of stellar evolution before the star dies and becomes a white dwarf. Typical of red giants, the star swelled well beyond its original size, overtaking the other, lower-mass star.

But the small star lashed out in response, rather than withering away. It moved in a spiral motion toward the red giant's core. Collision was averted, but the aggressive move

was enough to cause the red giant to lose its outer layers of gas. Those layers scattered and

the star's core was exposed. A study of the system was recently published in the journal *Astronomy & Astrophysics*.

"The star system HD101584 is special in the sense that this 'death process' was terminated prematurely and dramatically as a nearby low-mass companion star was engulfed by the giant," said Hans Olofsson, lead study author at the Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden.

The end result of the stellar fight created a stunning nebula, comprised of ejected material and rings of gas layers in different colors. Witnessing an event like this

provides a better understanding for what our sun will go through as it evolves.

"Currently, we can describe the death processes common to many Sun-like stars, but we cannot explain why or exactly how they happen," said Sofia Ramstedt, study co-author from Uppsala University in Sweden. "HD101584 gives us important clues to solve this puzzle since it is currently in a short transitional phase between better studied evolutionary stages."





# E-commerce: The threat of counterfeits and piracy

E-commerce in India has seen phenomenal growth over the years - from \$39 billion in 2017, it is projected to rise to \$200 billion by 2026. This comes in the wake of deepening penetration of the Internet and mobile phones. There has been a steady expansion of online offerings - electronics, apparel, travel, movies, medicine, hotel reservations, books, matrimonial services, cosmetics, footwear, fashion accessories and groceries. The liberal Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy, where 100% business-to-business transactions are allowed, is also fuelling the

growth of this market.

This growth, however, comes with challenges. Counterfeiting and pirated goods continue to distort the virtual marketplace. E-commerce sites are regularly being used as common platforms for the sale of counterfeit goods. Whether it is online or offline, the dangers are legitimate market loss and the occupation of economic space by unauthorised and grey market operators, causing loss of revenue to the government, loss of jobs, threat to consumer safety, and growth of organised crime.

While technology offers several solutions to authenticate the

original product, the same technological tools, particularly artificial intelligence, help create clones. This makes it more difficult to distinguish between the original and the fake. Moreover, when e-commerce players and brand owners get embroiled in disputes, it is the counterfeiters who reap the benefits. What is needed is constant upgradation and innovation to stay ahead of the counterfeiters. Therefore, it is important that we have regulations for e-commerce.

A big step has been taken by the government in bringing in the draft e-commerce policy, which has



indicated clear guidelines on the expectations from brand owners and e-commerce players. It is the first time that a government document has listed concrete steps for combating counterfeiting. It categorically

states that the details of sellers should be made available on a marketplace website for all products, and that sellers must provide an undertaking to the platforms about the genuineness of their products.

## Vijay Mallya extradition: Overwhelming evidence of fraud, India tells UK court



The now defunct Kingfisher Airlines owned by controversial businessman Vijay Mallya "knowingly misrepresented" its profitability while seeking bank loans in 2009, India submitted in the high court of England and Wales hearing his extradition appeal on Wednesday.

Besides, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on behalf of India insisted that there is "overwhelming" evidence of fraud and deception on the part of Mallya and his airlines, whose legal team mounted a forensic challenge to the Westminster Magistrates Court's 2018 judgement that cleared his

extradition to India face charges of major financial offences.

Mark Summers, CPS lawyer, reminded Justice Irwin and Justice Elisabeth Laing of the high court of England and Wales that in extradition cases, British courts are solely required to establish whether the person requested has a prima facie case to answer, not to establish the truth. To that extent, he argued, the magistrates court had taken into account all relevant evidence and had ruled that Mallya had a prima facie case to answer and that he needed to be extradited to India to face trial. "There was concealment of material while seeking loans from IDBI. Funds were disbursed contrary to the purposes the loans were given...Kingfisher Airlines was

knowingly misrepresenting its profitability", Summers said, seeking to counter specific arguments of Mallya's team by citing business plans, "optimistic" projections and brand evaluation by consultants Grant Thornton and others.

India's case rests on what was mentioned in the lower court as "three chapters of dishonesty" by Mallya-misrepresentations to various banks to acquire loans, the misuse of the loans and his conduct after the banks recalled the loans. Mallya's lawyer, Claire Montgomery, on Wednesday morning continued her forensic arguments against the magistrates court's judgement. The case, she said, is "dense", involving thousands of documents, mentioning dates,

internal emails and figures to substantiate the appeal.

According to her, judge Emma Arbuthnot of the magistrates court had made "multiple errors" after misunderstanding accounts and other documents related to IDBI, SBI and Kingfisher Airlines (KFA). "She is confused, it is nonsense to come to the conclusions she did on accounts and loss of KFA...The judge got it wrong on figures", she insisted. Summers refuted her contention that several witness statements were inadmissible. The appeal hearing will continue on its last day on Thursday, with Summers setting out further arguments in support of India's charges against Mallya. The judgement is expected next week.

## Chasing dollars: India's projects increasingly funded by offshore borrowings

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday pointed out to some green shoots in the economy.

While macroeconomic data is yet to pleasantly surprise markets, the minister isn't entirely wrong.

An article in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) monthly bulletin makes a similar optimistic case. The central bank believes private investment will improve judging by the financial sanctions for projects.

"The investment cycle appears to be poised to gain momentum in the short to medium term, but, its sustainability needs to be watched closely," said the RBI in an article in its monthly bulletin.

During the first half of the current fiscal year, 423 projects got funds totalling ₹1.87 trillion from banks, financial institutions and foreign sources. This is an impressive increase of 47% from the corresponding period in FY19. The number of projects financed has, however, dropped by 13%.

The more interesting factor is the rise in foreign funding in the total capital expenditure towards projects. During the first half this year, over 60% of the finance came from external commercial borrowings. Low global interest rates and a general unwillingness of Indian banks to lend seems to be the reason behind this.

Even so, the share of banks in the sanctions towards projects

**Macroeconomic data is yet to pleasantly surprise markets. The Reserve Bank of India believes private investment will improve**



remained high at 67%. Foreign money provided 33% of the total finance.

External commercial borrowings

are a very popular and during calendar 2019 companies have borrowed a whopping \$50 billion through this route. So long as

global liquidity is copious and central banks are accommodative, this trend is unlikely to change.





## Addicted to workouts? New study reveals it could be linked to eating disorders

Exercise addiction is nearly four times more common among people with an eating disorder, researchers have found. Exercise addiction was defined as having an obsessive approach to fitness that could have a negative impact on someone's

health and social life. The study was published in the journal *Eating and Weight Disorders - Studies on Anorexia, Bulimia and Obesity*.

"It is known that those with eating disorders are more likely to display addictive personality and

obsessive-compulsive behaviours," said study lead author Mike Trott of Anglia Ruskin University in the UK.

"We are also aware that having an unhealthy relationship with food often means an increased amount of exercising, but this is

## A new study recently found out that exercise addiction may be linked to eating disorders.

the first time that a risk factor has been calculated," Trott added.

The study drew on data from nine studies covering a total of 2,140 people with a mean age of 25. The researchers found that people displaying characteristics of an eating disorder are 3.7 times more likely to suffer from addiction to exercise than people displaying no indication of an eating disorder. "It is not uncommon to want to improve our lifestyles by eating healthier and doing more exercise, particularly at the start of the year. However, it is important to moderate this behaviour and not fall victim to 'crash diets' or anything that eliminates certain foods entirely, as these can easily lead to

eating disorders," Trott said.

According to the researchers, the study shows that displaying signs of an eating disorder significantly increases the chance of an unhealthy relationship with exercise, and this can have negative consequences, including mental health issues and injury.

Health professionals working with people with eating disorders should consider monitoring exercise levels as a priority, as this group have been shown to suffer from serious medical conditions as a result of excessive exercise, such as fractures, increased rates of cardiovascular disease in younger patients, and increased overall mortality," Trott concluded.



## Having less sex?

Women who have sex more often are less likely to have an early menopause, researchers say, adding that women who reported having sexual activity weekly were 28 per cent less likely to have experienced menopause than those who had sex less than once a month.

While the study published in the journal *Royal Society Open Science* didn't look at the reason for the link, researchers said that the physical cues of sex may signal to the body that there is a possibility of getting pregnant. But for women who aren't having sex frequently in midlife, an earlier menopause may make more biological sense, the study said.

"The findings of our study suggest that if a woman is not having sex, and there is no chance of pregnancy, then the body 'chooses' not to invest in

ovulation, as it would be pointless," said study researcher Megan Arnot from University College London in the US.

"There may be a biological energetic trade-off between investing energy into ovulation and investing elsewhere, such as keeping active by looking after grandchildren," Arnot added.

During ovulation, the woman's immune function is impaired, making the body more susceptible to disease, the study said. Given a pregnancy is unlikely due to a lack of sexual activity, then it would not be beneficial to allocate energy to a costly process, especially if there is the option to invest resources into existing kin.

The research is based on data collected from 2,936 women, recruited as the baseline cohort for the SWAN study in 1996/1997. The women were asked to respond to several questions,

including whether they had engaged in sex with their partner in the past six months, the frequency of sex including whether they engaged in sexual intercourse, oral sex, sexual touching or caressing in the last six months and whether they had engaged in self-stimulation in the past six months. The most frequent pattern of sexual activity was weekly (64 per cent). Interviews were carried out over a ten-year follow-up period, during which 1,324 (45 per cent) of the 2,936 women experienced a natural menopause at an average age of 52. By modelling the relationship between sexual frequency and the age of natural menopause, women of any age who had sex weekly had a hazard ratio of 0.72, whereas women of any age who had sex monthly had a hazard ratio of 0.81. This provided a likelihood whereby women of any age who

## That could result in early menopause, says study

had sex weekly were 28 per cent less likely to experience the menopause compared to those who had sex less than monthly. Likewise, those who had sex monthly were 19 per cent less likely to experience menopause at any given age compared to those who had sex less than

monthly. The study also tested whether living with a male partner affected menopause as a proxy to test whether exposure to male pheromones delayed menopause. The researchers found no correlation, regardless of whether the male was present in the household or not.

## Travelling with coronavirus scare: What to do if you are on a flight

Travelling abroad in the times when coronavirus has spread to more than 25 countries can put your life to risk. Which is why, it is of utmost importance to take the best precautions to keep yourself at bay from the deadly virus that has taken over 1000 lives worldwide.

Skymet Weather, an Indian company that provides weather forecast and solutions to Indians, recently released a report to share the best precaution to avoid getting infected with coronavirus on flights.

The report states that just wearing masks or rubber gloves inside the flight is not enough. "In fact, masks and gloves spread more bugs than restricting their spread. Thus, washing hands frequently is the only best way to avoid coronavirus," the report quoted David Powell, a physician and

medical adviser to the International Air Transport Association.

It also stated that it is actually the physical contact with other people that carries the potential risk of coronavirus infection on flights as the virus can't stand alone for long hours on seats or armrests.

The report also explained that the transmission of infection on flights is not because of the air but because of physical contact with another person. "There is a low risk of catching a serious infection on a flight as the air supply inside an aircraft is different from what is used in a movie theater or inside the building of an office. The aircraft uses a blend of fresh air and recirculated air."

"The recirculated air is then passed through the same type of filters that are used in operating theaters.



## Malang movie review

## Aditya Roy Kapur, Disha Patani's film is a missed opportunity

*Malang movie review: Aditya Roy Kapur and Kunal Kemmu steal the show in the film with their performances while Disha Patani looks stunning in this romantic thriller.*

Malang  
Director - Mohit Suri  
Cast - Aditya Roy Kapur, Disha Patani, Anil Kapoor, Kunal Kemmu  
Just like the non-linear Malang, I don't know where to start its review. Its plot, narrative, characters, climax and multitude of twists and turns are a heady mix and honestly, too much to take at one go. Malang begins with a high voltage fight sequence and soon Aditya Roy Kapur goes on a killing spree; then a flashback as we are familiarized with Aditya and Disha Patani's love story; cut to the present day where he's again killing cops; and wham, we are back in the past. A series of events unfold to reveal the climax. Yes, that's pretty much the order in which

the film tries to keep you invested. Director Mohit Suri, who has earlier helmed Kalyug, Aashiqui 2 and Ek Villain, frequently references his past works. While the film is backed by some intense performances from Aditya, Anil Kapoor and Kunal Kemmu, its wafer-thin plot makes you wonder why such films are still being made in Bollywood. Malang is so bad in parts that it can potentially give you a headache. Its length drags it down and what appears like an intriguing plot in the beginning soon turns limp. Set in Goa, the film shows Advait Thakur (Aditya) and Sara (Disha) meeting at a rave party and instantly falling in love. Advait is a shy guy from Mumbai while Sara is a footloose woman who

has recently landed in India. She doesn't have a phone, is not on social media, and has a to-do list of things to overcome her fears. Soon they decide to make each moment count and live life to the fullest. However, one encounter with the cops changes their fate and the story turns into a revenge drama. As Advait goes on a killing spree, we meet Anjaney Agashe (Anil Kapoor) -- a trigger-happy cop who believes in closing cases with his gun - and the yin to his yang, by-the-book policeman Michael Rodriguez (Kunal Kemmu). Soon after, everyone is killing everyone, and that's about it. While the first half builds up the curiosity and you genuinely want to know the reason why Aditya is targeting policemen, the



second half whittles away the only thing innovative in the entire film is perhaps the quirky reveals don't turn out to be as big disclaimers that pop up each as one would expect. Thirty minutes into the film and you can easily predict what is going to happen next. The non-linear narrative doesn't do any good either because the time span being covered is only five years so you can't really make out if the characters are in the present day or not. And what's with stereotyping Goa to merely a destination that's about drugs, parties, murders and repeat. The

## Birds of Prey movie review

## Margot Robbie soars in vibrantly violent DCEU gem



*Birds of Prey movie review: The DCEU cuts ties to Jared Leto's Joker with this violent and vibrant comic book film, starring Margot Robbie as Harley Quinn.*

Birds of Prey  
Director - Cathy Yan  
Cast - Margot Robbie, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Jurnee Smollett-Bell, Ewan McGregor  
Combining all the ingredients that make comic book bros break out in hives, Birds of Prey is a candy-coloured curveball of a movie that doubles as a feminist fable and an apology for the poorly received Suicide Squad. It does away with that film's convoluted tone and embraces the nuttier aspects of the monumentally mishandled DCEU, a series with which Birds of Prey has barely any

connection - tonally and narratively. In fact, it spends its opening minutes literally cutting any ties it has to Suicide Squad, and, metaphorically, to its toxic legacy. I liked Suicide Squad. It reminded me of Batman: The Animated Series, a show that I watched obsessively growing up. Harley Quinn was created specifically for that show by writer Paul Dini. He'd be happy with what director Cathy Yan has done with her in Birds of Prey. Once again played by Margot Robbie, Harley is having a difficult time getting over the Joker, with whom she has broken

up sometime between the events of this film and Suicide Squad. But she hasn't told anyone yet - partly because she's still in denial, but more importantly, being the Joker's girlfriend afforded her a certain immunity in the seedier corners of Gotham City, immunity that Harley is convinced she'll lose the second she announces that she is no longer under Mr J's protection. Birds of Prey is essentially the story of Harley emerging from under the Joker's shadow. Much has been written about the emotional abuse Harley has had to suffer as the Joker's partner in crime over the years - in comics, video games and cartoon shows. But by removing the Clown Prince of Crime (the Harlequin of Hate, the Jester of Genocide) entirely from the narrative, Yan and her writer, Christina Hodson avoid confronting some of the more interesting aspects of their relationship.

It's a missed opportunity, because despite never appearing in the flesh, the Joker haunts her like a particularly stubborn wart - unshakable and irritating. His face is visible on a dart board on Harley's bedroom wall and his name is mentioned by dozens of characters throughout the movie. Curiously, however, Jared Leto's likeness is never used; the Joker in Birds of Prey appears to be a campy composite of sorts. He looks like the Joker of the '90s; a mixture of Jack Nicholson and Mark Hamill's versions. This is also a good indication of the film's tone. It's interesting to note how, in the span of just over a decade, the pendulum has swung from Joel Schumacher's lurid Batman films to the gritty realism of Christopher Nolan's Dark Knight trilogy, and back again. Designed by KK Barrett and vibrantly shot by cinematographer Matty Libatique, Birds of Prey has more

in common with Schumacher's kitschy aesthetic than the grounded tone of Nolan's films. But the similarities are limited to the visuals, thankfully; Birds of Prey is infinitely better written than both Batman Forever and Batman & Robin combined. Hodson's screenplay channels the early films of Guy Ritchie, complete with a valuable MacGuffin, snazzy visual graphics, an overly complicated and non-linear structure. She even has Robbie serve as a relatively reliable narrator, and our guide in this densely populated world. The trio of women charged with spearheading the film - Yan, the director; Hodson, the writer; and Robbie, the producer - inject the film with a spirit of pride. It's the sort of film in which one character, sensing another's discomfort during a fight, offers her a scrunchie to keep the hair out of her eyes.



## Pooja Bedi trolled for daughter Alaya F's debut after anti-reservation stance, hits back at nepotism jibe

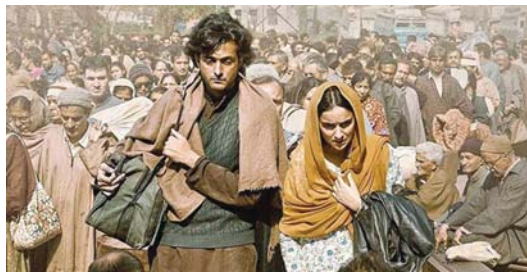
Pooja Bedi has hit back at Twitter users who trolled her over daughter Alaya F's debut after she tweeted against reservation and said that merit should be rewarded. The actor was promptly reminded that her own daughter got a dream launch in Bollywood.

"Nepotism nepotism nepotism!! the 'run to' word when u want to bash a star kid because u have no other tools in hand! so Let me make it clear. GRATITUDE is when you count your own blessings & JEALOUSY is when you count the blessings given to others. cheers!" she wrote, in response to the trolls.

A Twitter user told Pooja that calling it jealousy was "myopic" and that outsiders' parents were not "whining about unfair treatment" so celebrity parents should not complain either. "If you're damning someone for being born into a family.. then its resentment and jealousy. U need to see their hard work and its results. If someone has

performed fabulously & their years of hard work show they deserve their space on the screen why should their birth irk someone?" she replied. It all started when Pooja responded to Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's comment and said that reservation should be done away with. "Dear @priyankagandhi I think its VERY positive that @BJP4India wants 2 end the quota & reservation systems! if we believe in ONE india & merit & an end to divisive politics.... this is definitely a step in right direction. This reservation system cannot be a FOREVER entitlement," she wrote on Twitter. When one Twitter user reminded Pooja about the practice of manual scavenging and the atrocities against backward castes, she replied, "We have graduates sweeping floors because someone with way lesser marks got their job based on quota.

## Shikara is a tale of loss. It is not a story of hate, writes Vidhu Vinod Chopra



On Friday, I walked into a packed theatre for one of the first screenings of my latest film, Shikara. Three hundred people, most of them Kashmiri Pandits, stood up and applauded. But one lady at the back screamed that the film wasn't representative of her pain. She wanted

more. I was accused of commercialising the tragedy of a community which was exiled 30 years ago. I have spent many days thinking about what she said. And I realise that what she wanted was more hate. She wanted a film that demonised Muslims, and that sowed even more animosity and bloodshed. In fact, one of her issues with the film was that Muslim actors were playing Pandit characters. After a week of shrill accusations, controversy and introspection about what I could have done differently, I have come to the conclusion that I am not that storyteller. I will never peddle hate for profit.



## Aamir Khan, Kareena Kapoor pose with makeup artist Pompy Hans on his birthday in new pic from Laal Singh Chaddha sets

Actors Aamir Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan are currently shooting Laal Singh Chaddha at an undisclosed location. On Tuesday, the team celebrated the birthday of hair and makeup artist Pompy Hans. Pictures and videos from the celebration have been shared online. Now, he has shared a fresh picture, this time featuring Kareena as well as Aamir.

Sharing the picture, he wrote: "Birthday Celebration with #lalsinghchaddha #onsetbirthday" It looks like they are at a cold location; Kareena is all wrapped up in a thick and warm multi-coloured jacket. Aamir, in a totally different look from what we have previously seen, sports a really short hair style. He is wearing what appears to be a rather ordinary blue and white striped T-shirt, a pair of black high pants and a pair of spectacles. It is not clear if it is a look from the film but it is a departure from his



bearded Sikh look from the film's earlier shooting schedules in Chandigarh and Jaisalmer. On Tuesday, two new pictures from the film's sets were shared online. One was from Pompy's cake cutting ceremony while another was from inside a tent; Kareena was seated inside with a couple of team members, all in warm woollens and jackets. Laal Singh Chaddha is the official Hindi remake of Hollywood classic, Forrest Gump. It will be Aamir's next release after the debacle of his last, Thugs of Hindostan. Aamir and Kareena were on a long 20-day shooting schedule in Chandigarh in October last year. Aamir was spotted in Jaisalmer some time later. Aamir had announced the project on his birthday in March last year. Announcing it, he had told the waiting reporters, "My next film is finalised. It is called Laal Singh Chaddha.



# NME Awards 2020

## Katherine Ryan dazzles in a sheer gown as she cuddles up to partner Bobby Kootstra...



Katherine Ryan was dragged into an altercation with rapper Slowthai during Wednesday night's NME Awards after he made lewd comments about her on stage.

Yet before the drama kicked off, the comedian, 36, was seen having the time of her life at the event as she attended with partner Bobby Kootstra.

The Canadian comic looked radiant for the awards as she slipped into a scarlet puffball gown with sheer detailing.

Katherine hit the red carpet alongside her childhood sweetheart Bobby, who she entered into a civil partnership with last year after they rekindled their romance. Yet hours later, Katherine's night took a turn as she was dragged into an altercation with Slowthai.

The rapper was seen in a scuffle after audience members confronted him about lewd comments he made on stage to Katherine.

The performer launched himself into the crowd and had to be restrained by three bouncers after he threw his microphone into the audience, only to have it thrown back at him at the Brixton O2 Academy in south London after a man picked it up to call him a 'wasteman'.

He reacted by launching his drink at a person

he was rowing with for 'ruining' his speech for the Hero of the Year prize, before leaping off the stage at them.

The rapper, 25, could be heard shouting 'what' over and over again as bouncers restrained him after his performance earlier in the evening with Mura Masa.

The ugly scenes followed bizarre exchange with Katherine, who was hosting the ceremony, which started with him leaning into her face and putting

his arms around her as she tried to keep away from his face.

Shocked social media users shared footage of him leering at the host and telling the audience: 'She wants me to tend to her flowers.'

He began by urging her to 'smell my cologne' as he says 'smells good don't it' and shushes her, calling the host 'baby girl'.

'If you wanna do something see me later yeah,' he then tells the Katherine and later adds: 'You

ain't ever had anyone play with you like me.'

She hit back as he loomed into her face: 'You are like the hottest guy I've ever seen.' Her sarcastic rebuff didn't appear to throw him off despite her mocking him openly in front of the cringing crowds. He replies: 'Exactly so stop playing with me.' Katherine hit back by making an x-rated withering response at him as the audience cheered her response.



## Elizabeth Hurley spends weekend with old friends in Jaisalmer, shares pics



Actor and model Elizabeth Hurley looked stunning in a sheer dress as she spent the weekend with some old friends in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer. The 54-year-old dressed in elaborated getup took to Instagram to share the moments from the night.

"A magical weekend with old friends in Jaisalmer. It may take some time to recover Thank you to @tanyadubash and @arvinddubash for being the

best hosts #lebaloriental," the actor captioned the post alongside a series of pictures.

Elizabeth was decked up in a purple shade sheer dress and accessorized it with dramatic jewellery. She completed the look with a dazzling headpiece and went for a smoky eye makeup look for the evening. Further, the star even thanked the hosts Tanya Dubash and Arvind Dubash, for having her and being the best hosts. The event was a

grand birthday celebration of Arvind Dubash, who is the husband of executive director and chief brand officer at the Godrej Group, Tanya Arvind Dubash. Famous people from the Bollywood fraternity including Neha Dhupia, Angad Bedi, Amrita Arora, Malaika Arora, Gauri Khan, Karan Johar, Maheep Kapoor, Natasha Poonawalla Chunky Pandey, and Rahul Khanna also attended the event.

## At 92, the Academy comes of age



The 92nd Academy Awards made history. The South Korean film, Parasite, became the first foreign language film to win Best Picture for its dark drama. It also bagged three other awards (Best Director, Best Original Screenplay and Best International Film), and deservedly so. But that wasn't all that the Oscars brought with it this year.

From Brad Pitt and Joaquin Phoenix to Renee Zellweger and Janelle Monáe, artistes weaved in the political, cultural and social context of our times to make the night bigger than a

celebration of the best of film. Winners used the platform to underline the gravity of the climate crisis, highlight the need for minority and indigenous representation, expose gender discrimination, and caution against far-right extremism. Echoed across speeches was the overarching theme of justice and inclusivity in an unfair, unjust world. Phoenix (who won Best Actor for his role as a mentally ill, failed comic in Joker), quoting his brother, the late actor, River, said, "Run to the rescue with love and peace will follow".





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## AAPquake in Delhi

### Kejriwal's third sweep shows bijli-paani in Aam Aadmi heart



(News Agencies)- The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) swept the Delhi assembly polls yet again on Sunday by securing more than 60 seats - marginally short of the 67 seats it won in the elections held five years ago - paving the way for its supreme

leader Arvind Kejriwal to be sworn in as Chief Minister of Delhi for the third time in a row. The BJP, which put its all might in the last two weeks ahead of the February 8 polls, could not even touch double figures, though it won

a few seats more than it did in 2015 and increased its vote share. The Congress repeated its 2015 performance by drawing a blank. In 2015, the BJP received 32.3% vote share, the AAP polled 54.3% votes

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## NY Gov. Cuomo expected to concede to Trump on Global Entry fight



(News Agencies)- Andrew Cuomo is expected to concede in a meeting with Donald Trump Thursday that the state will give federal authorities access to the DMV database specifically for those applying for the Trusted Traveler Program but the New York governor said it's a ploy to call the President's bluff. The decision comes after the administration announced last week that New York state residents can no longer participate in certain Trusted Traveler Programs, including Global Entry, due to provisions in the state's new "Green Light Law" supporting undocumented immigrants. Calling it "pure politics," Cuomo told local radio host Jay Oliver Wednesday morning: "I will give them the DMV database for Trusted Traveler. These are people who go for an in person federal interview with all sorts of background information."

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## UP: Man shot dead by daughter's rapist, kin say cops ignored repeated threats



(News Agencies)- The father of a rape victim in UP's Firozabad was allegedly shot dead by the rape accused on Monday. The accused, identified as Aachman Sharma, is now absconding.

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## Bernie Sanders Is The Front-Runner For Democratic Nomination

(News Agencies)- Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) is the front-runner for the Democratic Party's nomination to challenge Republican President Donald Trump in November. Sanders, with a win Tuesday night in New Hampshire and a contested victory in Iowa under his belt, is in the strongest position to seize the nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee in July, clearly separating himself



from former Vice President Joe Biden, former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.). He is also the candidate in the field with the second-greatest

resources ? in the form of money, staffers and volunteers ? to power his efforts as the campaign continues.

His strongest potential rivals ? Biden and Warren ? are struggling, and the moderate candidates elevated by the nearly universally white electorates in the first two primary states have demonstrated almost no ability to appeal to the more diverse electorates casting

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## Student's dad arrested on sex trafficking charges after magazine's revelations



(News Agencies)- The father of a former Sarah Lawrence College student allegedly extorted and abused several students from the prestigious university and forced at least one student into prostitution over the past

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