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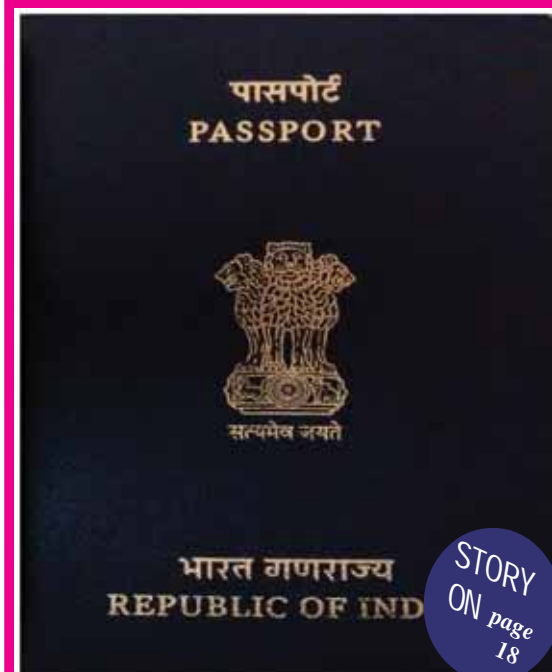
Bahraini royal sued for failing to pay £27 Million to meet Bollywood stars

London court hears Sheikh Khalifa had agreed to make payments to a third party



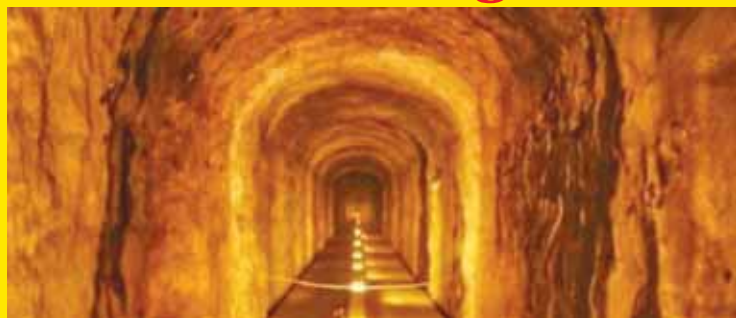
STORY ON page 18

Indian tourists among world's highest spenders abroad



STORY ON page 18

Why India is renting out its caves to foreign firms



(Insider Bureau): India signed an initial pact to lease out a part of its underground strategic oil storage at Padur in Karnataka to Abu Dhabi National Oil Co (ADNOC) for storing crude oil. Padur storage has four compartments of 0.625 MMT (million metric tonnes) each and ADNOC may use half of the storage capacity for stocking its oil. Allowing foreign companies to use the storage for storing crude oil helps the government save on the cost of filling the reserves.

"ADNOC is the only foreign oil and gas company, so far, to invest by way of crude oil in India's strategic petroleum reserves programme," an oil ministry statement said

(Contd on page 19)

Supreme Court will review its Sabarimala order

Entry of women not restricted as court refuses to grant stay but priests, protesters celebrate.



(Insider Bureau): A five-judge Supreme Court bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI), Ranjan Gogoi, on Tuesday agreed to reconsider its September judgment that allowed women of all ages to enter the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, but refused to stay the operation of the verdict that would have the effect of disallowing the entry of women into the hilltop shrine. The apex court bench, also comprising justices RF Nariman,

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Nishi Bahl of Panache Entertainment inc. in association with IFC organized

Miss, Teen and Mrs India New York 2018

“(By our staff reporter): ““Glitz, glamour and galore -- all came down on Sunday November 11, 2018 at Antuns by Minar in Long Island! The Event was hosted by Nishi Bahl of Panache Entertainment Inc. and coordinated by Shilpa Jhurani. “Panache entertainment, in association with IFC, hosted the 37th Miss, 11th Teen and the 5th Mrs. India New York Pageant! The largest reputed pageant held outside of India, this pageant has provided a platform and had past winners to many well achieved women, such as Bollywood actresses Richa Sharma Dutt, and Aarti Chhabria. “This year, a handful of New York’s finest Miss, Youthful Teens, and Elegant Mrs took the ramp displaying the utmost qualities of beauty, grace, elegance, confidence and talent! Despite all being current Indian Americans, it became evident that each generation has been, is and still carrying on their cultural heritage, roots and culture forward; and very much alive even though being Seven seas away from home! “The event consisted of judged segments including Ethnic Wear, Evening Wear, Talent, and Question and Answer. “Pageant Ramp Training and choreography was by Nishi

Bahl. “The glitzy evening began with an opening dance Choreographed by Shilpa Jhurani, dedicated in honor of our celebrity judge; The one and only Bollywood diva TANISHA MUKHERJEE (Big boss, Neil and Niki, Sarkar fame and much more.) and performed by all of the contestants. “The Judges panel of the evening included: Mr. Aron Govil (Accomplished and worldwide award renowned entrepreneur, Chairman and CEO of Ducon group of companies, Executive Director of Cemtrex, Founder of Aron Govil Productions), Mr. Sharanjit Singh Thind (a Media Personality, CEO of NuWay Media and former Commissioner, Nassau County Human Rights Commission and currently National Chairman, Indian American Victory Forum.) Miss Shree Saini (Miss India USA 2017), Mrs. Shehla Iftekhhar (currently working as the director of education and is the co-founder of SHIFT Education of Technology, the only licensed Software Test Engineering School in the United States.) and Mrs Jaweria Khan (The managing director with Ameer Medical group, and an advocate and ambassador for arts and peace.) And of course celebrity guest

Tanisha Mukherjee. “Initially, Preliminary judging proceeded to include a 3 minute talent portion, which ranged from incredible talent from dancing traditional Indian pieces, to modern bollywood, and playing instruments, to expertise public speaking skills. It was “immensely breathtaking to see such talent from the next upcoming Indian American Generation. The Best Talent was awarded to Miss Renuka Joseph of Brooklyn, NY in the Miss category and Miss Aarti Khanna in the teen division. Truly, remarkable and bundles of talent indeed! “The contestants took the ramp, shining light and bright in their beautiful traditional ethnic wear, and glamorous and stunning evening wear. “For the Finale, each contestant was asked a question by our judges panel, and reciprocated with an answer, and judged based on how best they advocate and justify their answer to the question. “The event was emceed by former Miss Teen India USA and former Miss India New York 2016 Riya Kaur. Through the event, there were energetic and vibrant entertainment dance performances choreographed by Shilpa Jhurani of Arya Dance Academy’s

Long Island locations. “Ultimately, the event concluded after a nail biting tough competition, crowning Miss India New York 2018: Renuka Joseph, 1st Runner Up: Ashwini Gowda, 2nd Runner up: Runsi Pastro. In the Teen category, Miss Teen India New York 2018 is Aarti Khanna. 1st Runner up: Arianna Lekhraj, 2nd Runner Up: Priya Aguilar Bhanot. In the Mrs Category, Mrs. India New York 2018 Daisy Rajpal. 1st Runner Up: Alina Dar and 2nd Runner up: Gayathri Rao. “In addition to these titles, there were multiple subtitle winners in all 3 categories including Beautiful smile: Diane, Most Photogenic: Naviera, Mrs. Catwalk: Sakshi, Mrs. Beautiful Eyes: Pupul, Miss Congeniality: Khushi, Best Hair: Samyukta, Best Skin: Neetu, Miss Bollywood Diva: Pallavi, Mrs. Vivacious: Daisy, Mrs. Fashion Icon: Juhi Chawla. “Ultimately, an exciting and eventful evening indeed. Congratulations! to all the winners on all their commendable accomplishments and new titles and reigns! The winners will now proceed to compete representing the state of New York, at Miss, Teen and Mrs. India Usa hosted by Neelam Saran and Dharmatma Saran of IFC.





Diwali, the Festival of lights celebrated at Nassau County



(By our staff reporter) Long Island- Human Right Commissioner Mr Zahid Syed lead another community event this year with host committee Jay Singh of Hum Hindustani, Beena Kothari ,Indu Jaiswal , Hosted by County Executive Laura Curran in Theodore Toosevelt Executive & Legislative Chamber in Mineola recently. Organizers claim that more then 350 guests came. Event was organized very well.Yummy snacks and dinner was liked by all.9 individuals were honored on this day including honorees Pinki Jaggi,Vimal Goyal, Saroj Aery & Deepak Bansal. Elected officials in presence were Laura Curran nassau chief,Judi Bosworth North hempstead Supervisor, Council women Anna Kaplan & Senator Elipe Phillips.



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If executed well, waterways can change inland transportation

Transporting goods along the waterway is far cheaper than on road or rail. But the river Ganga's health may be put under further stress too

(News Agencies) : On Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the country's first inland waterways terminal in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. The terminal is a part of the first phase of the government's National Waterway 1 project to ferry cargo from the eastern seaport of Haldia in West Bengal to Varanasi, around 1,360 km inland.

Using waterways for transporting people and goods is nothing new for India. Until about a hundred years ago, the Ganga river was a busy waterway that was used for the movement of commodities such as tea, jute, and spices. But with the coming of the railways, this watercourse fell into disuse. At present, according to a World Bank report, India's freight movement traverses mainly on roads (65%). Railways come next (27%);

waterways account for just 0.5% of the movement. The freight movement on waterways across countries is also much higher in the West and China than in India: In the US, it's about 8.3%; in Europe, 7%; and in China, it is 8.7%.

There are several reasons why the Centre is so enthusiastic about the waterways project.

First, transporting freight via river systems is much cheaper and greener than using road and rail. According to the World Bank, which is financing the National Waterway Project, the cost to transport one tonne of freight over one km for highways is Rs 2.28. It is Rs 1.41 for railways, and Rs 1.19 for waterways. Second, it's greener. In a written reply to a question in Parliament on March 20, 2017, minister of state for shipping, Mansukh L Madaviya, said: "As per RITES Report of

2014 on 'Integrated National Waterways Transportation Grid', one litre of fuel moves 24 tonnes km by road, 95 tonnes km on rail and 215 tonnes km on Inland Water Transport."

Third, ferrying goods via waterways is faster than on congested road and rail networks, which slows the movement of cargo, adding to uncertainties, and increasing the costs of trade. Logistics costs in India, says the World Bank, are estimated to account for as much as 18% of the country's GDP. Fourth is the pollution cost of traffic bottlenecks. According to a 2014 study by the Central Road Research Institute, eight major traffic bottlenecks in Delhi guzzle at least 40,000 kilolitres of fuel (diesel, petrol, and CNG) every day. Add to this, carbon dioxide (CO₂) that is added to the polluted air daily by these



vehicles. While there are several positives of the waterways project, any infrastructure development will have environmental costs, and those must be taken into account while evaluating the benefits of the project. This is because while the main infrastructure — the waterway — is naturally available in this case, it needs to be "trained, maintained and upgraded" to ensure that the movement of cargo carriers is possible. One important aspect of this "training" a waterway is dredging, which is required to ensure that the required water

depth is maintained everywhere for the goods carriers to pass. Environment activists allege that the Environmental Impact Assessment report prepared by Inland Waterways Authority of India ignores the severe impact of the movement of ships and dredging on biodiversity in critical but legally non protected stretches of the river. These are genuine concerns. The ecosystem services that the river provides must be quantified for a wholesome evaluation of the mega project's actual economic worth.

India must take a well considered position to ensure reform in the WTO

(News Agencies) ; The efforts to bring about major reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are gathering steam and India will have to take well-considered positions on key proposals that are likely to be put on the agenda of the next WTO ministerial meeting scheduled for June 2020 in Kazakhstan. It is important to understand the nature and intent of these proposed reforms and their likely impact on India. Equally, it should be India's effort to shape and modify these proposals so that they expand rather than restrict India's trade opportunities. The country should also devise its own reform proposals on the reform agenda. A major and sustained diplomatic effort to mobilise a sizeable constituency of other developing and even some advanced countries must be launched expeditiously to resist changes damaging to our economic interests and to promote those which enhance them. What we must avoid is the sacrifice of our interests by default because of a lack of homework or persisting with a self-defeating defensive mindset. Instead of ad hoc responses, we need a coherent trade policy

aligned to our overall development strategy and an awareness that, in the long run, India must transform itself into a globally competitive economy without props. Our bargaining position in multilateral trade negotiations is weak because we remain a marginal player in the global economy. Our current share of global trade is a mere 2.1% and our target is 3.5% by 2020. Our strength lies in the size of our \$2 trillion economy which is growing at 7.5% per annum. It is currently the fastest growing large economy. With the exception of China, no other country offers the market scale which India does. Moreover, it is in some of the new and rapidly expanding sectors, such as e-commerce, digital devices and services and high-end electronics that India offers opportunities. Our negotiating brief must leverage this advantage, linking market access reciprocally, to safeguarding our key interests. While a rule-based order with decisions taken by consensus has been the hallmark of WTO, this has already given way to plurilateral arrangements among consenting members. These are

not applicable to non-participating countries like India, but, over time, may become more generally applicable. In any event, it is not a good idea to stay out of these more restricted negotiations because this denies us the opportunity to influence the outcome or, at the very least, keep abreast of what may be

brewing on some important trade issue. India should have participated in the negotiations on TISA (Trade in Services Agreement) and ITA-2 (Information Technology Agreement, phase 2) both of which concern sectors of significant importance to the country's external trade. Our non-

participation means having to conform to rules in the drafting of which we were absent. One of the reform measures being proposed is to allow plurilateral agreements under the WTO, effectively abandoning the Single Undertaking principle as an overarching one.

World Diabetes Day

World Diabetes Day is observed annually on 14 November every year by the World Health Organization and International Diabetes Federation. The prevalence of Diabetes is increasing across the globe, so the disease has become a modern epidemic. The main objective of this day is to raise awareness of causes, prevention, management and diagnosis of disease. Diabetes mellitus is a group of metabolic diseases in which a person has high blood sugar, either because the body does not able to make insulin or because cells do not respond to the insulin that is produced.



The three main types of Diabetes mellitus are:
1. Type I diabetes mellitus results from the body's failure to produce enough insulin and requires the person to inject by the health experts. A nutritious and balanced diet is referred as insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus.
2. Type II diabetes mellitus referred as insulin-independent diabetes mellitus and results from insulin resistance, a condition in which cells fail to use insulin properly.
3. Gestational diabetes is when pregnant women have high blood glucose levels, who have never had diabetes before.
Main Signs and symptoms of

diabetes: Weight loss, Excessive thirst, Lack of energy, frequent urination, Fatigue, Lack of interest and concentration, Slow healing wounds.

Prevention: Regular physical activities like swimming, cycling, brisk walking, jogging and dancing are most recommended by the health experts. A nutritious and balanced diet is also essential for reducing risk of cardiovascular diseases. Avoid smoking, irregular sleeping patterns and stress can also help. On this day we should motivate the people to follow healthy diet and to encourage each member of the family to engage in healthy lifestyle.

Varinder Singh
Senior Research Fellow
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India must prioritise its fight against diabetes

Improving surveillance systems to monitor changing trends across states for quick policy interventions and using innovations to strengthen primary health centres and training general physicians for early diagnosis will improve disease management to lower diabetes-related complications

(Agencies) : Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart diseases, stroke and diabetes have increased in every state in India over the past 25 years and now cause more disease and death than infections, maternal and newborn deaths during delivery, and malnutrition put together, according to the first comprehensive analysis of disease trends in India published in The Lancet in September. Unhealthy lifestyles, which include being overweight, bad diets and sedentary behaviour, are the leading causes of these chronic diseases that strike Indians at least two decades before they do Caucasians, in the process, increasing

their dependence on medicines and bringing down quality of life over their last three to four decades. The number of people with diabetes in India has gone up from 26 million in 1990 to 65 million in 2016, with the prevalence of diabetes in adults aged 20 years or older rising from 5*5% to 7*7% in the same period. The jump in the rate of healthy years lost to diabetes since 1990 is the highest among major NCDs in India. The age-standardised disability-adjusted life years (DALY) rate, which is a measure of overall disease burden expressed in the number of years lost to bad health, disability or early death, for diabetes increased by 39*6%

from 1990 to 2016. Both diabetes prevalence and DALYs increased in every state, with the prevalence being highest in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Delhi, followed by Punjab, Goa and Karnataka. The relative rate of increase was highest in several less developed states, where the co-existence of diabetes with malnutrition and infectious diseases such as diarrhoea, lower respiratory tract infections and tuberculosis is leading to a double burden of disease. Being overweight is the biggest risk factor. For every 100 overweight adults in India, there were 38 adults with diabetes, compared with the global average of 19 for every 100



in 2016. With the number of overweight people aged 20 and above more than doubling over the past 25 years, from 9% in 1990 to 20*4% in 2016, diabetes prevalence will shoot up dramatically in every state unless policy support to promote prevention and early management is given the priority usually reserved for communicable and

childhood diseases. Improving surveillance systems to monitor changing trends across states for quick policy interventions and using innovations to strengthen primary health centres and training general physicians for early diagnosis will improve disease management to lower diabetes-related complications, such as blindness and neuropathies. Multi-sectoral collaborations, such as policies to reduce dietary fat, sugar and salt, to controlling overlapping NCDs and risk factors such as high sugar, hypertension, being overweight and high cholesterol, will collectively lower the risks for diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and certain cancers.

Does Bollywood normalise stalking?

A defence lawyer in Australia successfully claimed that his client's aggressive pursuit of women was 'quite normal behaviour' for Bollywood fans. Sadly, it's all too easy to concur

(Agencies) : In Australia, a 32-year-old Indian security guard has escaped a jail term after his attorney argued his harassment of women with unwanted texts, messages and personal advances was a by-product of his film fanaticism. What for some might be seen as stalking was, for Bollywood aficionados it was argued, "quite normal behaviour" as the movies encourage the idea that a woman will eventually fall in love with a man if he pursues her hard enough. Quite a contention, yet it holds cultural weight.

Rachel Dwyer, a professor in Indian cinema at SOAS, University of London, points out that the "often relentless" nature of the Bollywood leading man's pursuit can be tracked through decades of examples, which she examines in her book *Bollywood's India*. In the 60s, for example, screen heroes such as Shammi Kapoor, a pretty-boy famous for his cheeky on-screen persona, "would flirt and dance in front of the heroine, who initially rejected him but was won over when she found out his real worth". Yet this

peacocking has recently morphed into something sinister – and, moreover, still in the mainstream. In Yash Chopra's *Darr: A Violent Love Story* (1993), Rahul (Shah Rukh Khan) is obsessed with Kiran (Juhi Chawla), who is engaged to Sunil, a navy officer. Rahul carves her name on his chest with a knife, decorates his room with her photos and discusses her with his dead mother. He eventually kidnaps her to force her into marriage but is killed by Sunil. It was a film made before Khan mutated into the megastar that he is today, a time when he was better known for playing villainous roles. Yet his audiences championed his character's cause. They shouted their support for him in the fight scenes, and fast-tracked the actor into the A-list. Over the past 20 years, the deranged and thwarted Bollywood stalker has evolved from nominal



villain to an outright hero. In 2013's *Raanjhanaa* (Beloved), our leading man, Kundan, stalks the object of his affections, Zoya, cutting his wrists when rejected, then breaking up her wedding. Her fiancé is beaten to death, and Kundan himself eventually dies in pursuit of Zoya, saying he will be born again to fall in love with her. Such behaviour does inevitably affect an audience's assumptions about how to conduct themselves in similar situations. "While Hindi cinema is not realistic," says Dwyer, "some may see this behaviour, which is admired by viewers, as

acceptable, and follow it in real life where practices such as 'Eve-teasing' [sexual harassment] are widespread." Kanika Gahlaut, a journalist in Delhi, sees the relentless-lover theme played out even in supposedly progressive contemporary movies such as *Happy Ending*. "I enjoyed it," says Gahlaut, but it did "try to suggest that good girls don't like sex, and that men have to push for it". *Happy Ending* portrayed the love-lives of hip, freewheeling urbanites, but still put the sexual onus entirely on the man, who must win over a deeply reluctant female. "It's as if mainstream Bollywood is

still having a hard time believing a normal, good girl can't be spontaneous in bed, like a normal good girl. It's a dangerous message to send out because it seems to suggest that when girls say no, they mean yes." But the relationship between cinema and society is symbiotic; to some extent, the arrogant Bollywood hero is, say both women, simply a reflection of Indian men at large. Says Gahlaut: "They have an unusually high sense of entitlement; a sense that they are a star in the relationship, even if it's a misplaced sense, and feel a woman is to look after their mental, emotional, physical needs."



There is no evidence that Internet shutdowns work

Internet shutdowns have many names. An online curfew, network bans, information blackouts, and our favourite for its augury, the digital kill switch. It captures the growing centrality of electronic communications in modern society. Going beyond the mere disruption to a flow of information, to a halt to life itself. Access to the Internet is not only a recognised human right but practised tangibly in Digital India by the second highest number of Internet users in the world. A growing number, which according to the telecom regulator, includes about 4 in 10 Indians. But worryingly the Internet continues to be shut down, in more states and with higher frequency. Take the case of a recent state services exam in Rajasthan for which mobile Internet services were shut down in the cities of Ajmer, Bharatpur and Jodhpur in early August. This was the third such instance in recent months. Such disruptions are clearly disproportionate and even counter productive. Extensive arguments have been made by many organisations and researchers, who have clearly established that Internet shutdowns set a domino in motion that damages fundamental rights, the digital economy and, in instances, even public safety and order. Despite these, there seems to be a hardening of positions both in the legal rules which authorise shutdowns, and their increasing execution which is becoming a standard measure in the administrative toolkit. What explains this? Two key levers leading to a policy gridlock are a lack of transparency and irrationality. Both are playing dutiful twins, supporting each other in

the state apparatus which is approaching this issue under the blanket of national security but is ultimately being used in instances to prevent cheating in entrance exams. Since the practice of state governments to shut down the Internet was first noticed in India in 2013, people started keeping count. By maintaining a number with the date, the reasons and the place of occurrence. With the when, where and why, we could be educated and form a national policy that weighed the competing interests at play. While some organisations maintained trackers built primarily off press reports (given that most RTIs were refused), there were constant demands, even questions by members of parliament, across party lines, to gain knowledge of such data. The answer has been evasion as the central government till date has refused to provide any count or centralise a reporting and disclosure system. We should not fear such data, and that such calculation may put us to shame, for even existing news reports, India enjoys the top rank as the global leader in the number of Internet shutdowns. These trends were apparent even in 2016 before the central government made legal rules to regulate Internet shutdowns. These rules were made without any public consultation or even a ministerial or high-level bureaucratic statement despite the prominence of the issue. What was further worrying was several of its clauses seemed to be broadly drafted, giving extensive grounds to shut down the Internet without safeguards or oversight mechanisms as has been recently pointed out in an analysis by Nakul Nayak,

legal fellow at the Internet Freedom Foundation. To get to know more about these rules, the Internet Freedom Foundation filed a series of representations, that culminated in RTIs and Appeals. The result was another dead end, in which the response refused information on who was consulted for the drafting of the rules, what were their comments on them, and vague references were made to national security. This secrecy prevents an objective examination of not only the rules but permeates their implementation which fails on any definition of reason. For many of these concerns, a standard response is that Internet shutdowns are used in states with problems of militancy and as precautionary measures for security. Let us be clear. There cannot be any higher value than human life. But we certainly cannot punish entire populations of a region, deprive them of Internet access to secure their safety. This by itself, even if a measure limited in time to a few hours, is a precipitous path. Restrictions on rights, when left to unaccountable systems, ultimately increase in severity as they become a normalised implement of administrative control. This is precisely what has happened over time on the issue of Internet shutdowns. Coming back to Rajasthan, there is little to no evidence on how and what cheating was curbed with cutting off access to the Internet. There is a complete absence to engage meaningfully in other policy alternatives which are less restrictive, or even the consideration of more traditional, natural options such as more invigilators in exam halls, better measure for depositing mobile phones at entry gates or in case of paper leaks, launching a criminal investigation.

The danger of fake news is real

Twitter's co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Jack Dorsey, is in India, engaging with both political actors and general audiences. In August, the CEO of Whatsapp, Chris Daniels, visited Delhi and engaged with the government. Facebook's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, has both visited India and hosted Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, at his headquarters. The close engagement of leaders of some of the most revolutionary tools of communication with India is not a surprise. For these platforms, India is a huge market, and one that is only growing. The audiences they fetch here and the various ways in which they can monetise conversations on their platforms is now an indispensable part of their global business plans. For India, too, engaging with these platforms is essential. Take Twitter. It has changed the way political discourse is conducted in the country. Thanks to it, political leaders have found a way to communicate their views, without intermediaries. Social media supporters engage in deeply contested battles to push their narrative on all



these platforms. And the mainstream media sometimes ends up playing catch up. But if Twitter operates at a relatively elite level, Whatsapp and Facebook have percolated down to the remotest corners of the country. The spread of cheap smartphones and, more importantly, affordable data has enabled this democratisation of information and communication. Political parties — some more than others — have recognised how this can shape beliefs, values and electoral choices and PM Modi is understood to have told his party that 2019 will be an election fought on Whatsapp. This is all uncharted territory, however, and the perils of these tools have already become visible. Twitter has been home to hate speech; it is witness to the most vicious trolling and targeting of public figures. On Whatsapp, fake news is a real concern — and the circulation of rumours has led to a spate of killings and lynchings this year. Facebook was used — and misused — in the US elections of 2016 to spread fake news; there is a danger of this happening in India as well. Along with the democratisation, there has been a degeneration of the quality of public discourse. And the platforms have been able to do little to counter hate speech and fake news. All communication technology has had unpredictable consequences in human history. While it is inevitable that Indians — and Indian politicians — will continue to tap these technologies, all stakeholders must exercise far more caution and institute more correctives than they have so far.



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Deadly California wildfire grows as city of Paradise smolders

(Agencies): Convoys of fire engines rumbled through the smoldering northern California town of Paradise on Tuesday on their way to combat still-active sections of the state's deadliest and most destructive wildfire in history, which grew by 8,000 acres. Teams of workers wielding chainsaws cleared downed power lines and other obstacles from the streets, while forensics teams mobilized to resume their search for human remains in the charred wreckage of

the Butte County town of 27,000, which was almost completely consumed by fire last Thursday, just hours after the blaze erupted. The "Camp Fire" continued to rage in Butte County, about 175 miles (280 km) north of San Francisco, and expanded to 125,000 acres (50,500 hectares), more than four times the area of the city, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) said. The death toll stood at 42 people, the most on record

from a California wildfire. More than 7,600 homes and other structures burned down, also an all-time high. Some 228 people are still unaccounted for and listed as missing. Officials asked relatives and friends to keep checking with evacuation shelters and call centers in the hope many of them could be located. The fire was 30 percent contained, suggesting a "big chunk" was under control, but full containment was not expected until the end of November and the progress would depend largely on the wind and the weather, Cal Fire spokeswoman Erica Bain said. "Thirty percent is kind of where we're getting close to rounding the corner. When we're the 30s and 40s, they're getting a good handle on it. By the end of this week I'd like to see that number up to 40, maybe 45," Bain said. A Cal Fire spokesman said firefighters were more optimistic than in previous days, although he warned



some populated areas were still at risk because of steep terrain and unpredictable gusts.

"Things look much better than yesterday, due to weather conditions," Scott McLean told a briefing.

One hundred fifty search-and-recovery personnel were due to arrive in the area on Tuesday, bolstering 13 coroner-led recovery teams in the fire zone, said Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea. The sheriff has requested three portable morgue teams from the U.S. military, a "disaster mortuary" crew, cadaver dog units to locate human remains and three groups of forensic

anthropologists.

Some 52,000 people remained under evacuation orders and 8,700 firefighters from 17 states have been battling the wildfires.

In Southern California, two people died in the separate "Woolsey Fire," which has destroyed 435 structures and displaced about 200,000 people in the mountains and foothills near Southern California's Malibu coast, west of Los Angeles.

The Woolsey Fire was 35 percent contained, up from 30 percent a day earlier, Cal Fire said, as authorities reopened a number of communities that had been under evacuation orders

Authorities were probing the cause of the fires. A spokeswoman for the California Public Utilities Commission said on Tuesday the regulator has launched investigations that may include an inspection of the fire sites once Cal Fire allows access.

PG&E Corp, which operates in northern California, and Edison International, the owner of Southern California Edison Co, have reported to regulators that they experienced problems with transmission lines or substations in areas where fires were reported around the time they started.

CNN sues President Trump and White House for banning reporter Jim Acosta



(Agencies): CNN is suing President Donald Trump and multiple White House aides for revoking the press pass of the news network's White House correspondent, Jim Acosta.

The lawsuit comes less than a week after press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders announced it would suspend Acosta's White House credential, often called a "hard pass," in the wake of the reporter's fiery exchange with Trump at a news conference Wednesday. Sanders, White House chief of staff John Kelly, deputy communications chief Bill Shine and Secret Service Director Randolph Alles are also included in the suit. The

Secret Service officer who yanked Acosta's pass is included as well, though he is not identified by name.

In a statement, Sanders said the lawsuit was "just more grandstanding from CNN," and vowed that the White House will "vigorously defend" itself. CNN alleges in its legal action, which has been filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., that Acosta's First and Fifth Amendment rights were being violated with the ban. Lawyer Ted Olson, who served as Solicitor General under President George W. Bush and who reportedly declined Trump's request to join his personal legal team

in March, is one of CNN's attorneys in the suit, a court filing shows.

Acosta, who has frequently clashed with Trump administration officials, had challenged the president about his characterization of a "caravan" of Central American migrants traveling to the U.S.-Mexico border.

A female staffer then attempted to pull the microphone out of Acosta's hand, which he initially refused to surrender. "You are a rude, terrible person," Trump responded as Acosta continued to speak into a microphone being passed around to the gaggle of reporters present for the news conference in the White House. Later Wednesday, Acosta tweeted that he had been denied entrance to the White House grounds.

Sanders, in a series of tweets the same day, said the Trump administration will "never tolerate a reporter placing

his hands on a young woman just trying to do her job as a White House intern." Critics and media colleagues quickly pushed back on the statement, arguing that Sanders had mischaracterized the altercation. The press secretary received even more criticism after she tweeted a video of the exchange, which The Washington Post and other outlets said was doctored. That video was first shared by a right-wing commentator associated with conspiracy theory website Infowars, the Post reported. Later that week, Trump appeared to discard the notion that Acosta had inappropriately placed his hands on the intern — the reason stated by Trump's administration for revoking the pass in the first place.

Acosta "was not nice to that young woman," Trump said in remarks to reporters Friday, but "I don't hold him for that because it wasn't overly, you know, horrible."

CNN is asking the court for a preliminary injunction that would reinstate Acosta's press credentials as soon as possible. "While the suit is specific to CNN and Acosta, this could have happened to anyone," CNN said in a statement Tuesday morning. "If left unchallenged, the actions of the White House would create a dangerous chilling effect for any journalist who covers our elected officials." Minutes after the lawsuit was reported Tuesday morning, White House Correspondents' Association President Olivier Knox offered a statement of support for the media outlet. "Revoking access to the White House complex amounted to a disproportionate reaction to the events of last Wednesday. We continue to urge the Administration to reverse course and fully reinstate CNN's correspondent," Knox said. He added: "The President of the United States should

not be in the business of arbitrarily picking the men and women who cover him." The president has regularly slammed numerous mainstream media outlets "fake news" for their coverage of him and his administration, including The New York Times, NBC News, The Washington Post and others.

Trump has repeatedly singled out CNN in his attacks. And days after CNN's New York offices were targeted with mail bombs allegedly by Trump fanatic Cesar Sayoc, the president said "the Fake News Media" was "the true Enemy of the People."

Acosta has also been the target of criticism for his style in front of the news cameras. Writer Todd Purdum argued in The Atlantic in August that Acosta's "performance journalism" provides the Trump administration with "another convenient villain" in the press.

UK says reaches draft Brexit deal with EU



(Insider Bureau): UK Prime Minister Theresa May's office said that the British and EU negotiators have reached a framework Brexit agreement. The agreement will be examined by the UK cabinet at an emergency meeting on Wednesday. "Cabinet will meet at 2:00 pm

(1400 GMT) tomorrow (Wednesday) to consider the draft agreement the negotiating teams have reached in Brussels, and to decide on next steps," Downing Street said in a statement.

The agreement needs the political approval of both the British and European sides. The BBC reported a source as saying that the document has been agreed at a technical level by officials from both sides after intensive discussions this week. Ireland's public

broadcaster RTE cited two government sources as saying that a text crucially resolves the Irish border issue—a key sticking point. May's cabinet is divided on Brexit, with some senior ministers opposed to provisions that could keep the UK closely tied to the European Union for years to come.

But cabinet approval could pave the way for a historic EU-UK summit in Brussels at the end of November that would finalise the agreement's text.

A final deal would then face other hurdles, the most notable one coming in the British parliament, where May's government's holds a razor-thin majority.

May would need strong support from her own Conservative Party, where dozens of eurosceptics have opposed the reported frameworks of the deal.

Her coalition partners from Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) have also threatened to vote against the agreement if they find it splinters the province from the rest of Britain.

The news saw the British pound shoot up in value to 1.304 dollars from 1.285 on Tuesday at 2200 GMT.

Citing two sources, Ireland's RTE said the framework deal provides for a temporary solution aimed at keeping the Irish border open if London and Brussels fail to strike a new trade deal by the end of 2020. This so-called "backstop"—an issue the two sides have been unable to

resolve for months—would see the whole of the United Kingdom remain in a customs arrangement with the European Union.

It also provides for additional "deeper" provisions for Northern Ireland on customs and regulations, RTE said.

The report said the deal also provides for a review mechanism that Britain could use to try and leave the backstop arrangement, another key demand of eurosceptics in May's party. Britain will formally split away from the other 27 EU nations on March 29, even if no final agreement clears all the

hurdles both in the Britain and the EU. The threat of a calamitous no-deal Brexit, in which no clear trade rules are set by March between the bloc and one of its largest economies, have weighed heavily on the negotiations. May's government hopes that lawmakers in both chambers will rally around the deal once its text is set in stone, boosting investor confidence.

Scientists vote on new way to measure a kilogram

(Agencies): For more than 100 years Paris has been home to Le Grand K, a block of metal that defines the precise weight of a kilogram. Everything from kitchen scales to gym weights around the world have been manufactured to the standard set by the cylinder of platinum iridium, which has been kept in a high-security vault in the French capital since 1889.

Different countries have their own "prototype kilograms" that serve as national standards and are calibrated to the Paris artifact. But now, scientists want to update how the weight is defined. The reason for a proposed change to the International System of Measurement (SI) units, which the international community will vote upon on Friday, is that over time the

prototype has lost atoms and therefore mass because it is "susceptible to damage and environmental factors," according to the National Physical Laboratory (NPL), which houses Kilo 18, Britain's copy of Le Grand K—or the International Prototype Kilogram, (IPK) as it is officially known. Le Grand K is compared to the various copies only once every 40 years, which makes

the calibration potentially inaccurate. Though the change in mass is roughly equivalent to the weight of an eyelash, there could be wide repercussions. "This is fine when it comes to measuring a bag of sugar, but is becoming unacceptable for more sophisticated science, such as when measuring doses in pharmaceuticals," a statement from the NPL said.

Days after visit, Trump blasts France's Macron as relations sour

Sessions, who had recused himself from the Russia probe, asked to resign after Republicans lost control of Congress

(Insider Bureau) : U.S. President Donald Trump attacked his French counterpart on Tuesday in a series of tweets that underscored how much the once-friendly ties between the two leaders have soured, just two days after returning from Paris.

In five posts sent on the same day that French officials marked the anniversary of the 2015 terrorist attacks that killed 130 people in Paris, Trump blasted the key U.S. ally over its near defeat to Germany in two world wars, its wine industry and Macron's approval ratings. Trump returned to Washington from a weekend in Paris to commemorate the 100th anniversary of World War One where strained relations between the American president and European allies were on full display. On Tuesday, Trump

rejected Macron's warnings against the threat of nationalism, delivered during an emotional ceremony in Paris on Sunday attended by scores of world leaders.

A stony-faced Trump, who listened a few feet away, has described himself as a nationalist and has promoted an "America First" policy.

Trump, a real estate developer and former reality television star who owns a Virginia winery, said Macron has a "low approval rating," accused France of unfair trade practices over wine and attacked the news coverage of his trip.

Trump pointed to Macron's recent comments about Europe's need to protect itself, tweeting "it was Germany in World Wars One & Two - How did that work out for France? They were starting to learn German in Paris before the



U.S. came along. Pay for NATO or not!"

"By the way, there is no country more Nationalist than France, very proud people - and rightfully so!" Trump wrote in other tweets, ending with "MAKE FRANCE GREAT AGAIN!"

He defended his much-criticized absence from a commemoration event on Saturday, saying the U.S. Secret Service had vetoed driving to the venue because of logistics. The White House earlier had said it canceled Trump's appearance, citing poor weather that grounded a

planned helicopter flight to the site.

White House Director of Strategic Communications Mercedes Schlapp, meanwhile, cast Trump's Paris trip in a positive light. "It was clearly a successful trip," Schlapp told Fox News on Tuesday, saying Trump and Macron "had a productive meeting" on trade and NATO.

"He has sent a strong message to our European allies. And we have seen some changes and some positive shifts coming from our allies to pay more to NATO. We

need their support," she said.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said on Monday that Trump had isolated himself at one of the weekend events by deciding not to attend the Paris Peace Forum, which Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Russian President Vladimir Putin attended.

Trump also traveled in a motorcade to the Armistice commemoration while most other world leaders walked the last 100 meters (328 ft) or so to the ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe.

Asked on television if the United States was still a French ally, Le Drian answered yes.

Before his arrival, Trump had blasted comments that Macron made in a radio interview in which he appeared to cast the United States as a threat. Both French officials and

the White House said any misunderstandings had been cleared up after Macron and Trump held talks on Saturday.

In Washington, U.S. Defense Secretary Mattis on Tuesday backed NATO. Asked whether he supported an EU military, Mattis told reporters: "We see NATO as the cornerstone for the protection of Europe in the security realm and we fully support nations doing more to carry the load." On Sunday, Macron delivered his hard-hitting remarks.

"Patriotism is the exact opposite of nationalism. Nationalism is a betrayal of patriotism," he said. "When we say 'our interests come first, those of others don't matter,' we erase the very thing that a nation holds most precious, that which gives it life and makes it great: its moral values."

Congress rejects Dassault CEO's defence, says Rafale corruption can't be hidden

Dassault Aviation CEO Eric Trappier also said that the company itself chose Anil Ambani as offset partner for the deal and clarified that it had 30 more such partners other than Reliance.

(News Agencies) Alleging a "fixed match" between the Modi government and Rafale maker Dassault Aviation, the Congress on Tuesday said the "blatant corruption" in the fighter jet deal cannot be hidden and demanded a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into it.

"The nation does not need doctored explanations but fair investigation. A fixed match

between the BJP government and Dassault and public relation stunts of (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi and (Dassault Aviation CEO) Eric Trappier can't hide the blatant corruption," said Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala. His comments come in the wake of Trappier's remarks in an interview to an Indian media outlet, rubbishing Congress President Rahul Gandhi's charges of "lying"

and asserting that the intergovernmental deal to buy 36 Rafales was "clean". Trappier also said that the company itself chose Anil Ambani as offset partner for the deal and clarified that it had 30 more such partners other than Reliance.

Dubbing Trappier's interview as "dictated" and "manufactured lies", the Congress said the "Rafale scam" cannot be suppressed. "Mutual

beneficiaries and co-accused's statements hold no value. Beneficiaries and accused can't be judge in their own case," said Surjewala, daring the Modi government to submit itself for a JPC probe. Leading the attack on the issue, Gandhi has accused Modi of corruption and Trappier of lying. Alleging "huge corruption", Gandhi had claimed that the deal was "done by Modi to give Anil Ambani Rs 30,000 crore". The Congress has



earlier too rejected company will say whatever Dassault's justifications of the Modi government the deal, saying the wanted it to say.

Lessons for Delhi: How Beijing shifted tide in its battle against pollution

Chinese govt introduced a four-month ban on construction, reduced emissions from cargo corridors, resulting in a 54% drop in PM2.5 levels.

(News Agencies): As a long, bitter winter and sub-zero temperatures clamp down on Beijing and northern China, the battle against pollution — spurred by an action plan launched in 2013 — is set to get intense again.

For this winter, the government's plan is to reduce the average intensity of PM2.5, a major air pollutant, by around 3% in Beijing and surrounding areas, according to an official plan released by China's ministry of ecology and environment.

After years of battling crippling air pollution, the 2013 plan started yielding results "with average PM2.5 levels in the cities... falling by 30% from 2013 to 2016", according to Greenpeace, a Netherlands-based non-governmental environmental organisation. In the five years since, Beijing's PM2.5 had fallen by about 54% — figures that a heavily polluted city like Delhi desperately needs to replicate.

The government's policies are broadly focussed on controlling pollution from vehicular emission, construction dust and coal-burning for winter heating.

Two targets: Vehicles and Construction

A research project led by the Beijing Municipal

Environmental Monitoring Centre had revealed earlier this year that emission from vehicles and construction dust accounted for most of Beijing's pollution.

"Currently, mobile sources, including automobiles, boats and planes are the largest contributor for locally generated PM2.5 particulate matter that poses health dangers," state media had quoted the survey as saying. "The research also found dust kicked up from roads and construction sites... to be on the rise. The proportion of its PM2.5 contribution increased from 14.3% in 2013 to 16% last year," it added.

The second such survey on air pollution in Beijing revealed that in 2017, around 45% of PM2.5 came from vehicles. Diesel trucks were the worst offenders, it said.

The government is specifically targeting diesel vehicles. Since last year, the government has restricted the movement of diesel trucks within the city, said an official report released last week.

"Judging from the effect of policy implementation, as of the third quarter of this year, the emission structure of the trucks entering Beijing was significantly optimised," said the report.

"Pollutant emissions from major cargo corridors in and

out of Beijing have been reduced by 34%, playing an important role in regional air quality management," it added.

Last year, the government also banned construction of road and water projects as well as demolition of houses between November and 15 to March 15 within Beijing's six major districts to curb construction dust.

An official statement published in state media added that the government would step up dust control supervision at construction sites and restrict use of machinery with high emissions.

The period of ban — other than for major livelihood projects — spans the four months when central heating is on for Beijing's houses and other buildings.

From October 1, emission restrictions have also been put in place on heavily-polluting sectors including thermal power, steel, petrochemical and cement.

In addition, the 2013 plan requires reasonable targets to be set in local programmes regarding converting winter heating sources from coal to cleaner natural gas and electricity, in order to ensure environment-friendly heating for residents.

The results In a report last January — when pollution is usually high across northern China including Beijing — Greenpeace said PM2.5 had fallen by about 54% in the capital city since 2013.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has, in fact, recognised China's efforts to tackle pollution. "WHO's data captures impressive progress in China, where investment in clean energy, a national air pollution action plan and strict emission standards have driven dramatic progress, with average PM2.5 levels in the cities... falling by 30% from 2013 to 2016," Greenpeace said in a report this May.

One catalyst behind the drastic reduction was the policy to switch millions of homes and offices from coal-powered heating to heating by cleaner energy. "The consumption of coarse coal in rural areas of Beijing fell by about 3 million metric tons in 2017, as authorities helped switch homes to clean energy alternatives," state-controlled China Daily newspaper reported this year.

There-in is a tricky path for the government as it realised last year. "The large scale push to eliminate small-scale coal burning in provinces surrounding Beijing failed to



install homes with gas heaters or pipes in time, leaving them without heating in sub-zero temperatures," Greenpeace had said last year.

Even state-controlled media admitted the problem. "Amid efforts to switch homes from coal to cleaner alternatives, families across northern China were left without heat during last winter due to a shortage of natural gas," the China Daily report added.

Lessons for Delhi A comparison of satellite-retrieved pollution levels in China and India, both for their respective national capital regions and for the whole country, shows how China turned a leaf on dealing with air pollution.

The data by Greenpeace shows how China reversed the turn of air pollution around 2014, soon after the National Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Action Plan was

issued in September 2013.

The reduction in pollution levels since then is around 30%, representing more than a 100,000 premature deaths avoided each year, according to Greenpeace. "Our earlier analysis shows that by far the most impactful measures over this period are the strengthened emissions standards and enforcement for coal-fired power plants and industry, combined with levelling off of coal consumption growth. Other measures targeting coal use in industry and households directly have been very important in the Beijing region," says Lauri Myllyvirta, senior global campaigner, Greenpeace, Beijing.

"By far the most important thing was setting comprehensive and ambitious targets, and holding provinces and cities accountable for meeting them," Myllyvirta added.



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Inflation lowest in year, but it may not be good news

The Indian economy was staring at an inflationary spike due to rising oil prices and falling rupee as recently as a month ago. These fears are not as pertinent anymore. Brent crude has fallen by almost 15% in the last one month.

(Insider Bureau) : Retail inflation data released on Monday holds bad news for farmers, the government, and industry, with a disaggregated reading of the numbers showing that food inflation has turned negative and core inflation remains obstinate (and has actually increased). The first means that farmers haven't benefited from the government's move to raise minimum support prices; agrarian distress, largely caused by poor market linkages and falling prices of food, has become a significant political issue. The second means that the Reserve Bank of India will likely retain its hawkish stance, despite demands from industry, and also some quarters of govern-

ment, that interest rates be reduced to aid the cause of growth.

The Indian economy was staring at an inflationary spike due to rising oil prices and falling rupee as recently as a month ago. These fears are not as pertinent anymore. Brent crude has fallen by almost 15% in the last one month. The rupee has reversed its falling trend vis-à-vis the dollar during this period. The Latest Consumer Price Index (CPI; India's benchmark inflation measure) data has brought further relief on this count. Annual growth in CPI went down by 39 basis points between September 2018 and October 2018. One basis point is one hundredth of a percentage point. Inflation

growth in October 2018 was 3.31%, the lowest since November 2017. The details show that prices of food products actually fell, even as those of non-food and non-fuel product categories rose. The former is bound to worsen rural distress, while the latter lowers the probability of a rate cut. Food and beverages is the only sub-component of CPI which registered negative inflation in October 2018. The decline in overall CPI is a reflection of the fact that this category has a weight of 45% in the commodity basket used to calculate CPI. Prices of vegetables, pulses and sugar continue to fall. Even that of cereals, which were expected to strengthen after the gov-

ernment announced a significant hike in Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for Kharif crops, have seen a decline in inflation in October 2018. Annual growth in inflation for cereals in the period between April 2018 and October 2018 was 2.77%. This is the lowest since 2016-17.

Meanwhile, core inflation continues to remain high and has actually gone up by 29 basis points to 5.84% in October 2018. Core inflation is a better indicator of non-cyclical inflationary pressures in the economy and hence is given importance in decisions such as setting interest rates. Rising core inflation might dent hopes of a reduction in policy rates by RBI in its next monetary



policy review in the first a political premium for pro-week of December. Business gain from lower interest rates.

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP), or factory output growth, the short term indicator for industrial activity fell for the fourth consecutive month, and grew by 4.47% in September 2018. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a scheme earlier this month, which would enable small and medium enterprises to get a loan in just 59 minutes. This suggests

accessible loans in the economy.

"Declining food inflation in October, when harvesting actually starts, shows that the increase in MSPs has not helped much," said Pranab Sen, former chairman of the National Statistical Commission. This also shows that the farmers protests can't just be wished away, Sen added. That's worrying news for the government politically.

Govt to miss highway target but overtake 2017-18 mark

This year, Nitin Gadkari set a target of constructing 16,420km of highways; last year, the ministry built 9,829 km of highways. Last year's target of construction was around 15,000km of highways at a rate of 41km/day while they could achieve only 27km/day.

(By Our Staff Reporter) :The ministry of road transport and highways is likely to miss the target of constructing 45km a day of highways this financial year, set for it by roads minister Nitin Gadkari, although going by the current pace of work, it may still overtake last year's achievement.

This year, Gadkari set a target of constructing 16,420km of highways; last year, the ministry built 9,829 km of highways. Last year's target of construction was around 15,000km of highways at a rate of 41km/day while they could achieve only 27km/day.

The current pace of construction from the period of April to October is around 23km a day, according to road ministry officials who asked not to be named. The government had also set a target of awarding works for 20,000km of national highways during the current financial year, which was about 25% more than the 17,055 kilometers awarded during 2017-18. The total length of constructions awarded last year was 2,352km, marginally higher than this year's 1,999km.

"From April to October, we have been able to construct

4,830km of national highways. This is marginally better than the length constructed last year which was 4,085km with a rate of construction of about 19.5km per day," the official added.

Going by last year's record, construction activity should pick up in the second half of the financial year (June to September are the months when much of India gets rain).

"Highway construction during monsoon season is quite slow. From April to November, there were four months out of six months where some part of the country had rains and hence the projects get affected. The results of six months cannot be extrapolated to the year. No doubt the targets are challenging but hopefully everyone in the ministry, financing spectrum, contractor and developers would take up the challenge and we would see much better results than last year," said Kushal Singh, Partner, Deloitte India. Still, the ministry has managed to construct more highways with every passing year. It



did 4,410km in 2014-15, the first year of this government, 6,061km in 2015-16, and 8,200km in 2016-17.

"Our ministry is making all out efforts for improving and strengthening the highways network in the country... There will also be focus on completing the detailed project reports of all the "in Principle" declared national highways," Gadkari had said in April.

Gadkari also said that while the focus would be more on construction, the total length awarded would be more than last year. This also comes in the backdrop of the central government's aim of doubling India's national highways network to 200,000 lakh km by 2019. "India needs massive infrastructure development up to Rs 50 lakh crore... At this speed, I am confident we will

complete construction of 90,000km of national highways," Union minister for finance Arun Jaitley said during the budget speech in February for the current financial year. The Union budget for 2018-19 pegged the budgetary allocation for the highway ministry at Rs 71,000 crore, up from Rs 61,000 crore allocated during 2017-18. Despite the enhanced budget, a road ministry official said that it has written to the finance ministry seeking more budgetary support. "Sanctioning of funds is slow this year. As per our estimate, we may run out of funds by January, 2019. Keeping this in mind, we have written to the finance ministry seeking extra budgetary support," another official at the ministry added, asking not to be identified.





Searches intensify with more than 600 reported missing in California's Camp Fire

As the death toll from Northern California's Camp Fire rose to 63 and those reported missing spiked to more than 600, rescue workers searching for human remains hope that hundreds of people who remain unaccounted for are still alive.

"A lot of people are displaced, and a lot of people don't know we're looking for them," Butte County Sheriff and Coroner Kory Honea said late Thursday. The dramatic rise in those unaccounted for came after authorities combed through a week of 911 calls and incident reports. Combined with relatives who have reported loved ones missing, investigators are looking into reports of 631 people possibly missing. "You have to understand, this is a dynamic list," Honea said. "Some days might be less people, some days might be more people, but my hope at the end of the day, we have accounted for everybody."

A week after two major wildfires sparked at both ends of California, the death toll has increased

to 66 statewide, fire officials said. The Camp Fire -- the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in state history -- has left 63 people dead, destroyed about 9,700 homes and scorched 142,000 acres. By early Friday, it was 45% contained.

Hundreds of deputies, National Guard troops and coroners are sifting through leveled homes and mangled cars for remains.

"They are going to be searching vehicles that have been burned. They'll be searching residences that have been burned. Checking around the residences ... our mission is to find the victims from this fire, recover them and get them identified and notify the families to give them some answers," Butte County Sheriff's Investigations Sgt. Steve Collins said. President Donald Trump is expected to visit the region Saturday as firefighters struggle to contain the blazes. The number of names on the Camp Fire's missing list soared Thursday, but authorities said they are struggling to confirm whether all are still



unaccounted for. Honea said investigators combined all the information they have received from callers since the fire erupted more than a week ago. Some names on the list appear more than once, and it's unclear if any are duplicates, Honea said. Officials have said it's hard to determine the number of missing. Some people who may have evacuated can't be reached because cell phone service is unreliable. Others haven't reached out to relatives, and they may not know someone is looking for them, he said. "I want you to understand," Honea said, "that there are a lot of people displaced, and we're finding that a lot of people don't know that we're looking for them." The Butte County Sheriff's Office published the list on its website. If people find their names on the list, Honea said, or names of loved ones they know are safe, they're asked to call the sheriff's office. For two days, Paradise police Officer

Matthew Gates searched through ash and collapsed buildings for the remains of a woman. When the Camp Fire broke out, a man told Gates his mother was likely driving on a jammed roadway that hundreds used to flee the flames. But Gates couldn't find her. Then Gates finally came across her at an evacuee shelter. "She had burns up her arms and I knew it was her," the officer told CNN affiliate KRCR.

"I went and gave her a hug because I've been looking for her body."

Authorities are trying to reach those who called 911 to verify they've made contact with their loved ones, said Collins of the Butte County Sheriff's Office.

"We're asking people to call us if they do come in contact with their loved one so that we don't spend time looking for somebody that's already found."



'Falsehood' no substitute for 'failed politics': Arun Jaitley hits back at Rahul Gandhi

In a series of tweets, Jaitley said that 'falsehood' cannot be a substitute for "failed politics" of Gandhi.

(Insider Bureau) : Hitting back at Rahul Gandhi, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley Tuesday said the Congress President's failed politics is compelling him to resort to 'falsehood' and 'petty hair-splitting' to make the sensitive Rafale purchase defence deal controversial. Jaitley also said that it was the Congress-led UPA which delayed the purchase of the Rafale aircraft which was necessary to improve the combat ability of Indian Air Force.

He was responding to allegations made by Gandhi that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has admitted to "theft" in the Rafale deal before the Supreme Court and to changes in the contract without asking the Air Force. In a series of tweets, Jaitley said that 'falsehood' cannot be a substitute for "failed politics" of Gandhi. "UPA delayed the Rafale purchase, much required for improving the combat ability of Indian Air force.

Is Rahul Gandhi's failed politics compelling him to render India's sensitive defence requirements controversial?" Jaitley questioned. The Centre on Monday disclosed to the Supreme Court the pricing details for the 36 Rafale jets that were negotiated on "better terms" and said it "completely followed" the Defence Procurement Procedure laid out in 2013 and secured the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approval



before the deal that has whipped up a political storm was inked with France. Jaitley, in a tweet,

said, "Falsehood is not a substitute for Rahul Gandhi's failed politics. Realising that the Modi

government bought the Rafale at a price cheaper than what UPA was negotiating the disrupters are now reporting to petty hair-splitting". Earlier in the day, Gandhi in a tweet said "Modiji has admitted to his theft in the Supreme Court. In the affidavit, he admitted to changes in the contract without asking the Air Force and put Rs 30,000 crore in Ambani's pocket.

CBI lodges FIR against its law officer for alleged forgery

(Insider Bureau) :The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday registered a first information report (FIR) against one of its law officers for allegedly fudging her annual performance appraisal reports by forging the signatures of a superior. According to the FIR, a copy of which was seen by HT, Beena Raizada joined the probe agency at its Patna office as a senior public prosecutor in May, 2014. She became the agency's deputy legal adviser in 2015 and was transferred to Delhi in January 2017. "In the office of DoP (director of prosecution, chief law officer of the agency),

she personally submitted her three APARs (annual performance appraisal reports) together for three years between 2014 and 2017 along with assessment notes for the same period bearing signatures of Sh VK Singh, then DIG/HoB, CBI, ACB, Patna," states the FIR. In all the three assessment notes, Raizada's performance was graded as "excellent" but during a preliminary inquiry by the CBI, Singh said he hadn't signed the appraisal reports, the FIR read. The DIG also stated that Raizada was on leave for 90 days during 2014-2015 and there was "no question

of (him) writing an assessment in her favour", according to the FIR. Singh added that he went back to his parent cadre of Rajasthan in 2015 and therefore could not have written an assessment in Raizada's favour in 2016, according to the FIR. Besides, the annual appraisal report of an officer at the rank of DLA is signed by a joint director rank official and not the DIG, the FIR added. "It is prima facie established that the signatures of Sh VK Singh on the said assessment notes are forged with the intention of getting her APARs processed favourably," the FIR read.

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'I do not lie': Dassault CEO on Rahul Gandhi's Rafale charge



The government has submitted details of the price at which it bought the aircraft to the court in a sealed envelope and also shared with it details of the process involved.

(By Our Staff Reporter)
Dassault Aviation chief executive officer (CEO) Eric Trappier, in an interview to news agency ANI, rubbished allegations made by Congress president Rahul Gandhi that he lied about details of the French military planemaker's offsets joint venture with Anil Ambani's Reliance Group in the Rafale jet deal.

He also claimed the price of each jet, in flyaway condition, under the deal signed by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government is 9% lower than the price offered by the company to the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in a deal that wasn't closed.

Trappier's revelation is unlikely to resolve a highly controversial issue, one which has become central to the Congress' attacks on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Supreme Court is also hearing petitions related to the case.

The government has submitted details of the price at which it bought the aircraft to the court in a sealed envelope and also shared with it details of the process involved. Trappier's interview came a day ahead of the court's next hearing. "I don't lie. The truth I declared before and the statements I made are true. I don't have a reputation of lying. In my position as CEO, you don't lie," said Trappier when asked to respond to Gandhi's charge that Dassault was covering up possible cronyism in awarding the offset deal to Reliance Group.

The Congress party dismissed Trappier's remarks, alleging a "fixed match" between the Narendra Modi government and Dassault even as it reiterated its demand for a joint parliamentary committee (JPC)

probe into the Rafale deal.

Rahul Gandhi, in a press conference on November 2, alleged that Dassault invested Rs 284 crore in a loss-making company promoted by Anil Ambani which was used to procure land in Nagpur for the offsets joint venture. "It is clear the Dassault CEO is lying. If an inquiry starts on this, Modi is not going to survive it. Guaranteed," added Gandhi.

The NDA government's decision to enter an \$8.7 billion government-to-government deal with France to buy 36 Rafale warplanes made by Dassault was announced in April 2015, with an agreement signed a little over a year later. This replaced the previous UPA regime's decision to buy 126 Rafale aircraft, 108 of which were to be made in India by state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL).

The deal has become controversial with the Opposition, led by the Congress, claiming that the price at which India is buying Rafale aircraft now is Rs 1,670 crore for each, three times the Rs 526 crore, the initial bid by the company when the UPA was trying to buy the aircraft. It has also claimed the previous deal included a technology transfer agreement with HAL.

The NDA has not disclosed details of the price, but the UPA deal, struck in 2012, was not a viable one, former defence minister Manohar Parrikar previously said.

The deal has also become controversial on account of the fact that one of the offset deals signed by Dassault is with a joint venture it has with Reliance Group. The Congress claims the earlier deal was scrapped and a new one signed just to provide Ambani this opportunity for an offset deal. Both the government and Reliance Group have repeat-

edly denied this. In the interview in the Dassault hangar housed in Istres-Le Tube Air base, located north of the French city of Marseille, CEO Trappier said the company had prior experience dealing with Congress party administrations and the comments by Gandhi made him sad.

"We have a long experience with the Congress party. Our first deal was with India in 1953 with Nehru, and other prime ministers. We have been working with India. We are not working for any party. We are supplying strategic products like fighters to the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Indian government. That is what is most important," said Trappier.

When pressed for the reason behind Dassault's choice of Reliance Group as an offset partner, Trappier clarified that the money being invested by the French company was not going to Reliance directly but to a joint venture that included Dassault.

"We are not putting the money in Reliance. The money is going into the JV. I put my know-how free of charge on how to produce people. I have engineers and workers from Dassault who are taking the lead as far as the industrial part of this deal is concerned. At the same time, I have an Indian company like Reliance who is putting money into this JV as they want to develop their country. So the company is go-

ing to know how to produce aircraft," added Trappier.

Trappier added that Reliance Group would match the investment by Dassault, given that Dassault had a 49% stake and the Indian partner 51% in the joint venture, as per prescribed government norms. "We are supposed to put in this company together about ~800 crore as 50:50. For the time being, to start work in the hangar and to pay workers and employees, we have already put ~40 crore. But it will be increased to ~800 crore, which implies ~400 crore by Dassault in the coming five years," said Trappier. He added that Dassault has seven years to meet its offset commitments.

"During first three years, we are not obliged to say with who we are working. We have already settled work and agreement with 30 companies, which represents 40% of total offset obligation as per contract. Reliance is 10% out of the 40, while rest 30% is a direct agreement between these companies and Dassault," Trappier said.

On the pricing issue, the CEO said that the present aircraft were cheaper by 9% than those offered in the initial deal with the UPA that wasn't signed. "Price of 36 was exactly the same when you compare with 18 flyaway; 36 is the double of 18, so as far as I was concerned, it should have been double the

price. But because it was government to government, there was some negotiation, I had to decrease price by 9%. The price of Rafale in flyaway condition is less expensive in the 36 contract than the 126 contract," he said.

When asked about the initial agreement with HAL and the subsequent breakdown of talks with the Indian state owned firm for production of Rafale jets, the Dassault CEO said that if the initial deal of 126 jets went through they would not have hesitated to work with HAL and Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd. "It's because the 126 didn't go smooth that the Government of India had to reconfigure to urgently acquire 36 from France. And then I took the decision to continue with Reliance, and HAL even said in the last few days that they were not interested to be part of the offset. So, it has been done by my decision and the decision of Reliance to invest in a new private company," added Trappier.

He added that Dassault had earlier been in discussions with several other companies for offset tie-ups. "Obviously, we could have gone to Tata or other family groups. At that time, the decision to go ahead was not given to Dassault. We were in 2011, Tata was also discussing with other flying companies. We finally decided to go ahead with Reliance as they have experience in big engineering facilities," Trappier said.

Talking about the aircraft, the Dassault CEO explained that the present planes will have all necessary equipment, but not weapons and missiles. "The weapons will be sent in different contract.



Election Commission tells HC it registers full name of political parties not abbreviations

The Election Commission of India's counsel submitted before the Delhi high court that the panel registers political parties by their full names and not by abbreviations, so there would not be any confusion.

(Agencies): The Election Commission of India (ECI) Tuesday told the Delhi high court that it registers political parties by their full name and not by abbreviations.

The poll panel's submission came on a plea by the Aam Aadmi Party against the ECI's decision to reject its objection against registration of the 'Aapki Apni Party (Peoples)' as a political party.

The Aam Aadmi Party has sought de-registration of the new party on the grounds that their abbreviation would be the same -- AAP -- which could confuse voters.

The ECI's counsel submitted before the high court that the panel registers political parties by their full names and not by abbreviations, so there would not be any confusion. Justice C Hari Shankar listed the matter for further hearing on

February 22 next year after the counsel for 'Aapki Apni Party (Peoples)' sought time to file its response to the plea and the Aam Aadmi Party's advocate also prayed for time to file rejoinder to the ECI's reply.

The ECI, in its affidavit, gave a list of various parties which have similar abbreviations and said when the Aam Aadmi Party was registered in 2013, there was already another party registered with the same abbreviation. The petition, filed through advocate Anupam Srivastava, has claimed that the new party's name was sounded similar and that could confuse voters. The Aam Aadmi Party has sought quashing of the ECI's July 16 order rejecting its objection against registration of Aapki Apni Party (Peoples) as a political party under provisions of the Representation of People Act. PTI SKV HMP SKV ANB ANB



Man who killed tigress Avni defends self, wildlife experts livid

Asghar Ali Khan, who shot the 'man-eater' dead, says the tigress had to depend on humans for prey, but outraged activists insist that the human-tiger conflict is not something the authorities should delegate to a 'shikaari'

(Agencies): Asghar Ali Khan, 38, the man who shot dead tigress T1 (Avni) under controversial circumstances in Maharashtra's Yavatmal forest on November 2, says he is preparing to accompany his father, Shafath Ali Khan (hunter and nawab of an erstwhile aristocratic family from Hyderabad), shortly to retrieve Avni's cubs. "I feel on top of the world when I tranquillise or eliminate a problem animal, but in all future operations, tranquillising will be my priority," he says.

Avni was his first kill although he says he has participated in 10 tranquillising operations. It's hard to ignore that Ali Khan has in some ways been blooded like his great-grandfather Sultan Ali Khan Bahadur and father Shafath Ali. Like his father, he prefers to dress in military camouflage. And he sees a distinct role for people like him in wildlife operations, especially where they involve tranquillising or putting down a wild animal. "You have to be absolutely crazy to pursue this adventure. It involves a risk to life. Regular people cannot do it," he says. Ali Khan is a marksman who never practised in the wild until eight years ago, when he began accompanying his father on operations. "Precision shooting is an art. Even for tranquillising you have to use a weapon, a gun. It's like using a rifle. Veterinary doctors don't have shooting experience. That's where people like us are needed," he says. The soft-spoken Ashgar has a contained en-

ergy about him. He studied at Hyderabad Public School and Nizam's College in Hyderabad before doing an MBA from Leeds University in the UK. He learned shooting from his father at the age of nine in their Hyderabad haveli and in Masinagudi, where his father owns a wildlife resort called Safari Land. It's where father and son have now retired to after Yavatmal, even as a storm blows around that killing. Autopsy report of Avni suggests that the bullet hit her left side when she was facing away from the shooter, and not when she was charging at Ali Khan's team, contradicting his version of events.

Hunting ground

Masinagudi used to be a preferred hunting ground for Ali Khan's father and grandfather before the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 came into force. Their resort is an hour's drive from Ooty via Kalahatty road, which is known for a high number of wild animal sightings, including elephants, leopards and tigers. Ali Khan's wife and mother are at home but the doors of their home at the resort remained shut during his (and his father's) roughly two-and-half hour meeting with this reporter; there were no guests at the resort. Shafath Ali, the father, learnt hunting from his grandfather Sultan Ali, whom he describes as a "passionate conservationist and one of the few Indians whom the British took as consultant to handle man-animal conflicts." Shafath Ali says the

tales of 'shikaar' (hunting) and human-animal conflicts were routine around the dining table at home. "Till 1976-77, hunting was allowed. We used to get hunting licences, and it was a family ritual to go hunting. Hunting licences were also issued in Masinagudi. I used to practice here very often." He says his first encounter, when he was 19, was with a rogue elephant which killed 12 people on the outskirts of Mysore. He put the elephant down. Shafath Ali's conversation displays that he draws a thin line between hunting and conservation. "When the Wildlife Protection Act came into effect, the royalty, the gentlemen shikaaris, were all hanging up their weapons, and an around 200-year era of 'wildlife conservation' was rapidly coming to an end. National parks are a gift from the nobility; they were passionately protected private forests thanks to the vested interest in hunting," he says. He has kept in touch with both conservation and hunting through his involvement in around 40 operations, for various state governments — all done for free. Shafath Ali says he has been invited and continues to be a consultant for eight state governments. He says that Ali Khan has also been part of 10 tranquillising operations on rogue elephants, tigers, bears and leopards. 'Trigger-happy gunmen' Wildlife activists say Ali Khan's use of a tranquillising gun is in violation of various laws because the drugs and quantity of these



psychotropic substances can only be signed off on by a registered, qualified wildlife veterinarian. Ali Khan's defence is that the gun was loaded by one such. "Avni was aggressive by nature and had lost the fear of humans. Had I succeeded in saving her, it would have been a great moment. You must understand that though the area was projected to be a forest, Yavatmal is not a forest and Avni was stressed because she was not in her natural habitat. She was not getting prey so she had to depend on humans in the village for prey," says Ali Khan. Ali Khan, who has an All India Arms licence, has left the gun used to kill Avni in Hyderabad and says he is open to submit it if there is need for "further investigation". Their critics call them trigger-happy gunmen who are too cheap to pay for expensive gaming safaris overseas, and instead participate in rescue operations for the thrill and a sense of machismo. "In most states, private hunters are invited because of their strong political connections. Left to themselves, state governments would call commandos or police personnel to carry out the killing.

Are you telling me there are no commandos or police personnel in Maharashtra to do the job...?" asked Vidya Athreya, a Pune based-wildlife biologist. The cubs are priority now, says Ali Khan. "They will be tranquillised and moved to a fairly large place, and trained to hunt for a few months by chasing prey within the area. They are nine months old and as big as a leopard. They can hunt rabbits. Goats have also been tied on the trail they use," he adds. Wildlife experts say their chance of survival is bleak. "If you look at tiger sociology, cubs trail the mother until they are a little over two years old. They pick up predation techniques from the mother, who has been killed," says Rajesh Gopal, the former head of Project Tiger. "If the forest department succeeds in tracking them, they may be bred in captivity. Why should one wait for 13 people to die? The problem should have been resolved long ago. You need people's support to maintain the tiger population," says Gopal. "I am shocked that the nawab is being called to rescue cubs. This is absolute lack of professionalism.

India, China take measured steps to strengthen military ties, enhance exchanges



(Insider Bureau): India and China, who share a disputed border and a history of hostility between them, have agreed to expand bilateral exchanges involving top generals as well as young army officers in a bid to strengthen communication between their armies.

Reciprocal high-level visits and joint training exercises for the military – two of the world's largest – will also be enhanced, New Delhi and Beijing have decided.

These issues were in focus when top defence officials of the two countries met for the 9th India-China Annual Defence and Security Dialogue in Beijing this week.

The agreements were necessary to build strong military-to-military ties, which in turn is "...neces-

sary to strengthen political and strategic mutual trust," officials at the dialogue concluded.

There was, however, no official word whether India and China had reached an agreement on setting up a hotline between the Indian Army and People's Liberation Army (PLA). Details of the agreements weren't shared either.

The statement from the Indian embassy reflected the easing of defence ties.

"Both sides agreed to enhance exchanges and interactions through reciprocal high-level visits between the two ministries of defence as well as between military commands, joint training exercises, mutual visits by defence personnel including mid-level and cadet officers were also agreed upon," the statement said. "Both

India and China have decided to enhance reciprocal high-level visits and joint training exercises for the military – two of the world's largest.

sides reiterated the importance of maintaining peace and tranquillity in the India-China border areas, implementing the consensus of PM Modi and President Xi Jinping, and specific additional Confidence Building Measures at the operational level," it said. "They emphasised the need to further strengthen military-to-military ties in order to strengthen political and strategic mutual trust between the two countries," it also said.

Instituted as an annual dialogue, the latest one was reconvened after a gap of two years – the intervening period saw border troops from India and China locked in a 73-day standoff at Doklam (Donglang in Chinese) near the Sikkim border from June to August in 2017.

Since the resolution of the Doklam standoff, however, bilateral defence ties seems to have improved, spurred possibly by the realisation that neither country can afford even a skirmish amid a volatile world order and unpredictable economic conditions.

The informal Wuhan summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in

central China in April laid down a path forward on how to ease military tension.

Both leaders had agreed to expand and implement confidence-building measures between the two militaries to avoid a Doklam-type situation.

The dialogue was co-chaired by Indian defence secretary Sanjay Mitra and Lt General Shao Yuanming, deputy chief of joint staff department of China's powerful Central Military Commission.

Mitra called on state councilor and China's defence minister, General Wei Fenghe, on Thursday. Wei had visited India in August and had met Modi and defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman among other top India defence and military officials.

"They specifically talked about setting up an exchange mechanism for visits between the two defence ministries, set up a direct confidential phone line between the two defence ministries, strengthening exchanges at all levels including defence authorities, theatre commands and different services," defence minis-

try spokesperson Colonel Wu Qian had said in August about the visit.

"They also talked about setting up a hotline on border issues between adjacent military commands. They also talked about how to better play the role of defence and security consultations mechanism and the meeting mechanism between the working delegations of the defence ministries," Wu said.

In October, PLA Daily, the armed forces' mouthpiece had suggested that India and China should expand engagement between front-line units including training for border guards at each other's universities and open a defence hotline between adjacent military regions to "resolutely" ensure that Doklam-like standoffs don't recur.

The article, published under the headline "China-India Military Relations Improve Markedly" in the context of the armed forces' standoff last year near the Sikkim border, said the two countries should establish a regular border meeting mechanism for the generals of the respective theatre commands.

VHP gears up to stage show of strength in Ayodhya on November 25

(Insider Bureau): The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) is preparing to stage a show of strength in Ayodhya this month, seeking to exert pressure on the Centre to introduce a legislation that will clear the way for the construction of a Ram temple on a site disputed by Hindus and Muslims. It will be the largest congregation in Ayodhya since the 'Kar seva' on December 6, 1992, when a 16th century mosque at the site was demolished by a mob of hundreds of thousands of volunteers, and the 'shila daan' ceremony of March 2002, when carved stone pillars for a proposed Ram temple on the site were handed over to an emissary of the central government in a symbolic move. A rally, 'Dharam Sabha,' will be organised in Ayodhya on November 25 to press demands for a legislation to pave the way for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya that Hindu groups say is the birthplace of Lord Ram. The VHP is working to mobilise over 100,000 people for the rally at Bada Bhaktmal ki Bagiya. The Novem-

ber 25 rally (in Ayodhya) will be the biggest congregation of Ram Bhakts in Ayodhya after the kar seva, VHP regional spokesperson said Sharad Sharma. Officer bearers of the Parishad have already started arriving in Ayodhya and are camping in Karsevakpuram — the local headquarters of the VHP. "More than one lakh people will assemble in Ayodhya to attend 'Dharam Sabha'. We want to send a clear message to the Centre that now Hindus want an ordinance or a law in Parliament for the construction of the Ram mandir in Ayodhya," VHP's international vice president, Champat Rai said. The VHP has also planned similar public meetings in Nagpur and Bengaluru on November 25 and a rally in New Delhi on December 9. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP from Faizabad — recently renamed Ayodhya — Lallu Singh and the party MLAs are also extending a helping hand in preparations for the rally. "The Ayodhya railway station will be one of the finest in the country. It will resemble the proposed Ram temple in Ayodhya," Singh said.

It's official. UP cabinet clears renaming Faizabad district as Ayodhya

Allahabad district was renamed as Prayagraj last month and the renaming of Faizabad district as Ayodhya was announced on the eve of Diwali.

(News Agencies): The Uttar Pradesh government has today formally cleared the renaming of names of Allahabad and Faizabad divisions to Prayagraj and Ayodhya divisions.

Allahabad district was renamed as Prayagraj last month and the renaming of Faizabad district as Ayodhya was announced on the eve of Diwali.

"Yes, Allahabad is non-existent. We will seek the state cabinet's approval to rename Allahabad division as Prayagraj division," a senior UP government official had said on Monday. "We are completing the necessary formalities. The issue is likely to come up at the state cabinet meeting likely to be held on Tuesday," he said.

Meanwhile, there are reports that the state government is contemplating moves to change names of many other districts as well. Sangeet Som, the BJP MLA from Sardhana in Meerut, has also demanded that Muzaffarnagar be renamed as Laxminagar. "We have come across the de-



mands for renaming many other districts. As of now, the proposals about renaming Faizabad district and division as Ayodhya and Allahabad division as Prayagraj are being sent to the state cabinet," said another UP official.

Supreme Court will review its Sabarimala order

Entry of women not restricted as court refuses to grant stay but priests, protesters celebrate.

AM Khanwilkar, DY Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra, fixed January 22 to take up the 49 review petitions calling for a reversal of its September 28 verdict and other applications in the matter. In Kerala, the court's decision to revisit the verdict was greeted with relief. Glued to their television sets the whole day, devotees of Lord Ayyappa, the presiding deity in Sabarimala, celebrated the ruling by staging victory rallies and distributing sweets. Kerala's ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPI (M), which has vowed to enforce the court order, said the decision to review the verdict was not a setback to it, but both the Congress party and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) asked chief minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, to see the writing on the wall and drop his "adamant posture".

This order was issued after the petitions were circulated among the judges in their chambers at 3pm, in accordance with rules of the top court. No lawyers are present during these proceedings. As per the rules, the bench that delivers the original verdict considers the review petition. In the Sabarimala case, a new bench was convened and CJI Gogoi

stepped in to head it because former chief justice Dipak Misra, who was part of the bench that delivered the original ruling in September, has since retired.

The lone woman judge on the bench, justice Malhotra, dissented with the original ruling, which review petitioners have cited in support of their demand.

Several applicants had asked for an open court hearing of the petitions, which the court appears to have accepted.

"All the petitions along with all pending applications will be heard in Open Court on 22nd January, 2019, before the appropriate Bench. We make it clear that there is no stay of the judgment and order of this Court dated 28th September, 2018, passed in Writ Petition (Civil) No.373 of 2006 (Indian Young Lawyers Association & Ors. vs. The State of Kerala & Ors.," read the order.

On September 28, the apex court ruled by a 4-1 majority that no woman can be stopped from entering Sabarimala temple, ending a traditional ban on the entry of women between 10 and 50 years of age in to the shrine. Women of reproductive age were restricted from entering the over 800-year-old shrine in

south Kerala's Pathanamthitta district because its presiding deity, Lord Ayyappa, is considered to be a celibate.

Several groups have opposed the verdict and staged violent protests against it. No woman of reproductive age has entered the shrine since the court order was delivered.

A specific direction saying there shall be no stay on the operation of its earlier verdict means the temple governing board, in compliance with the ruling, will have to allow women in the age group to enter the temple when it reopens on November 17.

Forty-nine review petitions have been filed before apex court against the verdict. Three fresh petitions also came up for hearing before a bench led by CJI Gogoi on Tuesday morning. The court made it clear that the new cases would be heard once a decision is given during the day on the review petitions. The three will now be heard with the original review petitions.

The Supreme Court, in its original verdict, held the ban on women's entry into the Sabarimala temple to be "unconstitutional" and a form of "untouchability". Those who support the ban argued that the temple board constituted a separate religious



denomination and, hence, entitled to protection under the Constitution that allows citizens to practise one's religion and manage institutions under it, a contention rejected by the court.

Kerala chief minister, Vijayan, said the fact that the Supreme Court did not stay its earlier verdict meant that government was duty-bound to enforce it and it will seek legal opinion. Legal experts also said that since no stay has been clamped on the operation of the earlier verdict, it was up to the government to decide whether to allow women entry into the shrine pending a final order.

Hailing the decision, the Tantri (supreme priest) of the temple, Rajeevaru Kandarau, said, "It is a welcome move. Lord Ayyappa helped us. We are really grateful to all devotees who stood to protect the temple customs."

Last month, when two

women came in the vicinity of the entrance to the temple, the tantrist threatened to close the shrine. He is one of the petitioners who has filed review pleas. "We need peace at the temple. Hope SC decision will help maintain it," he said.

Both the Congress and the BJP said they will continue their protests and oppose any move to flout temple customs. "Now it is the duty of the government to maintain peace at the temple," said opposition leader, Ramesh Chennithala, of the Congress. BJP state president, PS Sreedharan Pillai, who took out a 'rath yatra,' said it was a clear setback to the state government. "It is an unusual step from the apex court. Hope the government will realise its seriousness," Pillai said.

Activist Rahul Eshwar said peaceful protests would continue and the temple would be guarded. "We will guard the temple till January 22. Hope at least now the government will respect devotees' sentiments," he said.

Indian tourists among world's highest spenders abroad: Data

Indian tourists are among the world's highest spenders per visit made abroad, with visitor spend expected to increase from USD 23 billion in 2018 to USD 45 billion by 2022

(Insider Bureau): The number of Indian visitors travelling to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations over the coming five years will create an extra 10.8 million room nights, as Indians are among the world's highest spenders per visit made abroad, according to new data.

The latest research published by Colliers International, ahead of Arabian Travel Market 2019 (ATM), predicts around nine million Indians will travel to the GCC states by 2022 – 37 per cent of India's total outbound market – with business, place of work and leisure underpinning this demand.

Indian outbound tourists will account for 22.5 million worldwide tourists in 2018, with reports from the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) estimating this figure will increase by 122 per cent to reach over 50 million by 2022. The ATM is scheduled to take place here from April

28-May 1, 2019.

Adding to this, Indian tourists are among the world's highest spenders per visit made abroad, with visitor spend expected to increase from USD 23 billion in 2018 to USD 45 billion by 2022. Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director, Arabian Travel Market, said, "Despite recent weak rupee exchange rates, which have seen the rupee lose around 14 per cent of its value against the US dollar over the last 12 months, the Indian outbound market has continued to grow at an average annual growth rate of 10-12 per cent over the last seven years". She said "The GCC has benefited from this trend with Indian travellers' willingness and ability to spend on outbound travel supported by the country's pace-setting seven per cent GDP growth and a new generation of leisure attractions in the GCC as well as increased business opportunities and

relaxed visa regulations for Indian nationals. We are witnessing this growth first hand with Indian visitors to ATM increasing 27 per cent year-on-year between 2017 and 2018". In 2017, the UAE welcomed 2.3 million Indian tourists, accounting for 13 per cent of its total annual visitors, with this figure expected to increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of seven per cent by 2022. India retained top spot on Dubai's list of source markets for inbound tourism, with over a million Indian tourists arriving in the emirate during the first half of 2018, registering a three per cent rise over the same period in 2017. Relaxed visa restrictions and the introduction of a free two-day transit visa have contributed to this growth. "The influx of Indian visitors to the GCC shows no sign of abating, with every reason to believe India will maintain its position as

a top source market, moving forward. Supporting this demand, in the UAE alone, there are currently 1,065 weekly flights to India corresponding to 130,000 seats per week. Meanwhile, ongoing bilateral talks are continuing to take place to increase airline frequency between India and all GCC countries," Curtis said. The Colliers research suggests India will rank as the world's youngest country demographically, with 65 per cent of the total population categorized as Gen X or Gen Y by 2025. "A rapidly growing younger population combined with a burgeoning middle class – currently representing 350 million of India's total population – who have an increasing amount of disposable income, provide strong indications that the country will continue to see a steep rise in the number of nationals travelling abroad over the coming years," Curtis added.

Bahraini royal sued for failing to pay £27m to meet Bollywood stars

(Insider Bureau): A super-wealthy member of the Bahraini royal family has been accused of renegeing on a promise to pay \$35m (£27m) to meet 26 Bollywood stars for whom he had an “unbridled desire and fantasy”.

A London court heard that Sheikh Hamad Isa Ali al-Khalifa, a cousin of the billionaire king of Bahrain and nephew of the country’s deputy prime minister, had agreed to pay an Egyptian middle man \$1.5m for setting up each meeting plus a bonus payment of \$500,000 for each third meeting.

The middle man, Ahmed Adel Abdallah Ahmed, is suing the sheikh claiming that he pulled out of the deal after handing over just \$3m. Ahmed is suing for breach of contract and \$20.9m in damages. Sheikh Khalifa denies promising to pay millions to meet the Bollywood stars, including Miss World 1994 Aishwarya Rai and Slumdog

Millionaire star Anil Kapoor. He admits he was “very enthusiastic at the prospect” of meeting the actors but said he expected to be charged “\$30,000 to \$50,000 for private meetings”.

(Contd on page 19) “I am deeply disappointed that someone whom I had come to think of as a good friend is bringing this claim,” the Sheikh said in a prepared statement. “I was trusting when Ahmed offered to introduce me to my Bollywood idols. I have since been pursued by Ahmed for enormous sums of money, despite having been very generous to him in the past. I do not accept that there was ever any contractual arrangement between us, let alone one that was exclusive and could never be terminated. I believe this claim has no merit, and I shall defend it.”

The sheikh is expected to be called on Thursday to give evidence to the high court and explain his overwhelming desire

to meet the Bollywood stars. In court papers, he is alleged to have agreed to pay the huge sums for the meetings, even though they might be as brief as 15 minutes. At a cost of \$1.5m a meeting the short rendezvous could have set him back as much as \$100,000-a-minute.

Ahmed claims that he set out extensive details of the arrangement with the sheikh in a series of phone calls and in person at his villa in Bahrain. “I told the defendant that I had learned from my telephone calls that meetings with Bollywood stars would be a minimum of 15 minutes and a maximum of 25 minutes unless the stars wanted to stay any longer,” Ahmed said in papers filed at the court on Tuesday.

The Sheikh met four Bollywood stars including Shah Rukh Khan, who is also known as SRK and referred to in the media as the “King of Bollywood”. He also went on to meet the actors Aditya Roy Kapoor, Salman Khan, and Ranveer Singh.

Ahmed’s lawyers claimed that the sheikh arrived for the meeting with Shah Rukh Khan at a five star hotel in Mumbai on 16 January 2016 with \$400,000 in cash. Two days later the sheikh is claimed to have given Ahmed the balance of his fee in a “dark grey Samsonite suitcase” filled with £600,000 and \$250,000 in cash. A photo of the suitcase filled with case was submitted to the court as evidence.

After the meeting, the sheikh is alleged to have texted Ahmed to say: “Dear brother thank u so much for kind visit and for making me happy love u always brother al the best in our new contract see u on Thursday. H”

Ahmed replied saying: “U r wellcome always dear bro. As i promised always will do my best efforts to make u happy inshalla. And promise u again will do my best to guarantee our new deal more happy and more perfect of meetting Mr.super star Salman Khan as you wish dream to become true as well same first deal of Mr. Sharokhan. Promise.”

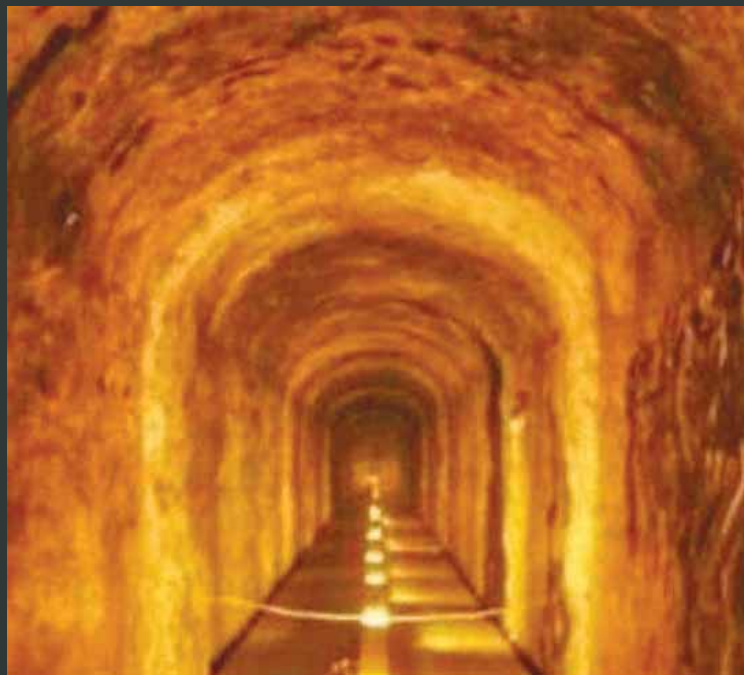
Ahmed’s lawyers said there is “extensive photographic evidence” of the Sheikh

“relaxed with the star of his choice, giving out very expensive presents (which he had carefully selected himself at Harrods, etc) and everyone who was present appearing to have a very enjoyable time”.

The agreement is said to have turned sour when the sheikh realised how much money the meetings were due to cost. Ahmed said the cost of the meeting was high because he had to hire half of the fifteenth floor of the St Regis Hotel in Mumbai. “I also booked the presidential suite for the defendant,” he said. “In total, I believe I booked 10 or 11 rooms at the hotel.”

The Sheikh’s lawyers said: “This is a case that should never have been brought. It is an unjustified attempt by the claimants to exploit the vulnerability and extreme generosity of the defendant by seeking to characterise a relationship of trust and friendship as a cold, commercial relationship between two businessmen. It is an opportunistic claim which has a conspicuous lack of documentary evidence to support it, and which lacks merit at every level.”

Why India is renting out its caves to foreign firms



Caves of oil: They are called strategic petroleum reserves (SPRs). India has three underground storage facilities (built at the cost of Rs 4,100 crore) that can store 5.33 million tonnes of crude oil. The one in Visakhapatnam is already filled with 1.33 MMT of oil, deals to fill another 1.50 MMT capacity in Mangalore have been

signed, and the third (with 2.5 MMT capacity) in Padur, Karnataka, is built but awaiting oil for storage. India also plans to build an additional 6.5 MMT facilities at Chandikhol in Odisha and Padur.

Caves on rent: India on Monday signed an initial pact to lease out a part of its storage at Padur to

ADNOC, the second such deal with the UAE firm this year. It had signed a pact in February to fill half of the storage at Mangalore.

Why? The agreement allows ADNOC to sell or trade crude oil stored in these facilities to local refiners but it gives Indian government the first right to the oil in case of an emergency. Allowing foreign companies to store oil will help Centre save Rs 10,000 crore. The storage facilities are for India’s energy security, and to insulate us from external price and supply shocks. The oil in the three facilities already built can help meet 10 days of crude requirement, and the two planned ones can hold supply of about 12 more days.

What crisis? There was one during the Gulf War in 1990, when our oil reserves were adequate only for three days. Plus, others like US, Japan, China, UK and EU have it too.

I’ve never used a computer,’: Japan cybersecurity and Olympics minister

(Insider Bureau): Japan’s recently appointed cybersecurity and Olympics minister has told parliament he has never used a computer in his life, though he is responsible for overseeing cybersecurity preparations for the 2020 Tokyo Summer Games.

Yoshitaka Sakurada, 68, was named to the two posts last month by prime minister Shinzo Abe, having never held a cabinet position before during his 22 years in parliament. The minister made the admission at a parliamentary committee meeting on Wednesday when asked by an opposition lawmaker if he was computer literate.

“I’ve been independent since I was 25 and have always directed my staff and secretaries to do that kind of thing,” Sakurada replied. “I’ve never used a computer!” Sakurada had said that he recognised that “firmly carrying out cybersecurity from a citizen’s standpoint” was part of his job. When asked by the lawmaker

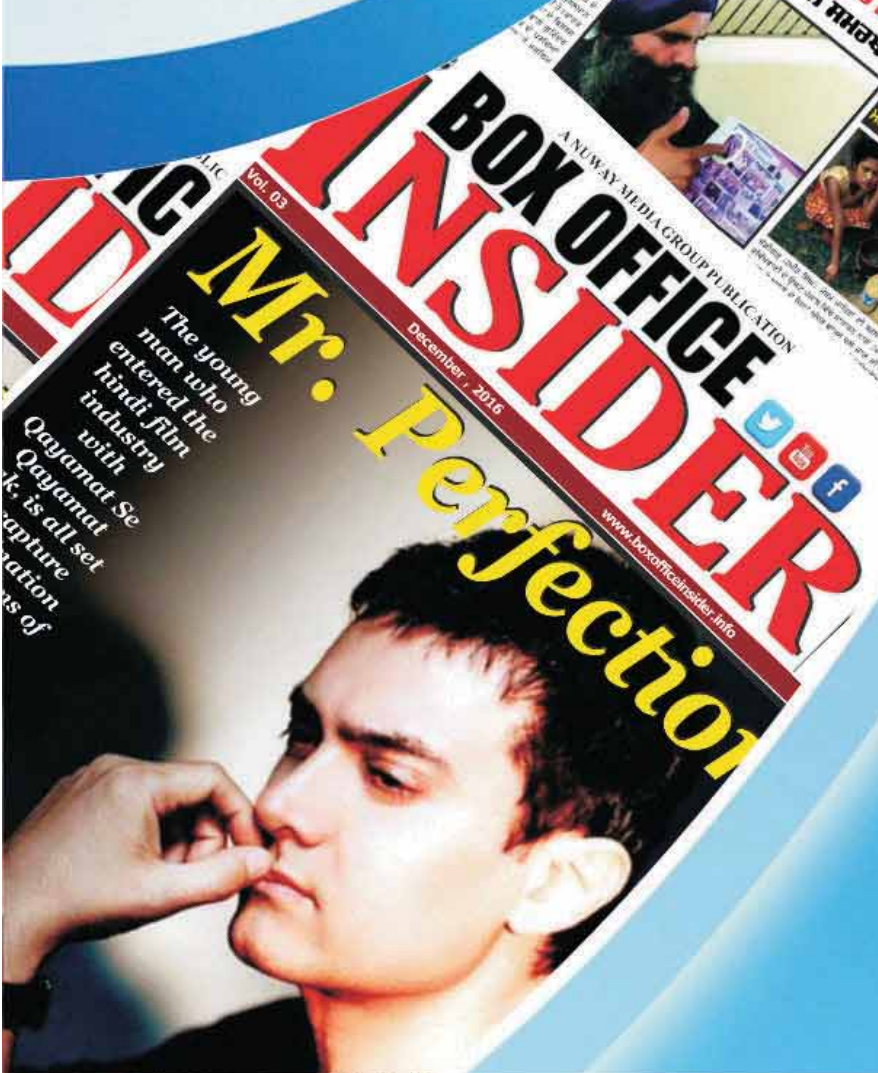


how someone lacking computer skills could be in charge of cybersecurity, Sakurada said policy was decided broadly by a number of people in his office and the national government, and he was confident there would be no problems. Sakurada’s responses in parliament and news conferences have drawn criticism before. Addressing another parliamentary committee, the minister had slipped up by saying the Olympics would cost Japan 1,500 yen (\$13.21) instead of 150 billion yen (\$1.32 billion). He has also blamed his mistakes on the opposition not submitting questions in advance, although they had, and during news conferences for the Olympics he has often simply answered: “I don’t know”.





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Sri Lanka Top Court Overturns Sacking Of Parliament By President Sirisena

The decision was the latest dramatic twist in the crisis that has gripped Sri Lanka since Sirisena sacked prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on October 26.

(Agencies): Sri Lanka's Supreme Court on Tuesday overruled President Maithripala Sirisena's dissolution of parliament in a major boost to sacked prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's fight to reclaim the post from an arch-rival. The heavily guarded court also halted preparations for a snap election in the latest twist in a power struggle that began when Sirisena dismissed Wickremesinghe on October 26 and replaced him with former strongman president Mahinda Rajapakse.

The 225-member parliament could meet as early as Wednesday to decide which of the duelling pair it backs.

Amid mounting international concern, Wickremesinghe has refused to accept his sacking and has remained in his official residence while Rajapakse has sought to build a parallel

administration.

Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP) is the largest single party in the assembly. He told reporters that he expected the legislature to meet Wednesday, as was scheduled before Sirisena dissolved the body to prevent a majority test.

"I will go to parliament tomorrow and we will show we are the legitimate government of Sri Lanka," Wickremesinghe said at the Temple Trees residence that has become the opposition headquarters.

Wickremesinghe called the court ruling a "a victory for the people and a victory for decent politics in this country."

Parliamentary officials said Speaker Karu Jayasuriya called a meeting of political party leaders on Wednesday morning ahead of a formal meeting of

legislators who could vote between Wickremesinghe and Rajapakse. There was no immediate comment from Sirisena or Rajapakse after the Supreme Court's unanimous decision. The UNP led petitions against the dissolution of parliament and the three-judge bench, headed by the Chief Justice Nalin Perera, gave the landmark decision to a packed court guarded by hundreds of heavily armed police and commandos. The court said it would give a final verdict on the petition on December 7, after three more days of hearings.

The judges ordered the independent Elections Commission to halt preparations for the January 5 vote, which Sirisena had announced on Friday.

Tight security

Security at the courtroom had



been beefed up ahead of the hearing as authorities feared clashes between rival supporters. However, there was no trouble and supporters of Sirisena melted away when it was known that parliament had been restored. The United States, European Union and other nations have raised concerns over the crisis in the strategically important island nation of 21 million people. Only China has recognised the appointment of Rajapakse, who during his decade as president until 2015

relied heavily on Beijing for diplomatic and financial support. As president from 2005 until 2015, Rajapakse ended Sri Lanka's four-decade civil war in 2009 by crushing the Tamil Tigers. But 40,000 ethnic Tamils were allegedly massacred in the process. During his time in office from 2001 until 2004, Wickremesinghe is credited with pulling Sri Lanka out of its first ever recession, in part with reforms that have endeared him to the West.

Almost 300 asylum seekers prevented from sailing to Australia in past year

Exclusive: Documents show international authorities 'disrupted' 10 alleged attempts from international ports

(By Our Staff Reporter): International authorities, with the assistance of Australia, have "disrupted" at least 10 alleged attempts to transport almost 300 asylum seekers to Australia by boat in the past 14 months, documents obtained under freedom of information reveal.

The documents, from the federal home affairs department, record the number of "foreign law enforcement agency" (FLEA) disruptions since 2013.

FLEA disruptions were set up as one of three components of the Abbott government's border policy – alongside boat turnbacks and offshore detention and processing. Since the establishment of the new policy there have been 78 disruption operations involving 2,525 "potential illegal immigrants" – the terms used in the documents referencing suspected passengers. In the year to August there were 10 disruptions involving 297 people, the majority occurring in Indonesia but also in Sri Lanka and Malaysia. FLEA disruptions are operated by a multi-agency taskforce led by Australian federal police and reporting to the

head of Australia's border enforcement operation, air vice marshal Stephen Osborne, and seek to prevent vessels carrying asylum seekers from leaving international ports including Indonesia. The taskforce has stationed more than a dozen extra liaison officers in various countries, on top of almost 100 already there, targeting known transport hubs, Guardian Australia understands. The operations involved weeks or months of intelligence gathering on individual plans for people-smuggling ventures, before local authorities intercepted groups – usually just prior to the point of departure. The freedom of information documents note 614 arrests since September 2013, as well as 14 arrest warrants.

Most arrests – 489 – occurred in Sri Lanka, followed by 48 in Malaysia and 66 in Indonesia. Thirteen of the 14 arrest warrants were issued in Indonesia. However the document notes the statistics are "indicative only" as they were provided by AFP posts from advice given by foreign law enforcement. "Post experience is that results are typically under-

reported because arrests in regional locations are occasionally not reported." Asher Hirsch, senior policy advisor with the Refugee Council of Australia, said the fact Australia was still working with Indonesian authorities to stop asylum seekers getting on boats "highlights the desperation of people there". "Refugees in Indonesia have no basic rights and are living in indefinite limbo and uncertainty. Instead of interceptions and disruptions of potential boat journeys, the Australian government should work with the Indonesian government to ensure refugees have the right to work, education and healthcare, and can remain in Indonesia safely until they find another solution," Hirsch said. "A better way to spend this money would be to invest in helping refugees in Indonesia through local initiatives and increasing our resettlement program to share responsibility for refugee protection." Indonesia is not a signatory to the UN refugee convention and has no status determination system of its own, and so asylum claims are



assessed by the UNHCR. As of December last year Indonesia was hosting around 13,800 refugees from 49 countries. About half originated from Afghanistan. At least 800 more have arrived in 2018. The International Organisation for Migration has provided basic healthcare and shelter for around two-thirds of the refugee and asylum seeker population in Indonesia since 2000, under a regional cooperation arrangement between the organisation, Indonesia and Australia. However in March the Australian government announced it was cutting funding to the IOM, saying it did not want Indonesia to be a "pull factor" for asylum seekers. In 2017 only 763 people were resettled in a third country from Indonesia, more than half in

Australia, according to the Refugee Council of Australia. The US settled 228, but has since cut its resettlement program from more than 96,000 to 30,000. The IOM also administered the Australia-funded Assisted Voluntary Returns program, offering asylum seekers \$2,000 plus airfares to return to their country of origin. The Australian government refuses to resettle any refugee who arrives in Australia by boat. Under the other two arms of Operation Sovereign Borders, Australian customs and authorities intercept and return vessels to their point of origin, "when it is safe to do so", and have in the past commissioned replica Asian fishing vessels to put passengers on when their own vessel is unsafe. Australia was previously using orange lifeboats to do this.

Sri Lanka's political crisis: everything you need to know

A dysfunctional ruling coalition has fallen apart, the president has sacked the prime minister and parliament has been suspended

(Agencies): The nation's president and prime minister come from traditionally opposing parties that formed a surprise coalition in 2015 to oust the then-president Mahinda Rajapaksa, who many feared was becoming too powerful.

In the past two years, this ruling coalition has started to fall apart. It is dysfunctional and unpopular with the Sri Lankan public. Since at least February this year, president Maithripala Sirisena has been searching for ways to remove the prime minister, Ranil Wickremasinghe.

On Friday, he found one: suddenly declaring he was firing Wickremasinghe and replacing him with Rajapaksa – the same man he had joined forces with Wickremasinghe in 2015 to

defeat Rajapaksa, a controversial Buddhist nationalist, is probably the most popular politician in Sri Lanka, and some are speculating in Colombo that Sirisena saw an alliance with the former president as his best chance of remaining in power. Was it legal to have fired Wickremasinghe?

That is for the Sri Lankan supreme court to decide – and a case is yet to be brought – but a close look at the constitution suggests it may not be. In 2015, Sri Lanka amended its constitution to prevent the president from sacking any prime minister unless they had died, resigned or lost the confidence of parliament. Sirisena has pointed to another constitutional article that allows

the president to appoint as prime minister any MP who, "in the president's opinion", is most likely to command the confidence of parliament.

Constitutional lawyers say Sirisena may have taken this too literally; that his "opinion" should be based on whoever commands the most numbers in parliament. Wickremasinghe's party has a plurality of MPs, and on Friday he called for an emergency vote to prove he still had the confidence of parliament. But he was prevented from doing so on Saturday, when Sirisena suddenly suspended parliament until 16 November. This was widely seen as an indication the Sirisena-Rajapaksa forces do not believe they would win a parliamentary vote, and need to time to persuade MPs. So who



is prime minister supporters. But Sirisena has now? Wickremasinghe has started stripping Wickremasinghe of staff and privileges. Wickremasinghe has lost his official cars, his office and residence in Colombo, called Temple Trees. The compound has been surrounded by his 1,000 officers to ten.

India's 'Asian model' will prevail over China, says global security expert

Halifax International Security Forum president Peter Van Praagh said development is a bit slower in democracy because one has to build consensus, but ultimately he believes India is going to end up being the model in Asia, not China.

(By Our Staff Reporter): The head of North America's leading event on geo-strategic matters believes the Asian model exemplified by democracies such as India will ultimately prevail over the system represented by China.

In an interview before the Halifax International Security Forum, formally hosted by Canada's national defence minister, currently Indo-Canadian Harjit Sajjan, its president Peter Van Praagh said there were complaints in places such as India over the lack of "efficiency" when compared to what has been achieved by China.

But he described this as a "superficial benefit". Van Praagh

said: "It goes a little more slowly in a democracy because you have to build consensus, but fundamentally, I think, India is going to end up being the model in Asia, not China."

Given China's current role in global affairs, it's hardly surprising the Forum in Halifax city in Nova Scotia province has several sessions dedicated to Beijing and its ambitions. But it does not separately look at South Asia in the context of the equation between subcontinental rivals India and Pakistan.

Van Praagh explained, "I don't think there's an India-Pakistan paradigm. It's a false paradigm. It's very clear now that Pakistan

is a puppet state of the Communist Party of China."

He added that "there's no equivalence between India and Pakistan", and "really, the conversation is not between India and Pakistan, the conversation is India-China relations".

"Democracies like India, Japan, Korea can offer a better model than what China is offering up," he said.

Some of the sessions reflect this focus as they include agenda items such as Asia Values: A Free and Open Indo-Pacific, Beijing's Cravings, Kremlin's Gremlins: Freedom's Foes, Indo-Pacific Security:



Battle of the Billions, and The Quad Squad: Asia's Democracy Defenders.

Former minister of state for external affairs MJ Akbar was originally scheduled to represent India at the Forum, but his visit was cancelled after he faced multiple allegations of sexual harassment and resigned from his post.

His replacement will be minister of state VK Singh, and Indian

envoy Vikas Swarup will also attend.

Admiral Philip S Davidson, commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, will be at the Forum for the first time.

The three-day global event, celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, begins on Friday. It will feature nearly 300 participants spanning government, military, think tanks, business and the media from 70 countries.

What Ashraf Ghani said on 'undeclared war' between Afghanistan and Pakistan

(Agencies): Asserting that Islamabad's support to violence has not benefitted either Pakistan or Afghanistan, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has said that the "undeclared war" between the two neighbours must end.

Ghani said the spectre of violence needs to be removed and that Pakistan needs to support direct discussions between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

"The undeclared war between

Afghanistan and Pakistan must end," he told a Washington audience through video conference from Kabul.

"We have not supported any movement against Pakistan from Afghanistan. The Afghan soil is not being used. We've exercised immense restraint and control because we seek a cooperative relationship," Ghani said in response to a question at the School of Advanced international

Studies of the John Hopkins

University on Monday.

Of the view that there is a need to define "what is a normal relationship" between Afghanistan and Pakistan, he said Kabul can offer a lot in the way of cooperation. "We are the key to Central Asia. How will Pakistan get to Central Asia without a stable Afghanistan?" he asked.

Ghani said Afghanistan and Pakistan need to together agree with the US and the rest of the

world community on counter terrorism. These three sets of relationship, he said are the key.

"From the day that President Donald Trump announced the South Asia strategy, I extended the hand of friendship. We have engaged in several rounds of discussion," he said, adding that Afghanistan and the US have arrived at a document on what is their expectation, what needs to be done to translate commitments into reality and to

help reduce the level of violence in moving forward to lasting peace.

Ghani said that he has not seen "urgency" from the new Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan regarding holding concrete dialogue with Afghanistan to fight terrorism or to assist in holding fruitful talks with the Taliban.

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dialogue with Afghanistan to fight terrorism or to assist in holding fruitful talks with the Taliban.

"We have not yet seen the sense of urgency. We hope that sense of urgency can be brought to the picture. We have a framework which is a Afghanistan-Pakistan agreement. The key is to move from talking to taking action," Ghani said. "Our national interest is to keep engaging with

Pakistan. We seek a stable Pakistan. We need to see substantive and measurable change. As of now that substantive and measurable change with the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan has not been seen. This is what needs to take place," said the Afghan president. Ghani said that the Taliban is not in a winning position. "Let them disclose their casualties.

India attempts to alter the regional strategic landscape: Pak General

(By Our Staff Reporter) : Pakistan army's Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Mahmood Hayat Friday alleged that India was attempting to alter the regional strategic landscape through an unprecedented military build-up. Hayat was speaking at a book launch event hosted by Center for International Strategic Studies Islamabad (CISS).

The CISS said in a statement that General Hayat reviewed the

regional security situation and listed the threats faced by Pakistan especially in the context of latest developments, including the first deterrence patrol by Indian nuclear submarine INS Arihant, Indo-Russian nuclear deal for S-400 air defense missile systems and India's shifting doctrinal posture. "An aggressive hybrid war had also been imposed on Pakistan," he alleged.

"Pakistan was determined to

maintain credible minimum deterrence against full spectrum of evolving threats while exercising restraint and responsibility in order to preserve regional peace and stability," he said.

Besides, India's destabilising actions, the world powers providing high-tech military hardware and technologies were also aggravating regional and global security, he claimed.

Hayat also claimed that

exceptional access to modern technology granted to India was undermining strategic stability.

"We are fully alive to these challenges. We will do what it minimally takes to restore the strategic balance in the region," he said. He reminded about Pakistani proposal for a 'Strategic Restraint Regime'.

About the challenge of hybrid war, Hayat said that it would be dealt with through "a whole of the nation approach". He additionally

called for a fair, equitable and non-discriminatory treatment for Pakistan's application for membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Executive Director CISS Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi said South Asia was a crisis-prone region due to unresolved disputes between India and Pakistan. These issues have resulted in trust deficit and lack of communication between the two countries, he said.

'Matter of concern': Pakistan on India's nuclear submarine INS Arihant

The 6,000-tonne Arihant is armed with 12 B-05 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) capable of delivering nuclear warheads up to 750km away



INS Arihant successfully completed its first deterrence patrol this week, taking India into a club of a handful of countries which have the capability to design, construct and operate such a submarine or SSBN. The spokesperson said the "bellicose" language employed by the top Indian leadership highlights the threats to strategic stability in South Asia and raises questions about responsible nuclear stewardship in India. He said the increased frequency of missile tests by India, aggressive posturing and deployment of nuclear weapons calls for an assessment of the non-proliferation benefits resulting from India's membership of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). The

spokesperson said Pakistan is committed to the objective of strategic stability in South Asia and believes that the only way forward for both countries is to agree on measures for nuclear and missile restraint. "At the same time no one should be in doubt about Pakistan's resolve and capabilities to meet the challenges posed by the latest developments both in the nuclear and conventional realms in South Asia," he said. Replying to a question about the follow up of Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent visit to China, Faisal said a high-level Pakistan delegation will have talks with their counterparts in Beijing to sort out technical matters and finalise the modalities for further enhancing the existing bilateral and strategic cooperation between the two countries in diverse fields.

On the proposed Afghanistan peace talks in Moscow, he said a Pakistan delegation led by an additional secretary will attend the dialogue. The spokesperson said Taliban leader Mullah Baradar was released to give an impetus to the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. He said Pakistan has always been emphasising the need for seeking a negotiated settlement on the Afghan issue with the participation of all stakeholders. He said it is a matter of concern that a recent American report points out that the Afghan administration and the foreign forces are losing control over the security situation in the war-torn country. Responding to questions on Christian woman Aasia Bibi who was recently released from jail, Faisal said she is still in Pakistan at a safe location.

(Agencies): Pakistan on Thursday expressed concern over the recent deployment of India's nuclear submarine INS Arihant, saying there should be no doubt about Islamabad's resolve and capabilities to meet the challenges in the nuclear and conventional realms in South Asia. "This development

marks the first actual deployment of ready-to-fire nuclear warheads in South Asia which is a matter of concern not only for the Indian Ocean littoral states but also for the international community at large," Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson Mohammad Faisal said. Nuclear-powered submarine

India's Roads Need The Resolve That Got Sardar Patel Statue Done

(Insider Bureau): What does strongman showmanship look like? In India, it's 25,000 tons of steel, 3,550 tons of bronze and 210,000 cubic meters of cement and concrete - towering over the world at a cost of about \$400 million.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently unveiled the Statue of Unity in his home state of Gujarat. The likeness is of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a leader of the independence movement known as the "Ironman of India," who died in 1950. At 182 meters (597 feet), it's the tallest such structure in the world - double the height of the Statue of Liberty and more than 40 percent higher than China's Spring Temple Buddha.

At first blush, this ostentatious display of nationalism comes at the expense of other

priorities. The cost was equivalent to around 90 percent of the central government's annual budget for the skill development and entrepreneurship ministry; double that of the ministry of shipping; almost as much as the biotech department's planned spending; and around 90 percent of the development expenditure budget for roads and bridges.

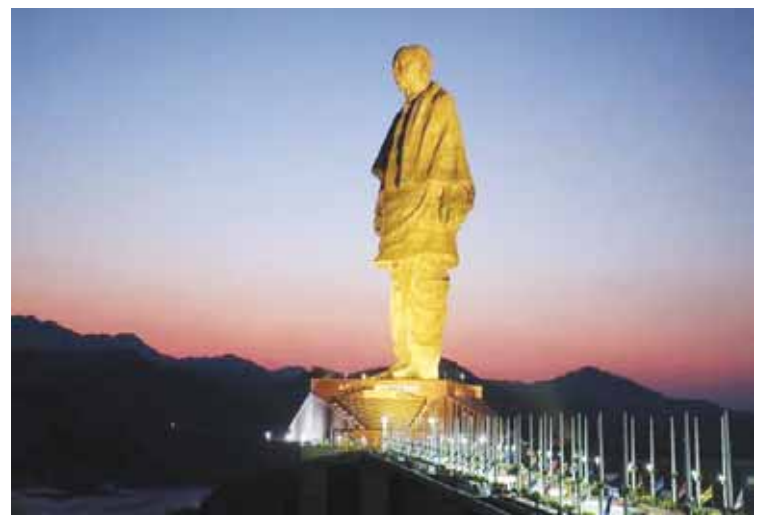
The amount could have irrigated 40,000 hectares of land, while all that cement and concrete could have been used to pave decrepit roads that cause thousands of deaths every year.

For all the things the statue didn't do, it's symbolic of the Modi government's ability to push through spending on populist causes - even those that displace villages,

sugarcane mills and farmers - while more urgent needs go unaddressed. Larsen & Toubro Ltd., India's largest construction company, took less than three years to erect the statue. By comparison, China needed 11 years to construct its Buddha.

State-backed companies have shelled out funds through their corporate social responsibility departments to support the project, with gas giant GAIL India Ltd. and Oil India Ltd. each putting in about 250 million rupees (\$3.4 million).

The efficiency of the government machinery stands in stark contrast to India's modus operandi when it comes to infrastructure. Road projects have been stalled for years because of the government's failure to help finance them. In recent months,



companies such as Larsen & Toubro and IDFC Ltd. have reined in how much they spend on financing roads. Of 104 projects awarded, more than half don't have enough money.

A public-private partnership metro project in the city of Hyderabad was "executed against huge odds," Shailesh Pathak, CEO of L&T Infrastructure Development Projects, lamented on Twitter in September, adding that the company wouldn't bid for any more PPP subway contracts.

A clogged financial system and the inability of banks to lend aggressively accounts partly for the backlog. Infrastructure

project completion by the government and private sector in the fiscal second quarter fell more than 40 percent from a year earlier.

"This monument will not just be a mute memorial like the rest, but a fully functional, purpose-serving tribute," the Statue of Unity's website says, promising it will spur all sorts of socioeconomic development. That may be optimistic, given that an entrance ticket costs as much as an unskilled worker in Delhi earns in a day. Still, at least it's finished. India's infrastructure could use a dose of the ironclad resolve that got this project done.

Gold taps, diamonds, yachts: Meet Indian-origin Canadian Kardashian sisters

(Agencies): "There is no such thing as bad publicity. I'm proof of that." This September 25 Facebook post by the Punjab-origin Canadian national Jyoti Matharoo, aka Taranjot Matharoo, 34, has a ring of truth. For Jyoti and her sister Kiranjot, aka Kiran, 32 — who were featured in the Sunday magazine of The New York Times this week — notoriety has proven to be as lucrative as fame.

Their Instagram following jumped by over 20,000 after their 2016 arrest by the Nigerian authorities. Jyoti Matharoo says they were charged with cyberstalking. "They assumed we operated a Nigerian gossip blog, which we denied." But their ordeal is over and the Matharoo sisters, also called the "Canadian Kardashians" are busy with their blog 'Matropolitan'. Recently it was full of pictures of Jyoti's vacation at a private seaside villa in Dubai with gold taps in the bath, a Rolls Royce, and Louis Vuitton luggage.

Luxury redefined

NYT says a bedroom in their Toronto home looks like a luxury boutique with over 70 pairs of designer shoes and dozens of handbags from brands like Hermès, Celine, Gucci and Saint Laurent. There are drawers full of expensive gold and diamond jewellery, and Rolex and Piaget



watches. Parked outside is their third Mercedes Benz, paid for by a wealthy paramour.

Their social media posts provide a peek into their lavish lifestyle rivalling Paris Hilton, the wealthy American heiress who is their role model. From yachting in the Bahamas, shopping in Paris and Dubai, flying on private jets and sunbathing in Saint-Tropez and Spain, the photos flaunt it all.

From Punjab to Toronto Taranjot and Kiranjot were born to Indian parents who migrated from Punjab to North York in Toronto. The sisters attended Emery Collegiate Institute where they were known for their provocative costumes often tailored by Kiran. Friends say while Jyoti was fond of literature and history, Kiran was good at chess, math and science.

Once out of high school, they enrolled in a two-year fashion arts and business program at Humber College, while working part-time. They enjoyed clubbing and their striking looks and statuesque frame -- the two sisters are 5'7" -- made them quite an eye-ful, but the two sisters mostly liked each other's company.

Kiran, an avid cook, wanted to work in the hotel industry, while Jyoti aspired to be a bartender. With their travels taking them mainly to India, where they loved both Ludhiana and Agra with equal passion, they thought they would eventually marry an Indian and settle in Toronto.

'High' on Nigeria

The Star says things changed when Kiran, then 21, met a Nigerian businessman while working at Marciano, a fashion brand owned by Guess. They began dating,

and soon he introduced Jyoti to a Nigerian executive. In 2008, the two invited the sisters to trip to Europe and Nigeria. The sisters told Toronto Star they were stunned when they were ushered into a private jet. Later, they found that Jyoti's boyfriend, who eventually bought her a condominium in Toronto and paid her a stipend of 10,000 pounds a month, was one of the richest oil magnates of Nigeria.

By the time this relationship ended in 2012, the sisters had become a rage in Lagos, where Kiran began working as a consultant for Bazaar, a fancy restaurant.

Alongside, the sisters used their writing and photography skills to ramp up their social media presence with titillating pictures of themselves and their uber-rich lifestyle. While it got

them lots of followers, they were loathed by Nigerians, especially women, who called them "prostitutes".

Their good times came to an abrupt end when they were picked up by the Nigerian police on December 14, 2016, for allegedly cyberstalking and owning a gossip website called NaijaGistLive, which they vehemently deny. What followed was an 18-day-long nightmare. The sisters claim were it not for a Nigerian lawyer, who helped them approach the Canadian embassy that issued them travel papers, they would have remained in Nigeria forever.



Fight continues for Faridkot Maharaja's Rs 20,000 crore inheritance

The 23-year-long fight for inheriting the royal riches of the Maharaja Sir Harinder Singh Brar, the erstwhile ruler of Faridkot, is considered as one of the longest battles in the legal history of this region.

(By Our Staff Reporter): Even five years after a court declared Faridkot's erstwhile Maharaja Sir Harinder Singh Brar's will — which had entrusted Maharwal Khewaji Trust to take care of the property — as forged, the fight continues for inheritance of the riches estimated to be worth Rs 20,000 crore.

On July 25, 2013, Chandigarh chief judicial magistrate (CJM) Rajnish Kumar Sharma had nullified the will, paving the way for maharaja's daughters Amrit Kaur and Deepinder Kaur to inherit his Rs 20,000-crore property by virtue of the Hindu Succession Act.

The 23-year-long fight for inheriting the royal riches of the Maharaja is considered as one of the longest battles in the legal history of this region.

Now, the matter is pending in the Punjab and Haryana High Court in which the trust through its chairperson Deepinder Kaur (she died on Sunday), had challenged the order to declare the will null and void. While her elder sister Amrit Kaur has moved high court saying that as per the law of primogeniture — applicable to princely families, the eldest surviving male in the family inherits the property — she should be inheriting the entire property. Another appeal has been filed by Amarinder Singh

Brar, grandson of Kanwar Manjitinder Singh, younger brother of the Maharaja.

All the appeals are listed for hearing of arguments on November 21.

Amarinder Singh said, "As per the law of primogeniture, my grandfather was the eldest surviving member. He was represented by my father Bharatinder Singh Brar. Thus, we are entitled to inherit the assets and the property."

"Deepinder Kaur was the chairperson of the trust and she maintained that the will is genuine. Nothing much changes as, now, her son, Jaichand, who is currently the vice-chairperson of the trust, should become the chairperson and contest the case," said advocate Vivek Bhandari, counsel for Amarinder Singh. Manjit Singh Khaira, counsel for Amrit Kaur, said, "The case will go on as it is against the trust. Whosoever becomes the chairperson of the trust will contest. In individual capacity, Deepinder's daughter and son are legal heir and can stake claim. But we will have to wait till November 21 when the case comes up for hearing."

Players in legal tangle

Sir Harinder Singh Brar, crowned at the age of three in 1918, was the last ruler of the Faridkot estate and was married to

Narinder Kaur. They had three daughters, Amrit Kaur, Deepinder Kaur and Maheep Inder Kaur and a son, Harmohinder Singh.

When his son died in a road accident in 1981, the Maharaja went into depression and the will (as being claimed) was executed 7-8 months later, entrusting the trust to take care of properties. While Maharaja's wife and mother (alive then) were in the dark, Deepinder Kaur and Mahip Inder Kaur were appointed trust's chairperson and vice-chairperson, respectively.

Maheep Inder, a spinster, died in Shimla in 2001 under mysterious circumstances. Eldest daughter, Amrit Kaur, had married against Maharaja's wishes and he disinherited her. The will came to light after the Maharaja's death in 1989. Amrit Kaur, married to a retired police officer is settled in Chandigarh and had filed a civil suit, challenging the will. Her contention was that her father could not have legally bequeathed his entire estate to the trust because it was ancestral property governed by the law applying to the Hindu joint family. She also questioned the authenticity of the will arguing, "Maharaja was not in a fit state of mind and the will was created under influence and pressure. It was exclusion of his (Maharaja's) wife Narinder Kaur and mother



Mohinder Kaur that raised suspicion."

Through the suit she said, "Appointment of all the employees, irrespective of their class and designation, as trustees strengthened the suspicion. Will is invalid, as one of the attesting witness, namely, Brijinder Singh Brar, is a beneficiary himself."

What is at stake

The property includes heritage buildings and prime land in four states (Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana), besides Chandigarh Rajmahal, Faridkot: Spread over 14 acres, it was constructed in 1885 as the royal residence. Now, a 150-bed charitable hospital stands on a portion of the palace grounds. Qila Mubarak: Built by Raja Mokulsi and reconstructed by Raja Hamir Singh in around 1775, it is spread over 10 acres. The present main building was built around 1890. Faridkot House, New Delhi: Located on a huge piece of prime land on Copernicus

Marg, it is currently leased out to Central government at a monthly rent of Rs 17.50 lakh. Valued at ?Rs 1,200 crore nine years ago. Also, there is one more property in posh Diplomatic Enclave.

Manimajra Fort, Chandigarh: Spread over four acres, it is at least 350-year-old. The city administration had planned to develop the fort as a tourist destination. Decision deferred due to the legal battle. Faridkot House, Mashobra (Shimla): A 260 bigha estate, it had five residences, three of which, including the Sherwood House, were destroyed in a fire. 18 vintage cars: A 1929 model Royal Royce, 1929 model Graham, 1940 model Bentley, Jaguar, Daimler, Packard among others and all of them in working condition. Aerodrome, Faridkot: Used by the civil administration and army, it is spread over 200 acres. Gold and jewels: Valued at ?1,000 crore, these are in Standard Chartered Bank custody in Mumbai.

Ugly RBI Row As India Policy-Making Catches "Silicon Valley Bug"

(Insider Bureau): Government and the central bank have had disagreements, but the relationship has never looked so irretrievably broken as it does now. Before the global financial crisis, the finance ministry saw the Reserve Bank of India as an incompetent regulator, one that managed the state-dominated banking industry by keeping it puny and primitive. In that view, Indian lenders didn't know how to model risks, and a conservative central bank wasn't letting them use credit derivatives to manage them. Pressure from Finance Minister P. Chidambaram to open up the banking industry to foreign competition almost led to the resignation of then RBI Governor Y. V. Reddy. The spat, which never became public, was soon overshadowed by the 2008 meltdown, when the central bank won global praise for its mistrust of high finance. That reputation was in tatters by the time of the

2013 taper tantrum, when India was hit by massive capital outflows. Appointing the former IMF Chief Economist Raghuram Rajan as governor helped stabilize asset prices and mend the central bank's reputation. But a change of government in 2014, followed by an acceptance of Rajan's old recommendation to narrow the RBI's policy remit to the single-minded pursuit of an inflation target, revived the campaign to chip away at the institution's authority in other matters. Rajan strongly opposed the idea of handing supervision of the government securities market to the stock-market regulator. He also resisted subjecting the central bank's regulatory decisions to an appellate authority. Had he failed to do so, his successor Urjit Patel's bank cleanup drive - which has included lending restrictions on 11 state-run lenders and the ouster of CEOs at a couple of

non-state banks - would have been bogged down in an appeals process. Not that Patel got a free pass. When stranded power companies challenged the central bank's February order that banks take defaulted firms to the bankruptcy tribunal, a court asked the government to consider using Section 7 of the RBI Act to start a dialogue with the monetary authority. That article, which has never been triggered, says the government may (in the public interest) give directions to the central bank after consulting with it. Emboldened by the court order, government officials began writing letters seeking Patel's views on everything from nonperforming power-sector assets to lending restrictions on state-run banks and a liquidity squeeze following the bankruptcy of a systemically important infrastructure lender. They didn't invoke Section 7, but to build pressure on the governor,

they cited it anyway.

This overreach has led to a delicate moment in the institution's 83-year history. In a speech about what happens when politicians toy with central-bank independence, RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya brought up Argentina in 2010. That annoyed the finance ministry. Just as in the Latin American example, New Delhi is bullying the central bank to transfer some of its resources to the government. One way to recapitalize banks would be to prune the RBI's balance sheet by \$60 billion, and use the capital freed up in process, the government's chief economic adviser suggested in early 2017. I wrote at the time that this wouldn't sit well with investors: There were serious questions about the RBI's independence following an ill-conceived demonetization adventure just a few months earlier.

What I didn't realize then was that the bigger consequence of demonetization was to make voodoo economics chic. Although outlawing of 86 percent of India's currency failed to yield a fiscal bonanza, media reports suggest the government still believes the central bank has \$50 billion in excess capital. Subhash Chandra Garg@SecretaryDEA Only proposal under discussion is to fix appropriate economic capital framework of RBI. Fourteen years ago, when New Delhi wanted to take \$5 billion a year for three years from the RBI's foreign-exchange reserves for infrastructure, there was a lively debate, but nobody demanded the ouster of the central bank's boss. It seems that policy-making in India, as elsewhere, has caught the Silicon Valley bug of moving fast and breaking things. There's now open speculation that Patel may resign

SC cracks whip on Amrapali, says 'big fraud' being committed on home buyers

(Agencies): The Supreme Court on Tuesday said "big scandal" is taking place in the name of real estate business, as it favoured independent forensic audit of balance-sheets of the Amrapali Group to know diversion of home buyers' money.

Saying "big, serious fraud" is being committed on home buyers, a bench of Justice Arun Mishra and Justice U.U. Lalit told the Amrapali Group to cooperate with the auditors or face sealing of its premises and a forensic audit of accounts of all companies, including directors, their wives and daughters.

It said those found guilty will have

their properties sold.

The court asked Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Maninder Singh, appearing for Bank of Baroda (BoB), to suggest names of auditors and posted the matter for hearing on September 6.

The ASG said BoB has initiated insolvency proceedings against Amrapali and its forensic audit of some companies showed diversion of Rs 27.65 billion.

The National Buildings Construction Corporation India Ltd (NBCC) gave a proposal for completion of 15 residential projects having 46,575 flats at an estimated cost of Rs 85.00 billion in 6-36 months, adding that it

could take over the projects while denying outing its own money to build these projects.

NBCC chairman Anoop Kumar Mittal, who was present in the court said that to realise the estimated cost of Rs 85.00 billion to complete the projects, there will be a shortfall of Rs 20.38 billion which can be raised from selling unsold floor space worth Rs 21.00 billion.

The court said it will try to reach the persons "responsible for the fraud" and retrieve each and every money siphoned off from various projects.

On the proposal of NBCC, the bench said: "We won't ask you (NBCC) to put any money. We



will provide you all the necessary funds to start the project. The idea is that the wheel should start moving." The court asked Amrapali Group to file its response on NBCC's proposal.

Why Apple failed in India-and how it can recover

(Agencies): Apple iPhone sales in India are expected to have fallen dramatically this year to two million, from three million phones last year. Reuters reports that at the peak shopping season, during Diwali, Apple stores were deserted. This occurred in the world's fastest-growing market, in which smartphone sales are increasing by more than 20% every quarter. Yet Apple's loss of the Indian

market was entirely predictable. In a Washington Post column of March 2017, I described Apple's repetition in India of the mistakes it made in China: relying entirely on its brand recognition to build a market for its products there. Rather than attempt to understand the needs of its customers, Apple made insulting plans to market older and inferior versions of iPhones to its Indian customers — and lost their

loyalty. The iPhone no longer stands out as it once did from its competition. Chinese and domestic smartphones boasting capabilities similar to those of the iPhone are now available for a fraction of the iPhone's cost. Samsung's high end phones have far more advanced features. And, with practically no brand recognition by the hundreds of millions of Indians who are buying their first devices, Apple does not

have any form of product lock in as it does with western consumers who have owned other Apple products and are now buying smartphones. Apple also made no real attempt to customise its phones or applications to address the needs of Indian consumers; they are the same as in the United States. Siri struggles no less on an Indian iPhone than on a US one to recognise an Indian name or city or to play Bollywood tunes. It wasn't even their technical superiority that made the earlier iPhones so appealing to the well-to-do in India; it was the status and accompanying social gratification they offered.

There is no gratification in buying a product that is clearly inferior. Indian consumers who can afford iPhones want the latest and greatest, not hand-me-downs. So Apple could hardly have botched its entry into the Indian market more perfectly.

And it's not just Apple's global distribution and marketing strategy that needs an overhaul. The company needs to rethink the way it innovates. Its pursuit of perfection is out of touch with the times. The way in which innovation happens now is that you release a basic product and let the market tell you how to make it better. Google, Facebook, Tesla, and tens of thousands of startup companies are always releasing what are called minimum viable products, functional prototypes with the most basic of features. The idea is to get something out as quickly as possible and learn

from customer feedback. That is because in the fast-moving technology world, there is no time to get a product perfect; the perfected product may become obsolete even before it is released.

Apple hasn't figured that out yet. It maintains a fortress of secrecy, and its leaders dictate product features. When it releases a new technology, it goes to extremes to ensure elegant design and perfection. Steve Jobs was a true visionary who refused to listen to customers — believing that he knew better than they did about what they needed. He ruled with an iron fist and did not tolerate dissension. And people in one Apple division never knew what others in the company were developing; that's the kind of secrecy the company maintained.

Jobs's tactics worked very well for him, and he created the most valuable company in the world. But, since those days, technological change has accelerated and cheaper alternatives have become available from all around the globe.

Apple's last major innovation, the iPhone, was released in June 2007. Since then, Apple has been tweaking that device's components, adding faster processors and more advanced sensors, and releasing it in larger and smaller form factors—as with the iPad and Apple Watch. Even Apple's most recent announcements were uninspiring: yes, yet more smaller and larger iPhones, iPads, and watches.

Companies struggling to fill jobs 'should try paying more,' Fed's Kashkari says



(Agencies): Companies should try digging in their pockets if they're looking to find workers for unfilled jobs, Minneapolis Fed President Neel Kashkari said Tuesday.

With the unemployment rate falling to its lowest level in 49 years, there are nearly 1 million more job openings than available workers, according to the Labor Department. Even though payrolls have been growing at a solid clip, complaints persist from companies that they are having a hard time finding qualified workers to fill positions because

of a skills gap.

Kashkari, though, said he doesn't completely buy the argument that there aren't enough bodies out there.

"I oftentimes hear businesses saying I just can't find the workers that I need," the central bank official said during a conference on immigration in his home district. "Now, I'm not entirely sympathetic with that view, because I've been saying you should try paying more, and you may be able to attract more workers." "But nonetheless, the unemployment rate is going

down, and there is a question about where the workforce is going to come from," he added. Immigration would be one answer to solving the issue, with low population and productivity growth, Kashkari said.

In talking to business contacts around his district, he said, "You realize that immigration does have a role to play in helping both those problems."

Wage growth has been nudging higher lately, with average hourly earnings growth at 3.1 percent in October from the same period a year ago. That has helped the Fed stay around its 2 percent inflation goal as central bank officials maintain that the unemployment rate is below the long-term normal level.

The Fed has been gradually raising short-term rates in an attempt to tamp down a future inflation threat. Kashkari did not address monetary policy at the event Tuesday.



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

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

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

Do you think that skipping breakfast can help manage your blood glucose better? Researchers say the opposite is

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

Another study highlighted that a high-energy intake breakfast of

around 700 kcals (vs a low energy breakfast of 200 kcals) decreased the overall high blood sugar (hyperglycaemia) in T2D patients over the entire day.

It has been established that better management of blood sugar has been associated with preventing complications of diabetes. Regular consumption of breakfast is potentially important for preventing T2D. A recent study tested 17 healthy adults on three separate days: Once when they skipped breakfast, when they had three regular meals and once when they skipped dinner. Skipping breakfast led to higher glucose concentrations after lunch than skipping dinner. The key to a

healthy morning meal is to choose a variety of foods to get a balance of carbohydrates, proteins, fats and other nutrients like vitamins and minerals - along with the much-needed fibre that helps manage blood-sugar levels. Here are some options to consider: Whole grains: Oatmeal, muesli with no added sugar, wheat flakes with added bran, whole-wheat daliya/chapatti/khakhra/paratha/ bread, whole grain millet (ragi, jowar, bajra) preparations. Whole grains are a good source of carbohydrates (including fibre), vitamins and minerals. Dairy: Use non-fat or low-fat milk instead of whole milk. If you don't drink milk, try non-dairy milk alternatives like soy, almond, coconut milk, etc.

Choose plain rather than sweetened versions. Fruits and vegetables: Fresh fruit is a great addition to any breakfast given that they provide fibre, vitamins and minerals. However, limit fruit juice. Vegetables (like carrot, French beans, capsicum, leafy greens like palak, methi, etc.) can be added to all the traditional breakfast foods. Lean protein: Protein foods may help control hunger, manage blood sugar and maintain lean body mass; so include protein at breakfast. Sources of protein include low fat milk/curd/yoghurt/paneer/cottage cheese, eggs, tofu, whole pulses like moong, channa, vatana, rajma, etc., and split pulses, which are all the dals.

New cell phone-based tool to detect HIV

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

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

"Early detection of HIV is critical to prevent disease progression and transmission, and it requires long-term monitoring, which can be a burden for

families that have to travel to reach a clinic or hospital," said Hadi Shafiee from Brigham and Women's Hospital in the US.

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

Traditional virus monitoring methods for HIV are expensive, requiring the use of polymerase chain reaction (PCR), according to the study published in the journal Nature Communications. Shafiee and his colleagues designed an affordable, simple

tool that makes HIV testing and monitoring possible for individuals in developing countries with less access to medical care.

Utilising nanotechnology, a microchip, a cellphone and a 3D-printed phone attachment, the researchers created a platform that can detect the RNA nucleic acids of the virus from a single drop of blood.

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

The detection precision was evaluated for specificity and sensitivity.

Researchers found that the



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

The total material cost of the microchip, phone attachment and reagents was less than USD 5 per test, researchers said.

"Health workers in developing countries could easily use these devices when they travel to perform HIV testing and monitoring. Because the test is so quick, critical decisions about

the next medical step could be made right there," said Shafiee. "This would eliminate the burden of trips to the medical clinic and provide individuals with a more efficient means for managing their HIV," Shafiee said.

"We could use this same technology as a rapid and low-cost diagnostic tool for other viruses and bacteria as well," said Mohamed Shehata Draz from Brigham and Women's Hospital.

"This platform could help a lot of people worldwide," Draz said.

Drinking and sex could be linked, here's what parents can do

Drinking and sex may have a connection, and that could be especially dangerous for underage drinkers. And research also shows a link between the two.

A 2018 survey published in the Journal of American College Health shows that consensual sex is less enjoyable when one or both of the participants have been drinking. Other research also links alcohol use to higher rates of unprotected intercourse. And teens who start drinking early are also likely to have their sexual encounter earlier, says a study

by Indiana University in Bloomington.

So, if you think your teenager may be at risk, here's what you need to know about it:

- * Talk to your teenager: As a parent, it's best to speak to them about the risks associated with underage drinking as well as unprotected sex to prevent diseases and accidents. Don't be condescending, try to understand their perspective as well. And while it may be an uncomfortable topic, you need to broach it.
- * Peer pressure plays a huge role:

You may want to keep a tab on your child's peer group and friend circle. Don't snoop around though. Try to invite them over and know them better so that you will have a clear idea about what's going on in your child's life. If you see any sign of bullying, broach the topic to your child's educational institution and have a chat with your child.

- * Give advice instead of trying to control: Forcing your teenager to behave a certain way is likely to backfire. Instead, make sure you talk to them and communicate your views as advice and not as



an ultimatum. Keep all channels of communication open.

- * Use teachable moments in daily life: TV shows or incidents that play out on news channels are good opportunities to broach

the topic with your teenager. Ask them about how things could have played out differently if the characters had acted in a different manner and made other choices.

Look your best this wedding season with contemporary fusion wear



This wedding season, give a break to heavy-set saris and embellished kurtis and try contemporary styles for a fusion wear look.

party season and steal the spotlight, Siddharth Bindra, Managing Director, BIBA, and Sanjeev Agarwal CEO, Rangriti, share some of the latest trends. Magical evening look: Smarten up your festive look with an alluring toga kurta to have a trendy yet chic festive look. It is a perfect outfit to make you stand out among friends and family and be the centre of attraction. Pair up the outfit with elegant fashion jewellery to create a magical look.

* Modern one-piece look: Adorn a long one-piece for this wedding season with ethnic shimmer work to have an ethnic look with

a modern touch. Pair it up with a pair of high heels and dangling earrings to have a perfect party look.

* Fashionista look: Redefine your style with a gorgeous sari kurta which will give you a designer drape sari look. It is a glamorous choice contemporising the sari into a kurta and making it more accessible and wearable, making you a showstopper and enjoy all the attention you deserve.

* Classic flared lehenga look: Wear a classic yet contemporary flared lehenga set or pair up an embroidered skirt with a side slit kurta to outshine this wedding season. It will give you the

flawless dance night look with a traditional feel to give you an upgraded oomph factor.

* Party look: Enhance your celebration this season with a gorgeous cape gown. A floor length gown with a beautiful sheer cape having intricate embroidery will make you a stunner in gatherings.

* Keep it chic: Show your love for anarkalis with a trending gold foil print anarkali suit set or go simple with a long asymmetric kurta. Such a kurta will be a comfortable, always in trend and an elegant pick. Style with golden jewellery and heels to complete the look.

With the ongoing wedding and party season, there are certainly going to be a lot of social gatherings you are going to attend. Worrying about how to be a style icon for each occasion? Look no further. This year, give a break to those heavy-set saris and embellished kurtis

and be the showstopper with contemporary styles like sari kurtas, toga kurtas, cape gowns and long one piece dresses. You can try different styles of kurtas having ruffles, multiple layers, and unequalled frills to get a fusion wear look.

To help you look your best this

Malaika Arora, Deepika Padukone, Kareena Kapoor, Alia Bhatt keep it cool in white tee

Although pictures of celebrities in showstopping sarees and lehengas at star-studded Diwali parties might have taken over our social media feeds, easy-to-wear celebrity looks haven't actually gone anywhere.

Spotted at various spots across Mumbai were casually-dressed actors Deepika Padukone and Kareena Kapoor Khan, among others. With their white T-shirt ensembles that looked effortlessly cool and comfortable, these celebrities proved that a simple white T-shirt never goes out of style. One of the most liberating, enduring and sexy garments in the history of fashion, the basic white T-shirt is here to stay. Scroll through these celebrity looks to get convinced that less really is more:

Kareena Kapoor Khan wore a plain white tank with a pair of wide-leg track pants. The overall look is clean and simple, yet extremely stylish. She looks stylish and chill. To recreate this look find a T-shirt that fits you well. Sometimes you just need a white tank top to show off your figure. This Malaika Arora tee fits perfectly and does just that. To show off her figure, Malaika's jeans cinched at the waist before billowing out from the leg. You can do the same; pairing flared denim with a white tee and some heels would be a perfectly appropriate outfit for a daytime or evening outing. A white tank top is also Alia Bhatt's secret weapon when it comes to layering ideas. She infused her casual look with some interest by way of an unexpected blue and white, striped co-ord set teamed with a white tee. So simple yet so cool. Like Alia, accessorise with your favourite sneakers for a casual and cool look. Deepika Padukone's white tee is slightly baggy with a scoop neckline. Tuck it in, or leave out if you're feeling casual. Wearing an oversized T-shirt with wide-leg trousers might make you look like you're swimming in your clothing.



Women in Japan are tiring of pastel pink and rhinestones

Japan's male-dominated businesses are starting to ditch long-held views about what kinds of products women want as female consumers flex their growing spending muscle. While the result--more goods that emphasize the practical rather than the pretty--is the way it's long been in many other economies, Japanese design for women has shown a lingering tendency to stereotype with cutesy forms and pastel pinks. Time-pressed women like 29-year-old Ruriko Saiki are forcing change via their spending choices. She's among the 1.9

million women who've entered the nation's workforce over the past decade, while 910,000 men have left. "Making things glittery and covering them with rhinestones is just plain wrong," said Saiki, who works in sales at an IT firm in Tokyo. "I want more products that save time." Some of those same companies that have been recruiting more women are now looking to better serve their demands as consumers.

Robot vacuum cleaners, hi-spec washing-and-drying machines and higher-quality prepared meals are among the items in demand from women, many of

whom are ordering by smartphone for home delivery or for picking up at their local convenience store on their way home from work. Japan is outside the top 100 nations in gender equality, and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's 'womenomics' campaign hasn't reached its targets for female representation in leadership roles, but it has overtaken the U.S. in the proportion of women working. Masayuki Nakajima, a middle-age male engineer at Daihatsu Motor Co., embraced a change in design after being approached by a group of women colleagues who had ideas for reviving the

flagging fortunes of the Mira Cocoa mini car. They told him the design was "too cute" for today's women and failed to address some basic needs of female drivers. The result was the Mira Tocot: a simpler design that was easier to handle in narrow streets and tight parking spaces, and came with a more reasonable price tag. The Tocot reestablished the Mira model in the top 10 best-selling mini-cars in Japan when it launched in June. "I came to realize that a male perspective of a woman's needs doesn't work," said Nakajima. "No woman wants a cute1sy car," said Junichi Abe, a marketing research chief at

Mitsubishi Research Institute. Abe, a middle-age man who worked with female writers to publish a book focused on women's consumption, said the key for companies now is to realize that "what's more important is how much time things save and how useful they are." Over the past four decades, there has been a complete reversal in what Japan's households look like. In 1980, there were 11 million households with housewives, and 6 million with dual incomes. Fast forward to 2017 and it had almost reversed.

Fantastic Beasts The Crimes of Grindelwald movie review

The worst film in the Harry Potter series; blame JK Rowling

Here's everything you want to know about Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's destination wedding at Lake Como in Italy on Wednesday and Thursday. Here are all the details about the venue, cuisine, decor, sangeet and much more.

Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald

Director - David Yates

Cast - Eddie Redmayne, Johnny Depp, Jude Law, Zoe Kravitz, Ezra Miller, Katherine Waterston, Callum Turner, Claudia Kim, Alison Sudol, Dan Fogler

Rating - 2/5

JK Rowling is headed the way of George Lucas. Keeping aside the many similarities of their Harry Potter and Star Wars series, both Lucas and now Rowling have displayed an annoying tendency to not let their creations be. It began with Lucas tinkering with the visual effects of his old Star Wars movies, and before you know it, he was altering mythologies and erasing the existence of entire characters. His reputation among fans - the same ones who once worshipped him - became so venomous that he was 'forced' to sell the Star Wars franchise to Disney.

With Rowling, the changing cultural climate has informed her poor decisions. Her Harry Potter books have a stunning lack of diversity - surely too off-brand for a writer as liberal-minded as Rowling. But in her panic to retroactively 'correct' her (in my

opinion) perfect series of books, she has fallen into a trap of her own making, as if knocked out by a Confundus charm cast by Ron Weasley's spello-taped wand.

She makes many unnecessary revelations in Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald, and I suspect nearly all of them will be tremendously annoying to die-hard fans. Indeed, when the film pulled the final rabbit out of its hat - in basically its final scene - I let out a groan of disbelief and despair.

Virtually every character who is introduced by name in the film is the ancestor of someone from the Potter series, suggesting perhaps that the wizarding community might have an inbreeding issue. It also betrays a rather narcissistic and hesitant approach to writing this new story - Rowling seems to be so convinced of the greatness of her own world, and so terrified of messing it up, that she inadvertently makes pandering decisions.

Did you care if Albus Dumbledore was gay or straight? Probably not. But now that you know he is gay, do you want proof? Again, not really. But hang on, here's a vague flashback anyway. You're

welcome. Aren't I woke.

The Crimes of Grindelwald is the weakest entry in the Potter film series, which now falls under Rowling's newly created umbrella corporation, the Wizarding World. And most of the blame can be directed towards Rowling's script, thin as a piece of yellowing parchment, discarded in the bins of Flourish and Blotts.

An hour had passed and the plot was still yelling 'Up!' at its broomstick, which was rolling around feebly on the ground, simply refusing to take flight. Instead, several characters - old and new - had crossed each other's paths, love stories I am willing to bet no one would be interested in had been introduced, and several lines of clunky exposition delivered. The finest example of this was when Newt's brother, Theseus Scamander feels the need to remind his girlfriend, Leta Lestrange that "Your brother Corvus is dead." Really? Her brother, you say? I wonder if she knew.

It feels terrible to say this - Rowling is a personal hero, and one of the greatest writers the world has ever seen, and Harry Potter has been tremendously



influential on not just me, but millions of others. But The Crimes of Grindelwald takes barely five minutes to announce its mediocrity.

The signs begin to show in the first scene itself - a murky, nighttime escape staged by Gellert Grindelwald, the dark wizard played by Johnny Depp, who was captured at the end of the first Fantastic Beasts movie by the unlikely hero, Newt Scamander. It has none of the visual clarity of those similar aerial battle scenes in Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix and Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part 1. It's incoherently edited, has too many inconsequential characters to keep up with, and ends with a switcheroo that feels like a cheat.

To say that Depp is by far the best thing about this film would be an understatement, but it is also a very

uncomfortable realisation to have. The jury's still out on whether or not he is guilty of committing the crimes that he has been accused of, but the least one can say about his performance here is that he earns the right to call himself the title character. His Grindelwald is unusually understated, despite his loud appearance. And even though the script does him no favours, he finds subtle ways to add subtext to very ordinary lines. His fight for what he perceives as freedom has an added emotional punch, considering the restrictions he has had to face in his past, particularly in matters of the heart.

Jude Law as the young Dumbledore, meanwhile, is basically playing Jude Law - with a mild Irish accent, perhaps to honour Michael Gambon's very aggressive take on the future Hogwarts headmaster.

Outlaw King movie review:

Netflix's infamous Chris Pine ding dong movie is a slog

Outlaw King

Director - David Mackenzie

Cast - Chris Pine, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Florence Pugh

Rating - 3/5

Director David Mackenzie's Outlaw King opens with an unbroken, eight-minute shot in which the camera performs pirouettes around actors through moments of drama, intrigue, violence and jaw-dropping action. Politics are discussed, duels initiated and flagons of ale consumed. In a way, these eight minutes could be seen as a condensed version of the film to follow - both a tease and a warning. Outlaw King, perhaps one of the most expensive films to open with that now iconic Netflix 'ba-dumm', is an unevenly told story. In his insistence to mature with the times - and perhaps to distance his movie

from Mel Gibson's very old-fashioned Braveheart, a film set around the same time in Scottish history - Mackenzie has sacrificed whatever warmth it was possible for his film to have. It hangs, like so many poor souls in Outlaw

King, drawn and quartered in a public square, there for future filmmakers to observe with stoic respect, so that they don't end up making the same mistakes. Chris Pine stars as Robert Bruce, son of Robert Bruce, son of Isabella Huntingdon, daughter of David, Earl of Huntingdon, son of Henry, Earl of Huntingdon, son of David, King of Scots. Quite the mouthful, expertly delivered by the actor Kim Allan during his



coronation scene. And it is with solemnity such as this that the film conducts itself throughout its two-hour length. Curiously, though, the cut that has been released to us isn't the same as the one screened at the Toronto International Film Festival a few weeks ago. After having locked the film only 48 hours before it was scheduled to open the prestigious festival, Mackenzie, to his horror, realised during the screening - in the presence of his

cast and 2000 others - that Outlaw King wasn't working. Following lukewarm reviews after the TIFF premiere, he made the decision to jump back into the editing room and continue working on the film. Twenty minutes were axed by Mackenzie - this includes a random encounter between Robert and William Wallace, Mel Gibson's Braveheart character - with the same ruthless brutality that defines his film. And this muscular editing style takes a while getting used to. Transitions are harsh and mechanical, sometimes jarringly so. A tender lovemaking scene could abruptly cut to a lavish aerial shot of men riding horses across the hillside, or of someone having their innards gouged out. Outlaw King is a film caught between the

temptation to revel in the pomp and pageantry of the genre, and the responsibility to deliver to the audience a more realistic take on it. Mackenzie, whose filmography is even more diverse than that of Ang Lee - he's made a science-fiction film, a prison drama, a neo-Western and now a historical epic - is aided in this unique approach by his legendary director of photography, Barry Ackroyd. Ackroyd began his career as a frequent collaborator of Ken Loach, and then shot four films - including the latest Jason Bourne - for Paul Greengrass. His style - Ackroyd loves long lenses, which means that even in close-ups, the cast doesn't have the distraction of having a camera shoved in their faces - is the single biggest reason that Greengrass, and now Kathryn Bigelow and Adam McKay, have developed one of their own.

Deepika Padukone-Ranveer Singh wedding

Everything you want to know about their Italian nuptials

Here's everything you want to know about Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's destination wedding at Lake Como in Italy on Wednesday and Thursday. Here are all the details about the venue, cuisine, decor, sangeet and much more.



Kapoor and Anand Ahuja, Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao in attendance. According to an IANS report, the ceremony will take place inside a surprisingly intimate dwelling that overlooks the villa's breathtakingly beautiful landscaped gardens with its roman statues and ancient flora. Ranveer and Deepika's wedding ceremonies

Ranveer is well known for his quirky ways and if the reports are to be believed, the groom will arrive on a seaplane and the baraat will accompany him on multiple yachts. Since

Deepika is a south Indian and has been brought up in Bengaluru, two different wedding ceremonies will take place. Deepika has reportedly chosen a Sabyasachi sari for the Konkani wedding in accordance with her heritage, whereas she will don a lehenga for the Sindhi wedding ceremony. The marriage rituals will be performed in morning and will be followed by an elaborate lunch.

Deepika has been very fond of Sabyasachi's designer creations and it won't be a surprise if she picks up multiple ensembles from his collection for her wedding. It is to be noted, Anushka Sharma and Rani Mukerji had also donned the designer's bridal pieces for their weddings in Italy.

Cuisine and decor According to a report in Bollywoodlife.com,



besides the Punjabi cuisine, traditional south Indian dishes including dosa and rice will also be laid out for the guests. Separate counters for continental dishes and finger foods will be in place as well. The report also suggests that special chefs from Switzerland have been flown to Italy to bake the perfect wedding cake along with some amazing desserts.

A report in Mumbai Mirror had stated that a Delhi-based wedding planner has been roped in for the wedding function including the sangeet. Now a report in India Today claims that 12 florists were specially flown in from Florence to decorate the villa. While the couple's families are staying at a separate luxury resort in Blevio (a small village), it has also been decked up by the florists for the guests' welcome and has been

entirely booked for the purpose till November 17. Shah Rukh, Sanjay Leela Bhansali on guest list

Deepika and Ranveer had specially visited Sanjay Leela Bhansali on Diwali to invite him personally for the wedding. The actors have featured in three films together and all have been directed by the noted filmmaker. After starring in Goliyon Ki Rasleela Ram-Leela, the two went on to complete their hat-trick with Bajirao Mastani and Padmaavat. The high-profile guest list also includes Farah Khan who launched Deepika in Bollywood with the 2007 film Om Shanti Om. Her co-star Shah Rukh Khan is also among the few invited for the wedding.

Deepika, Ranveer's Bengaluru wedding reception

It is reported that Deepika's parents -- noted badminton player Prakash Padukone and Ujjala Padukone -- will also be hosting a lavish reception at the The Leela in Bengaluru. Since the actor has been brought up in the Karnataka capital, this appears to be an apt choice for the family. This will be followed by a grand wedding reception in Mumbai on November 28 that will have the actors' industry friends in presence.

Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's wedding in the picturesque -- and posh -- Lake Como in Italy is set to take place on Wednesday and Thursday in the presence of family and close friends. Deepika and Ranveer will tie the knot in two ceremonies at the Villa del Balbianello and the fans cannot wait to get a glimpse of their lavish celebrations. Unfortunately, the actors have a no-picture policy in place.

Till we get our hands on Deepika and Ranveer's wedding photos, we bring you the next best thing -- everything you wanted to know about the wedding from decor to cuisine to what the two stars will

Deepika and Ranveer's pre-wedding events in Mumbai The pre-wedding festivities kick-started in India before both the Padukone and Bhavnani families left for Italy. While a Nandi puja was organised by Deepika's mother, Ujjala, in Bengaluru, an intimate haldi ceremony was held at Ranveer's residence in Mumbai. Deepika had worn an orange traditional ensemble in silk for the puja whereas Ranveer had donned a white kurta pajama for his haldi. It wear.

Deepika, Ranveer are 'love personified'

The pre-wedding functions resumed in Italy on November 12 and Ranveer's stylist Nitasha confirmed the same on Twitter. She tweeted, "No pictures but it was love personified to see them together today. Couldn't stop my tears, but these were tears of happiness and so I hope they never do. #DeepVeerKiShaadi #ranveerkiashaadi #foreverlove." Singer Harshdeep Kaur -- along with Sanjoy Das, Bobby Pathak and Firoz Khan -- will reportedly be performing at the sangeet on November 13.

Deepika's trainer Nam decked up for her sangeet and her stylist shared the photo on social media. Step inside Ranveer, Deepika's Italian wedding venue

Ranveer and Deepika's big fat wedding at Villa del Balbianello at Lake Como in Lombardy has a filmy connect as well. It is to be noted, a portion of the Bond film Casino Royale was shot at the same villa. Following Anushka Sharma-Virat Kohli and Rani Mukerji-Aditya Chopra, the couple has also opted for a destination wedding in Italy. The country has always been one of the most desirable wedding destinations and has witnessed the nuptials of many Hollywood celebs like Kim Kardashian-Kanye West and David Bowie-Iman. Lake Como had recently hosted the engagement of businessman Mukesh Ambani's daughter Isha Ambani and Anand Piramal too, which had celebs like Sonam



Shah Rukh Khan on Suhana: My daughter is dusky but she is the most beautiful girl in the world

For any father, his daughter is always the prettiest girl in the world and even superstar Shah Rukh Khan believes it. The actor was at the recent Kolkata Film Festival when he spoke about his love for his daughter Suhana. Shah Rukh was asked by The Time of India in an interview about how a few of his endorsements for products like fairness creams have raked in controversies over the years. He said that he has never tried to be dishonest to his followers and doesn't judge people based on their looks.

"Well, if I still smell a little honest beneath all that's public about me, then trust me, I've never tried to be dishonest with anyone. I mean, who am I to do so? I

was never the best looking guy, the tallest person, the most able-bodied person, the best dancer, the guy with the nicest hair, not from a fine lineage and I did not come from an acting school that taught me to be a Hindi film hero. So how can I belittle someone on any of these seven-eight aspects?" he said. Shah Rukh added that because his wife and his kids are also 'normal people', he would be abusing them too if he they judged a person on these superficial qualities. "I'm a lower middle-class guy with none of these trappings. The only thing



jaunga ya toh main Clint Eastwood ban jaunga. That aspect was never a part of my life," he added. He then talked about his daughter Suhana: "I'll be honest; my daughter is sanwli (dusky), but she's the most beautiful girl in the world. And nobody can tell me otherwise," he

said. Suhana turned 18 this year and made her magazine cover debut with Vogue. In her interview to the magazine, she said she wishes to be an actor in the future. Suhana is pursuing her education in London in a private boarding school. She also spoke about moving away from home at 16 and said, "Moving away at age 16 was the best decision of my life. Living in a different environment and meeting so many new people helped me gain a lot of confidence. It's about being able to do the little things, like walk on the street or take the train—stuff that was so hard to do in Mumbai. But living away also made me appreciate home so much more."



Game of Thrones season 8 to premiere in April. HBO reveals release date with a special video

HBO has finally revealed the release date for the final season of its hit television show, Game of Thrones. The eight season of the popular fantasy drama will premiere in April, almost two years after season seven.

"Every battle. Every betrayal. Every risk. Every fight. Every sacrifice. Every death. All #ForTheThrone," HBO wrote in their social media posts and attached a video that revealed the release date. The video is

a compilation of all the crucial moments from the previous seven seasons of the show.

So far we've only seen leaked set images from the eighth season of the series. Shooting for the season recently wrapped, with several cast members posting emotional farewell messages on social media, including Emilia Clarke who plays Daenerys Targaryen on the show. The first pictures from the show were also revealed as

part of a special cover for Entertainment Weekly, featuring Emilia an Kit Harington. Nikolaj Coster-Waldau—who plays Jaime Lannister on the show—said in a recent interview that HBO had spared no expense for the final season- instead of the usual 10, season eight will have only six episodes. "It's crossing out of a television schedule into more of a mid-range movie schedule," co-creator DB

Weiss had told Variety about why HBO opted for a shorter season.

Talking about why the production is taking so much time, Harington told EW that the makers want everything perfect. "It's relentless; scenes that would have been a one-day shoot five years ago are now a five-day shoot... They want to get it right, they want to shoot everything every single way so they have options," he said.

Clarke adds that



everything—from camera conversation, every checks to costumes—is given more attention this time. "Every choice, every attitude, has this air of 'this is it.' Everything feels more intense," she said.

Karan Johar to sip coffee with Kajol and Ajay Devgn on Koffee With Karan two years after their public fight

All seems to be well between Ajay Devgn and Karan Johar as the actor recently shot for director's talk show Koffee With Karan along with wife Kajol. While Kajol and Karan started talking again after their friendship turned sour a few years ago, Ajay also seems to have left all the differences behind to join Kajol on the Koffee couch. The lady graced the show in a black ensemble and shared a glimpse of their outing with the caption, "All is well...."

The couple had a fallout with the filmmaker during the clash of Shivaay and Ae Dil Hai Mushkil at the box office in 2016. The two films were pitted against each other and were the big Diwali releases of the year. A tweet by Kamaal

R Khan had led to an ugly showdown between Ajay and Karan as Kajol chose to side with her husband. Ajay had accused Karan of bribing a film critic to say negative things about Shivaay, to which Kajol had replied 'Shocked'. This ended Kajol and Karan's decades-old friendship after delivering several blockbusters like Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai and Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham.

Karan had also talked about the fight in his book titled An Unsuitable Boy. He had written that Ajay had said nasty things to him even before the films' clash at the box office. Karan had said, "She can never come back to my life. I



wouldn't like to give her a piece of myself to her at all because she's killed every bit of emotion I had for her for 25 years. I don't think she deserves me. I feel nothing for her anymore."

In an interview with CNN News 18, Karan had said, "Ajay Devgn called me and shouted at me and said some really nasty things because he heard at a party that I'd said some things about his wife. She was one of my closest relationships, as close as family could get, but it got unpleasant." Referring to Kamaal's tweet, he had said in the interview, "Ajay said I'd bribed a trade analyst to write bad things about his film and praise mine, then he put out a statement saying

there should be an investigation and she retweeted it saying 'SHOCKING'. And that was it... I don't want to say anything more, but yes one thing I'd like to say & I stand by it is that this is not a phase, a feeling that will change. No matter what, she's out of my life." However, it was the birth of his twins Roohi and Yash last year that made Kajol mend fences with her old friend. The filmmaker had shared a beautiful picture of the kids on Instagram and the actor had liked the picture. The two eventually became friends again on the social media and will now be seen sipping coffee together on the chat show.

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