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Voice of South Asian Community

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Vol. 15 Issue 51 Friday 18 May to 24 May 2019 \$1 www.thesouthasianinsider.com

The U.S.-China Trade War Could Be Long and Painful



Story Page 18

From bombings to anti-Muslim riots Sri Lanka descends deeper into turmoil



(News Agencies)- A few months ago Kumar Sangakkara, one of Sri Lanka's biggest cricket stars, asked a gathering of schoolchildren to each strike his or her palm with a single finger. Then, speaking over their feeble applause, Sangakkara directed them as they added fingers to the percussion. Soon enough, the moral of the story resounded through the field where they sat: the power of their diverse island nation's many "moving parts" -- divided by age, religion or language -- working together. How faraway such a dream seems now. Last month's Easter bombings targeted churches and hotels, killing over 250 people and re-opening political wounds as it shattered the relative peace

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No summer respite from air pollution this season in Delhi

(News Agencies)- It's peak summer but air pollution levels in Delhi are almost as bad as they are in winter, highlighting the Capital's enduring bad-air problem. Air quality on Monday was in the "very poor" category, aggravated by westerly winds bringing dust from neighbouring states, stubble burning in parts of Punjab and Haryana, and forest fires in Uttarakhand. There have been four "very poor" air quality days in the past week and the average PM2.5 (fine, respirable pollution particles) concentrations often crossed 250µg/m3, four times the national safe standard. PM 2.5 concentrations have even crossed 500µg/m3 at Anand Vihar, Bawana and Rohini, according to data collated by Delhi-based environmental



Continued on Page 19

The BJP's challenge in east Uttar Pradesh

(News Agencies)- With the elections entering the final leg, all attention is shifting to eastern Uttar Pradesh. This is where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) swept the polls last time around. The impact of Narendra Modi's candidature from Varanasi was felt far and wide across the region. The success was replicated in the 2017 assembly elections. This time, too, Modi remains highly popular, and the BJP's social coalition remains

robust. But the party is confronting a major political-electoral challenge, which stems from both the coming together of the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party (SP-BSP) as well as cracks in its own campaign.



Continued on Page 19

The rise of India's new billionaires and the fall of the old



(News Agencies)- India is going through one of the greatest periods of wealth creation -- and destruction -- all at the same time. A new breed of self-made entrepreneurs is vaulting into the ranks of the wealthy, offsetting billions lost by debt-burdened industrialists and members of the country's old dynasties.

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International Ahimsa Foundation echoes a message of Non Violence on Lord Mahavir and Gandhi birth anniversary



(By our staff reporter) Gandhi. The event was held at the Consulate General of India in New York, The Master of Ceremonies were Shanie Persaud, Adeen and Shelly Jain. The event began with the American National Anthem sung by Shruti Goyal and followed by the Indian National Anthem by melodious Dr. Smita Guha. Dr. Neeta Jain gave welcome remarks and reiterated the importance of Non Violence and teachings of Lord Mahavir and Mahatma Gandhi, now more than ever before, and emphasized why and what motivated her to start the IAF organization. Dr. Jain, the only female Indian-American elected official in New York City, was recently nominated by the Consul General of India in NY, Ambassador Sandeep Chakravorty, and was honored by the Society of Foreign Consuls in New York, Inc. on International Women's Day for her tireless work in the South Asian Community.



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Yoga Center inaugurated at the West Oaks Mall, in the presence of its Founder Dr. H. R. Nagendra



Sitting: L to R: Suveena Guglani, Kirthi Jain, Vishwarupa Nanjudappa, Smitha Mallaiiah, Brij Gopal Pallod, Jugal Malani, Shiv Das Agrawal. Standing: Dr. Manjunath Sharma, Alison Jeffries, Dr. Sudha Rajan, Raj Malani, Kiran Bhutada, Dr. H.R. Nagendra, Ramesh Bhutada, Dr. Lorenzo Cohen, Durga Agrawal, Sushila Agrawal, Kaushal Agrawal. Attendees at the opening



(By Manu Shah) President of VYASA Houston Dr. Houston : The "phones in meditation mode" policy set the tone for the event and the Vedic chanting by Vishwarupa Nanjudappa and Srikhanta Parmeshwara further elevated the positive energy in the room. Emcee Suveena Guglani invited

Sudha Rajan to introduce the "NASA to VYASA" Chief Guest of Honor Dr. H.R. Nagendra. Dr. Nagendra is the Chancellor of the S-VYASA deemed University in Bengaluru and the "NASA to VYASA" is a reference to his stint at NASA. The Center was formally

inaugurated in the traditional Indian way with the lighting of the lamp by Dr. Nagendra and the Guests of Honor. Dressed in his signature white shirt and dhoti, Padma Shri Dr. Nagendra, fondly known as Gurujii, left a promising career abroad and joined his aunt Lakshmi Amma to serve and

spread the practice of yoga. He is credited with bringing a scientific research dimension to the usefulness of yoga through many publications and led the formulation of the 35 minute yoga protocol which incorporates all the four streams of yoga – Karma, Gyana, Bhakti and Hatha yoga

for the International Yoga Day. In his address, Gurujii spoke of the great strides in yoga awareness and its practice, not only in India but around the world and credited this to his student - Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal interest and push in the project

Indian-origin woman convicted of killing 9-year old stepdaughter in New York

Shamdai Arjun was convicted of second-degree murder of her 9-year-old stepdaughter and faces up to 25 years to life in prison, Medical Examiner's Office report says death was due to strangulation.

(Agencies)- An Indian-origin woman in the US has been convicted by a jury of killing her nine-year old stepdaughter in 2016 and faces up to life in prison at sentencing.

Shamdai Arjun, 55, of Queens, New York was convicted Friday of second-degree murder by a jury that deliberated for less than one hour before Queens Supreme Court Justice Kenneth Holder, who indicated that he would sentence her on June 3. Arjun faces up to 25 years to life in prison.

Arjun was convicted for the August 2016 strangulation death of her nine-year-old stepdaughter Ashdeep Kaur, who was left in her care.

"This is a horrifying case of a

defenceless nine-year-old child, who was to be cared for by her stepmother but was instead strangled to death by her. Her actions are truly incomprehensible and deserve the maximum punishment allowed under the law," Acting Queens District Attorney John Ryan said.

According to trial testimony, on the evening of August 19, 2016, Arjun was observed by an eyewitness leaving her apartment in Queens along with her ex-husband Raymond Narayan, and her two grandchildren ages 3 and 5. When asked about the nine-year-old victim's whereabouts, Arjun informed the eyewitness that the child was in the bathroom and was waiting for her father to

pick her up. The eyewitness, who observed that the bathroom light had been on for several hours, called the victim's father Sukhjinder Singh and was instructed to break through the bathroom door, at which time she found Kaur's lifeless naked body in the bathtub. There were several bruises on her body.

A report filed by the Medical Examiner's Office determined that the cause of death was manual strangulation.

In 2016, Queens Assistant District Attorney Michael Curtis had said that Arjun repeatedly and on numerous occasions threatened to kill the young girl. Kaur's relatives had also said that the young girl had been previously



abused by Arjun, who had been entrusted with her care while Singh worked in a local restaurant.

Kaur had arrived in the US from India just three months before she was killed in August 2016 and was living with her father and Arjun in an apartment in Queens that was shared with another couple.

The housemate had seen Kaur go in the bathroom with Arjun, who later came out alone and left the building. She allegedly said that Kaur was taking a bath. New York Police Department detectives had then gone to Narayan's residence and found him, Arjun and the two grandchildren inside the apartment.

Bill de Blasio officially launches 2020 presidential campaign

(News Agencies)- He's late — again. After nearly half a year of hemming and hawing, Mayor Bill de Blasio on Thursday entered the 2020 presidential race, becoming the 24th Democrat to join the jam-packed field. The termed-out politician, known for his habitual tardiness, finally decided to run after five months of toying with a White House bid. "I'm Bill de Blasio and I'm running for president because it's time we put working people first," the mayor said in a three-minute YouTube video announcing his candidacy.

The opening shots include de Blasio zipping around the city in the back of an SUV — his gas-guzzling choice of transportation for the 11-mile jaunt from Gracie Mansion to the gym in Park Slope. "Good thing about New Yorkers is they look the same whether they're really pissed off at you or they like you," the mayor quips.

He details his "Working People First" slogan by touting his policy initiatives including pre-K for all,

paid sick leave and boosting the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. First lady Chirlane McCray also makes an appearance to briefly plug her mental health agenda.

"Everything begins with being healthy and there is no health without mental health," she says.

Then, as the White House flashes on the screen to dramatic music, de Blasio pivots to a national message.

"Don't back down in the face of the bully — take him on," he says. "As president, I will take on the wealthy, I will take on the big corporations, I will not rest until this government serves working people."

He also vows to fight President Trump head-on.

"Donald Trump must be stopped. I've beaten him before and I'll do it again," de Blasio says.

Insiders initially thought de Blasio would announce his national campaign the week of his 58th birthday on May 8, but he delayed.

"So you're still deciding?" NY1's Errol Louis asked the mayor on May 6. "Yes indeed," the dithering mayor said. Local



political experts can't fathom what prompted the mayor to take the plunge. "It's really hard to understand what lane de Blasio plans to ride to the nomination," said David Birdsell, dean of the Marx School of Public and International Affairs at CUNY's Baruch College. What's more, people just don't like him, polls show. De Blasio has the dubious distinction of being the only candidate or potential candidate out of 23 contenders to earn a negative rating among national Democrats in a March Monmouth University survey. A total of 24 percent gave him a

thumbs down while just 18 percent had a favorable view of him.

At home, the numbers are even worse. A staggering 76 percent of Big Apple voters don't think he should run, according to an April Quinnipiac University Poll.

"There are reasons why mayors of New York City haven't done well in national politics and that's because people don't associate with their problems with those problems," said Birdsell, the CUNY dean.

The checkered past goes back to 1812, when New York City Mayor DeWitt Clinton lost to incumbent James Madison. John Lindsay's 1972 White House bid petered out during the primaries, and Rudy Giuliani came up short in 2008. The mayor must spend time bulking up his campaign team. His Fairness PAC, which has organized his recent out-of-state visits, currently has a largely volunteer, skeleton staff. "There are reasons why mayors of New York City haven't done well in national politics and that's

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It's led by Jon Paul Lupo, who took a leave from his city position as director of intergovernmental affairs and is using vacation days to work on the PAC. Deputy press secretary Olivia Lapeyrolerie and deputy director of executive operations Alexandra Kopel are also using leave and their time off to boost the mayor's 2020 bid.

Former top aide Mike Casca, who'd worked on Sen. Bernie Sanders' previous presidential run, first left City Hall for the PAC, then cut ties with de Blasio altogether earlier this month.

Uber introduces 'Quiet Mode' to let you politely tell chatty drivers to shut up

Uber Black and Uber Black SUV riders in the US will now be able to enable the Quiet Mode to politely indicate you need some quiet on your way to your destination, the official blog explains.



(News Agencies)- Ever called for an Uber after a long, tiring day and realised the driver was being too chatty? You can take a break from drivers who go on to give you a tour of the city unasked with a simple yet subtle new feature.

Uber Black and Uber Black SUV riders in the US will now be able to enable the Quiet Mode to politely indicate you need some

quiet on your way to your destination, the official blog explains. You can disable the feature if you feel like having a casual conversation with your driver.

Other features will be added to the luxurious experience includes help with luggage, extended pickup period, temperature control, premium customer support, and more.

Nagpur man allegedly finds dead lizard in vada sambar at Haldiram's, outlet shut

The incident took place at the outlet located at Ajani square on Tuesday morning. The picture of the dead lizard found in 'vada sambar' went viral on the social media.

(News Agencies)- A man allegedly found a dead lizard in a food item served at the snacks major Haldiram's outlet in Nagpur, a Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) official said on Wednesday. The incident took place at the outlet located at Ajani square on Tuesday morning. The picture of the dead lizard found in 'vada sambar' went viral on the social media. "The man and a woman accompanying him, both from Wardha, had ordered vada sambar at the outlet. But while eating, the man found a dead lizard in the food. They brought this to the notice of the outlet's supervisor, who later on threw it away," assistant commissioner of FDA (Nagpur) Milind Deshpande told PTI. "They were later admitted to a private hospital and discharged on Wednesday," he added. The duo,



however, neither spoke to media, not lodged a complaint in this regard. "The FDA was informed about it in the evening, after which we immediately visited the the Haldiram's outlet and conducted an inspection. We found certain deficiencies in its kitchen. The windows of the kitchen need to be fitted with nets, which was missing," Deshpande said. "The FDA has closed the outlet till they complete the compliance as

per the Food Safety and Standards (Food business licences and Registration) regulations 2011. They have submitted a compliance report to us. We will inspect the premises and if we find the steps taken are satisfactory, only then we will allow it to reopen," he added. When contacted, a senior office-bearer of Haldiram's told PTI that they doubted the veracity of consumers' claim.

Sushma Swaraj holds talks with Iranian Foreign Minister

The talks by the two foreign ministers came 12 days after the US ended six-month-long exemptions from sanctions to India and seven other countries to buy oil from Iran.



(News Agencies)- External counterpart Javad Zarif on all days after the US ended six-month-long exemptions from bilateral issues of mutual interests. The talks by the two foreign ministers came 12 days after the US ended six-month-long exemptions from bilateral issues of mutual interests. The talks by the two foreign ministers came 12 days after the US ended six-month-long exemptions from bilateral issues of mutual interests. The talks by the two foreign ministers came 12 days after the US ended six-month-long exemptions from bilateral issues of mutual interests.

Iran. It is learnt that the issue figured in the talks. "EAM @SushmaSwaraj and Iranian Foreign Minister @JZarif held constructive discussions on all bilateral issues of mutual interest. Good exchange of views on the evolving regional situation, including Afghanistan," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar tweeted. After the exemptions expired on May 2, India said it will deal with the issue based on three factors -- the country's energy security, commercial consideration and economic interests. In May last year, the US had brought back sanctions on Iran after withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal which was struck in 2015. The US had told India and other countries to cut oil imports from the Gulf nation to "zero" by November 4 or face sanctions. However,

Washington had granted a six-month waiver from sanctions to eight countries, including India. India, the world's third biggest oil consumer, meets more than 80 per cent of its oil needs through imports. Iran is its third largest supplier after Iraq and Saudi Arabia and meets about 10 per cent of its total needs. Indo-Iran ties have been on an upswing in the last few years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Tehran in May 2016 with an aim to craft a strategic relationship with Iran and expand India's ties with West Asia. During the visit, India and Iran signed nearly a dozen agreements, centrepiece of which was a deal on development of Chabahar port. Later, India, Iran and Afghanistan signed a trilateral agreement providing for transport of goods among the three countries through the port. PTI MPB ZMN

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Wanted: a Trump policy for Iran Iran, please give Trump a call

Wednesday marks the first anniversary of the Trump administration's decision to pick up its marbles and exit the Iran nuclear accord, otherwise known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA. The sky hasn't fallen. But tensions are mounting; Iran has not yet bolted from the agreement or resumed its nuclear enrichment, but reports suggest Tehran may well stop abiding by some provisions in the JCPOA, particularly on research on advanced centrifuges, as payback against US sanctions. The two countries aren't yet at war, though the Trump administration's deployment of a carrier strike group this week, in an apparent reaction to intelligence on the movements of Iran-aligned groups (as administration officials told *The New York Times*), is a worrisome sign. But the administration achieved neither its publicly stated goal of forcing Tehran back to the nuclear negotiating table nor its unstated goal of regime collapse or change. This state of affairs is likely to persist. Iran is hurting badly from US sanctions. And we should never rule out the possibility of an Iranian move to engage Washington, though the smart money is betting that Tehran will try to outlast this administration -- though we can't rule out that Iran could walk away from the nuclear accord, either.

Right now, neither the United States nor Iran seems interested in serious negotiations. If we're lucky, the two countries will avoid a serious military escalation, even though administration hawks appear to be itching for one. But diplomatically, both sides are on a road to nowhere. And here's why. Trump has flirted with the idea of trying to negotiate a better deal with Iran and has offered to meet with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to do so. Trump's grandstanding should not be taken seriously. The administration just turned the heat up even higher on sanctions. What's more, the administration seems to hail from the "our way or the highway" school of diplomacy. Last May, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo set out a dozen conditions Iran would have to meet before the administration would lift sanctions and establish diplomatic relations with Tehran. This was not a serious offer to negotiate, but rather a demand that Iran wave the white flag of surrender.

Pompeo and especially super-hawk John Bolton, the national security adviser, aren't willing to consider a negotiation where they'd give as well as take; for both, compromise -- at least with Iran -- is seen as weakness, even appeasement. The administration's strategy, then, appears to be regime change. Unsurprisingly, Pompeo, who championed this goal before entering the administration, has been coy about

its real intentions, saying the United States isn't interested in a "military exercise" to change the Iranian regime. But the administration is doing everything it can to fracture and collapse the regime. Reneging on the nuclear deal, designating the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization, and pulling out all the stops to reduce Iranian oil exports to zero are aimed not at changing regime behavior but changing the regime. Before joining the administration, Bolton was a tireless advocate of bombing Iran and changing its regime; he recently told *The New Yorker* that opposition to the regime was widening. A policy of regime change is quixotic and reckless. The repressive power of the Iranian state is formidable; there's no public or organized political opposition to clerical rule, and millions of Iranians still support the regime. There is also no viable US military option to remove the regime, short of a full-scale invasion that would be a dangerous and fantastical proposition -- and Iran has all kinds of ways to hurt the United States and its allies very badly, throughout the region. The Iranian economy is deteriorating, but there is no humanitarian catastrophe, and it's doubtful Iran's oil exports can be reduced to zero. There's no precedent for sanctions changing a nation's approach on vital national interests, let alone bringing a regime down. The regime is not nearly as brittle as Pompeo and Bolton appear to believe.

Equally important, US and Iranian political clocks are out of sync. Americans are impatient when it comes to foreign policy. Not so for the Iranians. As Iran's foreign minister recently opined, unlike the White House and members of Congress, Iran doesn't look at history in terms of US election cycles; it looks at "history in millennia." The Iranian regime has proven to be resilient, resourceful and patient in the face of US bullying and browbeating. Moreover, Iran's religious and security establishment are determined to use the United States as a foil to maintain support for the regime and control the population.

Tehran will most likely limp along until the US presidential election, relying on a combination of its own sanctions-busting, the refusal of some countries to knuckle under completely to US pressure to stop buying Iranian oil completely, and the return of a tighter oil market that would maximize revenues from its remaining sales. And Iran always has a Plan B, if muddling through doesn't pan out: resuming its nuclear program or even striking at the United States and its allies in the region, buckling down for confrontation, and demanding greater sacrifices from its public and relying more on a ruthless security apparatus to keep a lid on internal dissent.

Donald Trump is waiting for his phone to ring. After diplomatic relations ended between Washington and Tehran in 1980, backchannels for communications have existed, and negotiations have even occurred, but usually through the US Department of State and the Iranian Foreign Ministry. So after Trump expressed to reporters on May 9 that he wanted Iran to give him a call, American officials passed a direct telephone number for the White House to the Swiss government, which as a neutral nation represents US interests in Tehran in the absence of an American Embassy, to make available to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The US President may come to regard Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani with as much trust as he does North Korea's dictator Kim Jong Un. On the other hand, Trump could become belligerent if the Iranian regime does not reach out peacefully soon. His acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan recently dispatched the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and a bomber task force to the Persian Gulf to counter a "credible threat." The State Department now has warned Americans not to travel to Iran, while also moving all nonessential personnel out of neighboring Iraq for fear of violence against them from Tehran's proxies.

Tehran's leadership should bear in mind that for Trump, a deal seems to be "horrible" unless it is proposed by his administration. Only then can it be

deemed "fair" if not "great." By making his willingness for a phone call clear, President Trump is laying the groundwork for an attempt, through his bipolar style of negotiations, at an agreement bearing his signature, instead of those of the previous US administration and the other world powers. As Trump stated when he exited the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action, better known as the Iran deal, in May 2018, he seeks "to negotiate a new deal." Trump marked one year since unilaterally pulling out of the JCPOA by designating the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization, revoking waivers granted to major importers of Iranian oil and gas like China and India, and imposing stiffer sanctions upon Tehran's export of iron, steel, aluminum and copper. Having upped the pressure on Iran's leadership by further constraining their geopolitical reach and economic survival, Trump then extended his offer to negotiate in person. Speaking with reporters at the White House on May 9, President Trump suggested: "I'd like to see them (Iran's leaders) call me. ... What they should be doing is calling me up, sitting down; we can make a deal, a fair deal."

US National Security Adviser John Bolton and Secretary of State Michael Pompeo have extensive requirements for any settlement. They seek to plug shortcomings in the Iran deal including limited verification of declared nuclear plants and materials, lack of access to suspected nuclear weapons development sites, the small window of time before nuclear activities can resume, and no curbs on nuclear weapons delivery systems.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

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A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

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An Open Letter to Time Magazine

Dear Editor
The Time

As a fellow New Yorker, I am deeply disappointed at the May 20, cover story "India's Divider in Chief". The publication of lengthy piece written by Aatish Taseer and making it a cover story reflects that your esteemed publication has endorsed his outrageous views, which are one-sided and far away from reality. As a matter of fact, it is a blatant effort to interfere in the internal affairs of a foreign publications.

Coming from the world's largest democracy and living in the world's oldest democracy, I strongly believe in freedom of press, and free speech. And so, does Prime Minister Narendra Modi. His actions speaks for itself.

I wish, before publishing this article, Time would have done its own research based on facts, not based on the views of a group of so-called authors and

opinion makers, who have dominated India's political discourse post 1947. I would like to challenge you to do a research on the number of articles published against the most powerful leader of India in the 10 years of previous UPA regime and in the five years of the current Government. I wonder, if you and the author of the cover story can name any other major national or regional political party having the kind of freedom of speech and dissent that ruling BJP has. Not only this, every day, you will see, read and view, major Indian media outlets critical of the policies of the Prime Minister. I am surprised that your esteemed magazine and the author of the cover story has decided to ignore it.

It's quite painful to see that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's effort to give justice to the Muslim women, has been ignored. I wish, the current editors



of Time Magazine have read its own previous editorials and its strong defense of women's right. Women's rights are Human rights. The step taken by the Modi Government on triple talak

issue is nothing less than a revolution. It is undoing the injustice done to millions of Muslim women in India after 1947.

Dear members of the Time editorial board. When you hold your next editorial board meeting. Please ask this question and vote on it. Would you support Muslim citizens of the US to have a separate law, that

By Jagdish Sewhani
New York



is based on Sharia? Kindly let me know, what the result of your vote is. Can you please help me understand your double standards?

Dear Editor. In five years. Prime Minister

Narendra Modi has given India a corruption-free government, good governance, he has decentralized power, today States have more financial powers in the history of independent India. His people-centric policies have helped in uplifting millions of people from poverty. Isn't it shame that after 70 years of independence millions of

people were living in India without electricity, cooking food from dry wood and leaves, no house, no access to health and even toilets? These are just a few. In these five years, he has taken steps to give common man the very basic necessities that every Indian deserved to have access at the most in the first 10 years of India's independence.

In the last five years, Prime Minister Modi has laid the foundation of a modern, powerful India which is a harbinger of global peace and prosperity. Just wait and watch. He is a leader, who believes in Peace, practices the principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or World is one Family. But this does not mean, that a New India would and should tolerate terrorism. Name one country in the world, which has shown as patience and tolerance to terrorism as India? India can no longer be bullied.

In fact, if anything Prime

Minister Narendra Modi can be described as just the opposite of your cover story. He is India's Uniter in Chief. He has united India as never before. Unlike five years ago, today Indians feel proud of the country, there is a sense of ownership. He has given a new direction and energy to a country that is young and vibrant.

In this ongoing election, by and large people are not voting based on caste or religion. In 2014, Prime Minister Modi sought votes in the name of development. As Prime Minister he has focused on only three things – development, development and development. As such, in 2019, he is seeking votes and mandate based on his performance and development. In 10 days from now, results of the world's largest electoral exercise would be declared. I am sure, it will prove you wrong. He is coming back to power with much bigger mandate.

How representative are our representatives?

According to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), nearly a fifth or 19% of the close to 8,000 candidates contesting the 2019 polls have criminal cases pending against them, while 29% have assets worth Rs 1 crore or more. Candidates are also far richer than the voters they represent. For example, 50% candidates contesting the 2019 elections own net assets worth less than Rs 23.1 lakh.



India's general elections are not just one of the most complex administrative exercises in the world, they also attract a wide variety of candidates from different social and economic backgrounds. According to

the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), nearly a fifth or 19% of the close to 8,000 candidates contesting the 2019 polls have criminal cases pending against them, while 29% have

assets worth Rs 1 crore or more.

The report, which was released on Monday by the election watchdog, is based on the analysis of affidavits filed by the candidates with the

Election Commission of India. Over the years, the number of candidates with criminal cases against them has increased as have the assets of candidates. The share of candidates with criminal cases increased from 15% to 19% between the 2009 and 2019 elections, while the share of crorepati candidates increased from 16% to 29%.

There is a strong link between candidates with criminal record and their increasing participation in the polity. In When Crime Pays: Money and Muscle in Indian Politics, political scientist Milan Vaishnav writes that the primary drivers that maintain the

supply of candidates with criminal background are the collapse of the election finance regime and a continuing breakdown of the law and order situation. The demand for criminal politicians by parties, he writes, is also linked to the soaring costs of election campaigns, which parties are unable to afford. Therefore, self-financing by candidates is encouraged. Does political participation have a positive impact on the assets of candidates? It would seem so. In a recent piece in Hindustan Times, Centre for Policy Research's Neelanjan Sircar wrote: "If campaigns must be self-financed, then candidates may view contesting elections as an investment rather than a sunk cost, leading to greater levels of corruption in office as legislators try to recoup the costs of contesting elections."

While the ADR report

reveals a lot of what is wrong in the political process, it also highlights an important issue. Candidates are meant to be representatives of the electorate. But the figures reveal that is not the case. While nearly a fifth of the candidates have criminal cases pending, it is unlikely that one-fifth of the country's voters have cases against them. Candidates are also far richer than the voters they represent. For example, 50% candidates contesting the 2019 elections own net assets worth less than Rs 23.1 lakh. But, according to Credit Suisse's Global Wealth Report 2018, 50% Indians had wealth worth less than \$1,289 or about Rs 90,617 at the current exchange rate. Many of India's political candidates could not be more different from the voters they represent.

India should deliver on its projects in Nepal, not worry about Nepal joining the BRI

Nepal has embraced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's ambitious infrastructure and connectivity project, with great enthusiasm. Nepal was the only country in India's neighbourhood, other than Pakistan, to send a high-level delegation to the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) organised in Beijing recently to promote the initiative. The burgeoning Sino-Nepal relationship has raised many eyebrows in India. Two recent events have added to India's discomfort. First, Nepal signed a protocol arrangement for trade and transit treaty with China. The agreement would allow Nepal to use at least seven Chinese ports - seaports in Shenzhen,

Tianjin, Lianyungang and Zhanjiang and land ports in Shigatse, Lhasa, and Lanzhou - for third country trade. Until now, Nepal could use only Indian ports.

Second, BRI officially has a programme for Nepal now, similar to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CEPC). The joint communique issued during the Forum includes "the Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network, including Nepal-China cross-border railway" as one of 35 new BRI-affiliated programmes. While it didn't specify the number or nature of projects, Nepal has proposed nine projects that it wants to develop under the BRI banner.

One of them is a rail link connecting the country's capital to the Chinese border.

In the short run, these agreements with China have mere symbolic, rather than economic, value. Given the vast distance from China's coasts, inhospitable geographic terrain and high costs of rail-freight transportation, trading through Chinese ports is physically and economically not viable. Nepal only has a single all-weather road leading to the Chinese border, and that too remains defunct since the 2015 earthquake. A Chinese rail link is coming to Kathmandu but that is at least a decade away.

Nevertheless, these recent developments are likely to have

far-reaching implications for Nepal's relationship with its northern neighbour. However, for India, the strategic benefit of focusing on its ties with Nepal outweighs the cost incurring from the latter's relations with China. Hence, India is better off strengthening its own ties with Nepal. There are three things in particular that India should look at. First, India should demonstrate that it can deliver on its promises as well as China does, if not better. News of China-supported infrastructure projects completing ahead of schedule, one after another, might be a wake up call for India. The latter's large projects in Nepal are often delayed, and some never take off. Nepal Police Academy, for

instance, supposed to be built with Indian assistance 30 years ago, is still in limbo. This needs to change if India wants to makeover its image as a reliable development partner. Action, not words, is the key.

Second, India should have its own version of the "community of shared destiny" - a concept used by China in its external relations. Neighbouring countries like Nepal expect the economic rise of India to benefit them as well. This hasn't happened so far. Nepal faces a massive trade deficit with India, giving the country a hard time managing macroeconomic stability. Nepali agriculture exports often face non-tariff entry barriers.

Congress must spell out macro vision on its new economic model

The Congress president, Rahul Gandhi, in two recent interviews, has indicated that the economic model which worked well in the 1990s, then between 2004 and 2009, had broken down by 2012. He acknowledged that the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's mistake was to continue with the model after that, and claimed that even former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had told him in a private conversation that the model had run its course. Mr Gandhi believes that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

mistake has been continuing with the same model, which explains what he considers the economic mismanagement of the last five years.

This is among the most significant, but also intriguing, statements Mr Gandhi has made in the course of the campaign and needs careful thought. When he speaks of the 1990s model, which he accepts led to great benefits too, one assumes he is talking about economic liberalisation, and lifting restrictions which allowed the Indian private sector to grow,

India to get more economically integrated with the global economy and a middle class to flourish. When he speaks of the post-2004 model, one assumes he is referring to the addition of major social welfare initiatives like National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to the liberalisation mix in the spirit of creating inclusive growth. This was in response to the critique that the set of economic policies followed in the 1990s had exacerbated inequality and not taken care of the poorer segments of the population.

What part of this model does Mr Gandhi think broke down? In 2012 - the break off point for him - India was reeling from allegations of crony capitalism. The government was accused of policy paralysis, investments began dipping, and economic parameters began stumbling. Does he believe that a relatively liberal economic regime created conditions for this kind of corruption and stasis? And if that is the case, is Mr Gandhi suggesting a return to the pre-1991 form of heavy regulation in the economy and a drastic

increase in State intervention? If that is so, the Congress may end up throwing out the baby with the bathwater because even if Indian capitalism has major problems, there can be no doubt that India needs more reforms, not less. Or does Mr Gandhi merely mean that the country needs more welfare initiatives in the form of schemes such as Nyuntam Aay Yojana (Nyay), which the party has promised this time around? If this is the case, the Congress needs to think more carefully about how it plans to increase growth that will allow better redistribution.

The inevitable conflict in the opposition

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has been proactive over the past week. While ruling himself out of the prime ministerial race - which perhaps also stems from the recognition that the TDP may not do as well as he would have liked in the elections - Mr Naidu has been keen on convening a meeting of the opposition parties between the end of polling and the announcement of results. Reports now indicate that two key pillars of any such opposition alliance - Mamata Banerjee and Mayawati - have told Mr Naidu that this would be premature and any such meeting should be held after the results come in. To be sure, the two leaders have not rejected opposition unity in principle, but they seem to believe that deliberations will be

productive only once the arithmetic of the Lok Sabha becomes clear.

Notwithstanding the specifics of when such a meeting is held, in the eventuality that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its existing allies fall short of a majority, the attention will shift to key regional outfits. They may have projected a united front against the BJP in rallies and meetings before the elections, but in key states, broad opposition unity remained an illusion once competitive politics took over. This was most obvious in Uttar Pradesh (UP), Delhi and Haryana. There are also clear contradictions. Mr Naidu may be proactive but the numbers may well dictate that his arch rivals, K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) and Jagan Mohan Reddy be far more instrumental as

swing forces if the opposition needs numbers to keep Mr Modi out. Who sits in the meetings and call the shots will be a function of the results.

And then there will be the inevitable clash of ambitions. Till now, the non-BJP parties have been able to skirt around the question of who would be Prime Minister. But as soon as the numbers come in, four sets of actors will throw their hats in the ring. If the Congress is able to get above 140, it could well claim leadership. Ms Mayawati has already let her ambitions be known and if the alliance gets over 50 seats in UP and stops the BJP's march, she will be a contender. Ms Banerjee will think of herself as a PM candidate if she is able to prevent the BJP from rising in Bengal. Mr KCR is



known to harbour ambitions too. And then there are dark horses, from Sharad Pawar to HD Deve Gowda, who may think of this as their last chance at national leadership. If the opposition had actually resolved the PM question before the elections, its credibility as an alternative would have been higher. But the dilemma was that if they had announced someone, all other

elements of the opposition may well have sabotaged it or the person may not have had all-India acceptability to take on Mr Modi. With the opposition's firm belief that Mr Modi will fall short of a majority - this could well be untrue for there is as strong a possibility of the NDA making it to government again - the competitive game in their ranks is set to begin.

UK to take up persecution of Christians in India

The issue of alleged persecution was raised during Foreign Office questions in the House of Commons, following which the Theresa May government said it would take up with Indian authorities.



occurrence' in Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Telangana. This, it further alleges, leads to beatings, forced conversion from Christianity to Hinduism, sexual violence against women and murder. Hunt said: "I asked the Bishop of Truro to deliver an independent, honest, unflinching and hard-hitting report. What he has delivered...makes for a truly sobering read" "There is nothing more medieval than to hate someone on the basis of their faith. That it is on the rise should shock us all". At a launch event of campaign group Open Doors' global watch-list of 50 countries where Christians face the most persecution, Hunt said London should draw attention to such cases in India. The group for the first time included India in the top ten countries where Christians face the most persecution.

(News Agencies)- The Theresa May government on Tuesday said it would take up with Indian authorities cases of alleged persecution of Christians in India, days after a review commissioned by the Foreign Office highlighted several such cases in India. The issue of alleged persecution was raised during Foreign Office questions in the House of Commons by David Linden (Scottish National Party), who claimed the cases against Christians were 'escalating' in India. Foreign

Office minister Mark Field responded: "India of course has been one of many countries where there has been an increase, worsening of cases. We will obviously take up at the consular level all the cases that the member refers to". The exchange followed the submission of an interim report by the bishop of Truro on the Foreign Office's support to deal with persecution of Christians across the world to foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt. The report alleges that mob violence has become a 'regular

Priyadarshini Mattoo's killer allowed 3-week parole to write law exam



(News Agencies)- The Delhi High Court Tuesday granted three-week parole to Santosh Kumar Singh, who is serving life term for the 1996 rape and murder of law student Priyadarshini Mattoo, to write his LLM examination. Justice Mukta Gupta granted the parole to Singh for appearing in final year examination of LLM (Master of Laws). The court said Singh's examinations are scheduled to commence from May 24 and he be released from jail from May 21 after the Delhi government did not oppose his plea.

Mattoo, 25, was raped and murdered in January 1996. Singh, a law student of Delhi University, was acquitted by the trial court in the case on December 3, 1999, but the Delhi High Court had on October 27, 2006 reversed the decision, holding him guilty of rape and murder and awarded him death penalty. Singh, son of a former IPS officer, had challenged his conviction and death sentence awarded by the High Court. In October 2010, the Supreme Court had upheld Singh's conviction, but commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment.

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'Can radars detect aircraft during rain?' Rahul Gandhi jabs PM Modi



(News Agencies) Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his comment that the Indian Air Force carried out the Balakot airstrikes despite cloudy weather because it would have helped the fighter jets evade Pakistan radars. "Narendra Modi told officers that radar won't be able to track aircraft in bad weather. So Modi must answer if aircraft disappear from radar when it rains in India," said Rahul Gandhi at a rally in Madhya Pradesh's Neemuch, over 400 km from state capital Bhopal. Rahul Gandhi's sister and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi had also targeted PM Modi over his comments. She accused him of indulging in rhetoric and said "he's on the radar of the people". In an interview aired on Saturday, PM Modi had said, "The weather was not good on the day of air strike. There was a thought that crept in the minds of the experts that the day of strike should be changed. However, I suggested that the clouds could actually help our planes escape the radars.

CBI raids 22 locations in three states in Rs 250-cr Himachal Pradesh scholarship scam

Nearly 2.38 lakh students from Himachal Pradesh register for scholarships every year and after cross-checking their record since 2013-14, the entire scam was established.

(News Agencies)The CBI on Monday carried out searches at 22 locations in three states after registering a case in connection with alleged irregularities in the distribution of scholarships worth Rs 250 crore to disadvantaged students by the Himachal Pradesh government from 2013 to 2017, officials said.

The move comes six days before all the four parliamentary constituencies in Himachal Pradesh go to the polls. The searches were conducted at 22 educational institutions in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh, sources said. Teams of CBI officials raided the premises of institutions in Una, Karnal, Mohali, Nawanshahr, Ambala, Shimla, Sirmour, Solan, Bilaspur, Chamba, Gurdaspur, Kangra among others.

But since some institutes outside the state were allegedly found to be involved in the scam, the state government had registered the case. An official said the Himachal Pradesh government had forwarded the case to CBI as several discrepancies were found in the distribution of funds to students. These educational institutions allegedly received pre-matriculation and post-matriculation scholarship from the government but all the funds were not received by the beneficiaries belonging to scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, other backward classes (OBC) and minority communities, CBI has alleged. Nearly 2.38 lakh students from Himachal Pradesh register for scholarships every year and after cross-checking their record since 2013-14, the entire scam was established.



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पाकिस्तान के अंतर जारी करने अपने हिस्से के घानी की रोकने का फैसला किया है। इस घानी का बंद करने और पाकिस्तान को जाने जाने हिस्से के घानी की रोकने का फैसला किया है। इसके साथ ही इस घानी को बंद करने और पाकिस्तान की तरफ मोदी का फैसला भी केंद्र सरकार ने किया है। मोदी ने मोदी सरकार ने बंद कदम उठाए हैं। मोदी सरकार ने बंद कदम उठाए हैं।

के बंद कदम और पाकिस्तान की तरफ मोदी का फैसला भी केंद्र सरकार ने किया है। मोदी ने मोदी सरकार ने बंद कदम उठाए हैं। मोदी सरकार ने बंद कदम उठाए हैं।

भारतीय-अमेरिकन कम्युनिटी द्वारा घोर निंदा

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आईएस में शामिल हुई महिला को अमेरिका ने एंटी देने से किया इंकार

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अमेरिका ने आईएस में शामिल हुई महिला को एंटी देने से किया इंकार। अमेरिका ने आईएस में शामिल हुई महिला को एंटी देने से किया इंकार। अमेरिका ने आईएस में शामिल हुई महिला को एंटी देने से किया इंकार।

In Mayawati's 'sinking ship' jibe at Modi, a claim about RSS' stand on PM



(News Agencies) Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, keeping up her attack on Prime Minister Modi on Tuesday said, "Modi government's ship is sinking," as the Lok Sabha elections 2019 entered the last lap with phase 7 voting scheduled on May 19. "Prime Minister Modi government's ship is sinking, even the RSS has stopped supporting them. In view of unfulfilled election promises and the public agitation, their swayamsevaks are not being seen putting in the work, it has made Shri Modi nervous," the BSP chief tweeted. This comes a day after the two leaders sparred over alleged atrocities on Dalits. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hit out at Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, accusing her of "shedding crocodile tears" over an alleged gang rape in Rajasthan's Alwar and dared her party to withdraw support from the Congress government in that state. Hours after his remark, Mayawati accused Modi of doing "dirty politics", and demanded his resignation for incidents of Dalit atrocities in the past. The crime in Alwar led to protests across the state after the woman's husband said she was raped on April 26 and the police were informed on April 30, but a first information report (FIR) was filed only on May 7.

Supreme Court refuses to consider Karti Chidambaram's plea seeking release of Rs 10 crore security

Son of senior Congress leader P Chidambaram, Karti Chidambaram is facing probe in the INX Media and the Aircel Maxis cases.

(News Agencies)-The Supreme Court on Tuesday declined to consider Karti Chidambaram's plea seeking release of his Rs 10 crore deposit, submitted as security for travelling abroad.

A Bench of Justices Indra Banerjee and Sanjiv Khanna asked Karti's advocate to mentioned the plea before a Bench of Chief Justice India Ranjan Gogoi as there is no urgency in the matter.

Karti's counsel told the court he had taken a loan to submit the security deposit and is paying interest on it.


Son of senior Congress leader P Chidambaram, Karti Chidambaram is facing probe in the INX Media and the Aircel Maxis cases. On January 30, a Bench of the Chief Justice had allowed him to travel abroad but with a condition of depositing the said amount.




After making the deposit he travelled abroad, but again approached the top court last week seeking permission to travel US, Spain and Germany for international tennis tournaments in May and June. The Chief Justice allowed his plea and ordered him to deposit another Rs 10 crore as security.

As a result, Karti sought that the sum deposited earlier, after the January 30 order, be released as he had to take a loan to raise the amount and is paying interest.

Congress' Karti Chidambaram is contesting Lok Sabha elections from Tamil Nadu's Sivaganga parliamentary seat.






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'Monsoon slightly late, may be below normal': Skymet

The monsoon season delivers about 70% of India's annual rainfall and is key to the success of the farm sector in Asia's third-biggest economy.

(By Our Staff Reporter)- Private weather forecaster Skymet Weather has reiterated its prediction of a below-normal monsoon this year, and given the significance of this at a time when farmers in many parts of the country are already in the grip of an agrarian crisis, all eyes are now on the India Meteorological Department or IMD which will release its own update later this month.

On Tuesday, Skymet said the monsoon will set in over Kerala on June 4 and that monsoon rains will be below normal at 93% of the Long period Average or LPA.

It added that all four regions of the country will see below normal rains, especially in June and the first half of July.

Skymet Weather's monsoon forecast may have serious implications for agriculture because pre-monsoon rainfall was 21% below the long period average of 82.5mm between March 1 and May 8, according to IMD.

North-west India with a deficit of 37% and peninsular India with a deficit of 39% are the worst affected. The soil is dry in

these regions, and a below normal monsoon is likely to make it even more difficult for farmers who will begin sowing of kharif (or monsoon) crops in June.

The monsoon usually sets in over Kerala by June 1. Last year, it did so on May 29. The monsoon then advances northwards, usually in surges, and covers the entire country around July 15. In 2017, the monsoon set in over Kerala on May 30. IMD is likely to announce its own monsoon onset date on Wednesday.

On April 3, Skymet Weather forecast below-normal monsoon, but on April 15, IMD forecast that there would be a "near normal" monsoon at 96% of LPA.

M Rajeevan, secretary, ministry of earth sciences (MoES), said at the time that the department expects a good distribution of rainfall across the country. IMD's forecast probability however showed a moderate chance of a "below normal" monsoon (32%). The probability for "deficient" monsoon was 17%, "near normal", 39%, and for "above normal", 10%.

Rainfall between 96% and

104% of LPA is considered normal, below-normal is 90-96% of rainfall, while below 90% is characterised as deficit. On Tuesday, Skymet Weather's regional analysis suggested that monsoon rains over east and north-east India will be 92% of LPA, north-west India, 96%, central India, 91%, and the southern peninsula, 95%. "All the four regions are going to witness lower-than-normal rainfall this season. It seems that the initial advancement of the monsoon over Peninsular India will be slow," said Jatin Singh, managing director, Skymet Weather. IMD officials said they will issue an updated forecast in the latter part of the month and once again dismissed threat from the El Nino effect. "Weak El Nino conditions are persisting but it hasn't gained strength, so our observations on its impact on monsoon are still valid. But a detailed assessment will be released later this month," said KG Ramesh, IMD's director general. El Nino is a weather phenomenon characterised by warm ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. In

El Nino years, the monsoon is usually weak and more episodes of heat waves are recorded in India. DS Pai, senior scientist at IMD, Pune, said "Some of our models are showing that the El Nino conditions will weaken to neutral during monsoon, while some are showing that they may persist through the monsoon."





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Lok Sabha Election 2019

Mani Shankar Aiyar's "Neech" Slur An Attempt To Stay In News: Congress



abused me. This is their condition after the sixth phase of the election. I consider their abuses as a gift. I will not reply to them, you (public) will reply by voting for the BJP".

Mr Aiyar was also slammed by the BJP as "irrepressible" and said that the 78-year-old was "upset that Sam Pitroda was getting all the attention" over his controversial remarks on the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. "Mani Shankar Aiyar pulls Pitroda's foot out of his mouth and puts it in his..." tweeted Amit Malviya, the head of the BJP's IT cell. Mr Aiyar was suspended by the party two years ago after he called PM Modi a "Neech aadmi," in the middle of the Gujarat assembly election in 2017. His remarks were even criticised by Congress chief Rahul Gandhi. His suspension was revoked months later, in August 2018 after recommendation by the party's disciplinary committee.

In his article, Mr Aiyar said that PM Modi "needs to be warned that he is guilty of anti-national activity in trying to ride on the sacrifices of our army and CRPF martyrs in a dirty election campaign".

(News Agencies) After initially going soft on Mani Shankar Aiyar, the Congress party today condemned the senior leader's article where he justified the "Neech" slur he had used for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, adding that disciplinary action will be taken against him.

The opinion piece, published in the Rising Kashmir and reproduced by The Print, is an attempt by Mr Aiyar to stay relevant in news, said Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala. "It was wrong to use these words. Hatred, violence and abuse are the modus operandi of Modi and his regime...We condemn the remarks of Mani Shankar Aiyar for using these words and not

adhering the political ideology," he said.

Earlier in the day, Congress leader Jaiveer Shergill was seen trying to justify Mr Aiyar's remarks. Asked whether Mr Aiyar had embarrassed the party yet again, Mr Shergill said: "Yes, it is embarrassing that today we have a PM who has degraded the post of PM, it is embarrassing when he called Rahul Gandhi hybrid half calf, it is embarrassing he called someone 50 crore ki girlfriend, called Rajiv Gandhi bhrashtachari number 1."

PM Modi, at a rally in Uttar Pradesh, said: "These mahamilavati' people SP, BSP and the Congress, all are abusing me. Not a single day has passed when they have not

At Priyanka Gandhi rally, Navjot Sidhu rejoins Punjab campaign to attack Badals

Navjot Singh Sidhu had taken offence to the Punjab Congress dropping him out of the list of speakers at a Rahul Gandhi's Moga rally in March this year and had been in a sulk for days, skipping office and political events.



(News Agencies) Punjab minister Navjot Singh Sidhu who had skipped his home state Punjab finally hit the campaign trail with a rally addressed by Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in Bathinda on Tuesday. Sidhu, a star campaigner of the Congress in many states, had kept himself out of electioneering in the state reportedly because he felt slighted by the state leadership including Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh.

Sidhu had taken offence to the Punjab Congress dropping him out of the list of speakers at a Rahul Gandhi's Moga rally in March this year and had been in a sulk for days, skipping office and political events. "If I am not good enough to speak at Rahul's

rally, I am not good enough as a speaker and a campaigner. Whether I am invited to speak or not is something that is not under my control. But it has shown me my place," Sidhu had said before going incommunicado.

Sidhu did emerge weeks later to campaign for the party but this time, he only addressed election meetings in states as far as Gujarat, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. Some of these speeches did get him into trouble with the Election Commission also but he stayed the course. His office said the former cricketer had addressed 80 rallies over a 28-day period.

But Punjab didn't figure in his itinerary.

Threat over loan drives woman, mother to suicide

The woman and her daughter were said to have been upset at the frequent visit of bank officials to their home.

(News Agencies) A 19-year-old woman and her mother committed suicide by setting themselves on fire on Tuesday after a public sector bank allegedly threatened to attach their house for failing to repay a loan they had taken to buy it at Neyyattinkara in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram district, the police said.

Vaishnavi, a first-year college student, succumbed to her burns while she was being rushed to a hospital. Her 40-year-old mother struggled for her life with 90% burns before she died at Thiruvananthapuram Medical College Hospital.

C K Hareendran, a local legislator who said he had earlier

tried to negotiate and settle the issue, blamed Canara Bank's "inhuman attitude for the unfortunate incident". He sought action against the bank's officials.

In a press release, Canara Bank said its officials had not threatened or put any pressure on the family. Vaishnavi's father, K Chandran, said he was not home when the two set themselves afire. "Since there was some default... about ₹6 lakh was pending and the bank had threatened to attach our property," Chandran told reporters. He said they had sought some time from the bank to enable them to sell their property to clear the dues.

"...bank officials continuously called up my wife demanding that we repay the amount or face attachment."

Chandran said he had loaned ₹7.80 lakh from the Canara Bank's Neyyattinkara branch 15 years ago and had repaid ₹8 lakh. He added the bank insisted that he had to pay ₹5 lakh more as interest and other penalties. The family's neighbours said they had received phone calls and a message from the bank on Tuesday morning, saying the house will be attached by May 15. The mother and the daughter were really upset over the frequent visits of the bank's officials, they said. An official from Canara Bank, who did not



want to be identified, said the family had failed to repay both the interest and the principal amount of the loan for the last five years. The official added that the bank then moved a court, which ordered the attachment if the amount was not repaid within the stipulated time. The official added that the deadline was May 15 and denied any pressure on the family.

"It was a sad incident. Officials

acted as per the law. We are under pressure from seniors to clear all pending dues. It was unfair to target them," the official said. Senior officials of the bank were unavailable for comments. Angry residents took to the streets in Neyyattinkara and blocked a road seeking the arrest of the manager of the bank's local branch and other employees.

Lok Sabha elections 2019: 'BJP will win more seats than in 2014': Rajnath Singh

Senior party leader Rajnath expressed that the BJP will win more seats than 2014 and that a two-thirds majority for the NDA cannot be ruled out, asked the Congress to respond to "neech aadmi" remark.



BJP will win more seats in Lok Sabha polls than it did in 2014. Two-thirds majority for NDA also cannot be ruled out. The hope people had from the prime minister in the 2014 elections has turned into confidence this time," Singh said at a press conference in the BJP headquarters here. "Last time, it was Modiji versus Sonia Gandhi/Manmohan Singh. This time it is Modiji versus who? It is unknown. The opposition should not keep people in dark, should reveal its PM candidate," he said. He also asked the Congress to respond to Aiyar justifying his 2017 "neech aadmi" remark about the prime minister. "Congress should give its response to Mani Shankar Aiyar's comment that his claim about Modi was correct," he said.

(News Agencies) Expressing confidence that the BJP will win more seats than it did in 2014, senior party leader Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said a two-thirds majority for the NDA cannot be ruled out. The Union Home minister said the opposition should reveal who is their prime ministerial candidate and also took on the Congress for its leader Mani Shankar Aiyar justifying his "neech aadmi" jibe against the prime minister. "I have reached a conclusion that

After backlash on 'Godse a patriot' remark, Pragya Thakur apologises to BJP

(News Agencies) Pragya Thakur, who provoked national outrage by calling Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse a patriot, has apologised for her comments, the BJP's Madhya Pradesh unit said after a barrage of criticism from political parties across the board. "She has apologized for her statement. She said she had said it by mistake." Rajneesh Agrawal, a BJP spokesperson in Madhya Pradesh said. Another BJP leader added that the BJP's state president Rakesh Singh had also called up Thakur and ticked her off. The Congress had called her patriot remark an "insult to the country" and demanded an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP boss Amit Shah. "India's soul is under attack from the successors of Nathuram

Godse, the BJP ruling dispensation," said Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala. Digvijaya Singh, the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister who was pitted against Pragya Thakur for the Bhopal seat, said glorifying Nathuram Godse wasn't patriotism either.



"It is sedition," he said on Pragma Thakur's controversial statement. Pragya Thakur, responding to a question on actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan's remark that Godse was the first extremist in independent India and a Hindu, had retorted: "Nathuram Godse was a 'deshbhakt' (patriot), is a 'deshbhakt' and people consider him as a 'deshbhakt'."

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TIME once called PM Modi Man of the Year, it won't decide who runs India: Ravi Shankar Prasad

Speaking exclusively to India Today TV from Patna Sahib, where he is contesting the Lok Sabha election against Congress's Shatrughan Sinha, Ravi Shankar Prasad also said that the TIME magazine will not decide who would be the prime minister of India.

(News Agencies) Union law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said on Tuesday that TIME magazine, which recently put Prime Minister Narendra Modi on its cover and called him India's "divider in chief", had once called him 'Man of the Year'. Speaking exclusively to India Today TV from Patna Sahib, where he is contesting the Lok Sabha election against Congress's Shatrughan Sinha, Ravi Shankar Prasad also said that the TIME magazine will not decide who would be the prime minister of India. Ravi Shankar Prasad also claimed that the person who had written the TIME magazine article 'Can the World's Largest Democracy Endure Another

Five Years of a Modi Government?' belongs to Pakistan.

"Those who have written the TIME article are from Pakistan. Earlier, the same magazine had called PM Modi 'Man of the Year'. TIME magazine will not decide who will be the prime minister of the country. The Indian citizens will decide it," he said.

Ravi Shankar Prasad also spoke about a huge victory and a complete majority for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The Union minister also said that BJP will script a historic win in Patna Sahib as well.

"We will have a historic win on May 23. We will script

a historic, unimaginable victory in Patna Sahib as well. Only BJP will get full majority in Patna. We will get a full majority because every citizen believes that India is safe in PM Modi's hands," Ravi Shankar Prasad said.

He said, "PM Modi has made India reach great heights for the Army and the poor people. Pm improved India's image, it's the big issue this season."

On former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was recently referred to as 'Brashtachari number 1' by PM Modi, Ravi Shankar Prasad said that Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, too, has been abusing the country's



prime minister.

"He [Rahul Gandhi] was rattled over Bofors scam. Who was middleman Quattrochi? If the truth comes out, their image will be maligned. We know well of Congress's history of corruption and the MP who has joined another party, he will have to answer," he said, adding, "I am proud that no scam took place under the Modi government. This is how Modi is taking India

forward."

Speaking on the Rafale aircraft, the Union minister said that Rahul Gandhi has been "lying shamelessly". "Till today, Rahul Gandhi has not given testimony in Rafale cases. He is lying shamelessly," Ravi Shankar Prasad said.

Ravi Shankar Prasad also condemned Congress leader Sam Pitroda's 'hua-toh-hua' remark on 1984 anti-Sikh riot and said that Congress has never ensured justice to the riot victims.

"Sajjan Kumar was put behind the bars under the Modi government," he said.

When Ravi Shankar Prasad was asked about the issue of nationalism as compared to that of development, he said that the BJP government has always been for development but "questions are raised on the Indian Army, then we will definitely talk about nationalism".

We must make India proud of us again



(News Agencies) With election results weeks away, I step back and look at my beloved country. Never have I seen such polarisation, such anger and such base thought, and as I hear people, read articles and watch television, I can't help but ask, "India, what have we done to you?" Seventy-two years ago, we peacefully made our colonisers leave. Seventy-two years ago, as our country was split, we saw unprecedented violence. Going forward from there, we chose to live life like those who lived, fought and died to give us freedom. Peacefully and inclusively.

But it seems to me, the nature of my country is changing, the fibre has changed. This is the India we have made.

Is there any going back? How do we make India proud of us again?

To love a motherland is no different from loving a parent. Familial love requires a particular devotion. Often, children let their parents down. Let's not let India down. "No nation has ever become great unless it has overcome dangers and difficulties and has thereby strengthened its own inner fibre" - Katha Upanishad. Let's overcome and make India proud of us, again.

Mathura temple committee demands inquiry into Rs 10.74 crore embezzlement of temple funds

(News Agencies)-The State Human Rights Commission has sent notices to the District Magistrate and Senior Superintendent of Police over Rs 10.74 crore embezzlement of temple funds in Mathura.

The notices were issued after Daan-Ghati temple committee in Mathura's Govardhan approached the State Human Rights Commission alleging that the assistant manager of the temple has embezzled over Rs 10.74 crore of temple funds.

Earlier, the Daan-Ghati temple committee had filed a complaint with the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate of Mathura alleging that Dalchand Chowdhry, the administrator and finance controller of the temple, was misusing temple funds.

The temple committee said they sent an application to the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate of Mathura for registering a criminal case

against Dalchand Chowdhry.

The temple's administration is managed under the supervision of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate of Mathura. The Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate of Mathura had then

accepted that the assistant

manager of the temple did not deposit the donations collected from May 2017 to September 2018 in the temple committee bank account.

The Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate of Mathura then said that Chowdhry had not deposited the account cash books and other paperwork in court.

In the case filed by the temple committee, it said a tender worth Rs 13.85 crores was passed by

the court but only Rs 5.31 crore was deposited in the bank. In the past three months, a tender of Rs 2.60 crore was also passed but the account for that money along with the Rs 10.74 crore in the bank has not been submitted to the court.

Ramakant Kaushik of the Giriraj Mandir Seva Samiti said Mathura temple committee approached the State Human Rights Committee since no action was taken by the Mathura police against the assistant manager. The State

Human Rights Committee has now issued notices to SSP and District Magistrate of Mathura to explain why criminal proceedings were not initiated in this case. When India Today talked to Dalchand Chowdhry about the case, he said that he has deposited all the papers demanded by the court in February and there has been no irregularity in the temple's finances.





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Why the U.S.-China Trade War Could Be Long and Painful: No Offramps

Just two weeks ago, the United States and China seemed to be gliding toward a trade deal meant to resolve tensions between the world's two largest economies.

But the breakdown in talks since - the United States raised tariffs to 25 percent on \$200 billion of Chinese imports, for example, and is threatening to tax an additional \$300 billion - worries people who study international economic diplomacy.

That's because both the United States and China seem to be digging into their positions in ways that will be hard to resolve with the mutual face-saving that typically turns high-stakes negotiations into deals.

To use a common negotiating metaphor, it is not clear what the offramps might be that would allow a de-escalation and prevent a major trade war that would prove costly to both nations.

In effect, President Trump appears to view continuing tension with China as good for him politically and has said, contrary to the view of mainstream economists, that tariffs are a reason for the United States' recent economic good fortune.

China's leaders may not reveal

their thinking in real time on Twitter, but they have signaled that many of the concessions the United States wants would require China to sacrifice core parts of its economic strategy and national sovereignty - in particular its ambitions to lead in the high-tech industries of the future.

"Each side has dug itself into some fairly deep holes such that it will be difficult to emerge from," said Douglas Rediker, chairman of International Capital Strategies and a former U.S. representative to the International Monetary Fund. As is often the case in negotiations, the pathway to a deal may rest in a "constructive ambiguity" that both sides can present to their domestic audiences as a win.

"Do I believe there's enough room to find common ground?" Mr. Rediker said. "Yes, but only based on this ambiguity that doesn't necessarily resolve the issues in one party's favor or another."

Both sides have taken subtle steps to allow time for last-ditch efforts. China sent a senior negotiator to Washington last week despite the breakdown in talks, and it delayed the start of its retaliatory tariffs on American imports until June 1.

The United States applied the

newest wave of higher tariffs based on when ships containing the affected goods arrive, adding a few weeks in which a reversal could be hammered out.

And President Trump and President Xi Jinping of China could meet at the G20 summit in late June in Osaka, Japan, which would be an opportunity for de-escalation at the highest levels.

But open lines of communication and time to work won't by themselves solve the problem of how to finesse some mutually agreeable deal, particularly given that both countries view this negotiation as resetting their economic relationship in ways that would have long-lasting consequences.

Add in Mr. Trump's tendency to view every negotiation through a zero-sum prism, and it may be hard to find a pathway for both parties to go home able to proclaim victory.

When the negotiations seemed to be going well a few weeks ago, "I thought we were going toward constructive ambiguity," said Mary E. Lovely, an economist and trade expert at Syracuse University's Maxwell School.

The United States is demanding that China codify rules into law

to protect American companies (and their technology) that do business in China. Chinese negotiators now reject that possibility; American officials said they had agreed to those provisions.

"It looks like there was a level of specificity that China wasn't willing to accept and a level of ambiguity that the Trump administration wasn't willing to accept," Ms. Lovely said. "It looks like the Chinese are firm that there are some areas where they are not willing to go, that they see as disrespectful."

If the escalation now being signaled by both sides goes into force, Americans will face higher prices for a wide range of goods, and certain American manufacturers will face less demand for their products. Already, American farmers are suffering amid reduced Chinese demand for soybeans and other products. The Chinese manufacturing sector is hurting as well - and is likely to suffer further if tariffs reduce American demand for their products or drive relocation of production to other countries.

Ultimately the question becomes how much of that pain each side will be willing to endure, and whether the two nations' leaders

feel a sense of urgency to each help the other save face domestically.

Things can change quickly. In a different sphere, for example, Mr. Trump went from threatening North Korea with nuclear annihilation to acting as if they were old friends practically overnight.

But given where things stand, it may take that kind of surprising reset between two top leaders, built on personal relationships, rather than the slow grind of hammering out an agreement that is more typical of economic diplomacy.

"The off-ramps are tricky here because the president believes this is good policy, and the Chinese are loath to cave on it," said Jay Shambaugh, a professor of international economics at George Washington University and director of the Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution. "It's not abundantly clear how you climb down without any damage."

The question for the weeks and months ahead is how much damage each side will tolerate before rethinking some of those basic assumptions and deciding that they don't want to dig in quite so hard, after all.

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From bombings to anti-Muslim riots: Sri Lanka descends deeper into turmoil

Sri Lanka has known since the end of its civil war. The terrorist group Islamic State claimed it had a hand in the attacks, which were blamed on two local groups. Now, Sri Lankan authorities are working to contain a worrying outbreak of communal violence. Attacks on mosques and property owned by Muslims -- a minority population

in Sri Lanka -- have been reported in North Western Province. One man, Mohamed Ameer Mohamed Sally, has died of stab wounds in Puttalam district. Muslims who spoke to TRT World, a Turkish state-run channel, complained of soured relations with friends or threats to their livelihood. A man who witnessed the ransacking of a mosque in Kinyama provided

harrowing testimony: "They destroyed and burned Korans, broke every glass window and door and urinated on the water storage which Muslims used to take ablution." Agence France-Presse reports that the most recent violence began in Chilaw, in Puttalam district, where Christians perceived a shopkeeper's Facebook post --

"Don't laugh more, 1 day u will cry" -- to be a threat. A mosque and businesses including the man's shop were attacked; he has reportedly been arrested. Sri Lanka has now relaxed an overnight curfew imposed on Monday everywhere except the restive North Western Province, and temporarily blocked some social media. "I appeal to all

citizens to remain calm and not be swayed by false information," Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said on May 13. "Security forces are working tirelessly to apprehend terrorists and ensure the security of the country, but each time there is civil unrest, we increase their burden and hamper ongoing investigations."

The rise of India's new billionaires and the fall of the old *The BJP's challenge in east Uttar Pradesh*

The changes are set to help India's ultra-rich population grow at the world's fastest pace.

It's a shift shaped partly by a debt-fueled expansion that left businesses from power generation to airlines with \$190 billion in soured loans. Over the past few years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has cracked down on delinquent borrowers, and India's banks moved to seize their assets, a dramatic change for a country where the wealthy once enjoyed almost complete protection. While old business clans continue to dominate India's rich lists, a tenfold expansion in its economy since its opening in the 1990s has spawned new tycoons in fields like technology. The number of billionaires in India more than doubled to 119 between 2013 and 2018, according to Knight Frank. And the country will lead the global growth in ultrahigh net worth individuals, with its numbers rising 39 percent to 2,697 by 2023, the researcher estimates.

'The business environment has improved over the years,' said

Charles Dhanaraj, a professor at the Fox School of Business at Temple University in Philadelphia.

'The availability of venture capital and private equity has changed the opportunity space for promising businesses. So we should see more of these startups and scaleups in the coming years.'

Here are some well-known names who have seen a shift in their fortunes:

Old Money

Telecom Troubles:

Anil Ambani, the younger brother of Asia's richest man, inherited some of the newer businesses of Reliance Industries Ltd. in 2005 as part of a settlement with older sibling, Mukesh, following the death of their father Dhirubhai Ambani three years earlier. Now, more than a decade later, the younger Ambani has been fending off creditors and fighting multiple cases in courts amid his phone carrier Reliance Communications Ltd.'s slide into bankruptcy. A representative for Anil Ambani didn't comment. The value of his holdings in companies has plunged to about \$120 million from a net worth of at least \$31

billion in 2008, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

A Boom and Crash:

The first-generation entrepreneurs, Shashi and Ravi Ruia, started the Essar Group in 1969 as a construction company. Later they diversified into new businesses, investing about \$18 billion between 2008 and 2012. The excessive leverage across the group and some adverse policy actions forced them to sell many of their assets. The Ruia brothers were jointly worth more than \$4 billion at the start of 2015, and have since lost their billionaire status, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

The Turbine Maker:

Tulsi Tanti's Suzlon Energy Ltd. purchased German REpower Systems for nearly \$2 billion in 2007 to be hailed as a global company, but things went downhill from there. Once the world's top turbine maker, Suzlon's debt-driven expansion caused one of India's largest corporate debt default in 2012. Seven years later Tanti is struggling to repair his company's finances.

HT travelled to three constituencies which voted on Sunday — Bhadohi, Machlishahar, and Jaunpur — and three constituencies which will vote on May 19 — Robertsganj, Chandauli, and Varanasi. Here are four new challenges the BJP confronts in the region:

THE YOGI LIABILITY

UP is polarised, with a sharp division between those who want Modi as Prime Minister and those who will vote for the Mahagatbandhan (grand alliance) of the SP-BSP. The surname of a voter is often a clear indicator of who will vote which way, with upper castes, non-Yadav OBCs (other backward classes) and smaller Dalit groups with the BJP and Yadavs, Muslims and Jatavs with the alliance. The division percolates from the bigger cities to the villages.

But in this starkly polarised landscape, there is one common refrain you increasingly hear from both sides of the political spectrum: Yogi Adityanath is not adding votes to the BJP's kitty because those who are attracted to his brand of politics would have anyway voted for BJP; and if at all he has an impact, it is negative because he is helping consolidate Opposition votes and turn away

swing voters.

Even a section of BJP supporters - especially from the backward communities - say that while they will vote for Modi this time around, in 2022, they wish to see a change at the state-level. The critique of Adityanath spans from his perceived casteism (he is accused of promoting only Thakurs); his policies born out of ideological rigidity (the emphasis on cow protection and the crackdown on slaughterhouses has led to a stray cattle menace destroying farms and keeping up farmers all night to protect their fields); his perceived inaccessibility; and his lack of attention to daily development and livelihood concerns. Yadavs and Jatavs - the core groups behind the SP-BSP alliance - also claim that but for Yogi government's exclusionary attitude towards them, their alliance would not have had the same kind of synergy on the ground. It is striking that the criticism of Adityanath is so deep in Purvanchal, the region that is his home ground. It could well be the case that the resentment against Adityanath does not get manifested this time around, and Modi is able to offset the local anti incumbency.

No summer respite from air pollution this season in Delhi

communications initiative, from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Heavy showers were recorded by the IMD? (India Meteorological Department) in parts of the national capital on Monday night, bringing some relief from the scorching heat and the rising pollution, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) coming down slightly from 322 at 4pm to 311 at 11pm. The AQI is calculated on a scale of 0-500 with a 0-50 score considered "good", 51-100 "satisfactory", 101-200 "moderate", 201-300 "poor", 301-400 "very poor" and 401-500 "severe".

Environment scientists, however, said this slight drop in the pollution could be temporary as it was due to the rain, and the pollution will remain in the "poor" or "very poor" category at least till May 16 due to the recurrent dust storms.

Ghaziabad on Monday was the most

polluted city in the country with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 384 as per the CPCB data. Neighbouring Noida was the second most polluted city with AQI value of 347.

Officials from East Municipal Corporation, New Delhi Municipal Council and public works department said they have been sprinkling water, covering construction sites, mechanically sweeping roads regularly to combat dust pollution, but pollution levels don't reflect these actions.

Poor air quality in Delhi has been aggravated by westerly winds bringing dust from neighbouring Rajasthan and Haryana and below-normal pre-monsoon showers in northwestern India, leading to extremely dry and dusty conditions. Pre-monsoon rainfall between March 1 to May 8 over northwest India is 37% below the long-period average, according to data

released by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Minutes of the meeting held by the task force on the graded response action plan (GRAP) on May 8 show that it was briefed about a sudden rise in particulate matter concentration in Delhi-NCR to "very poor" category and further, moving towards the "severe" category as a result of a fresh plume of dust emitted from western Rajasthan and northern Gujarat reaching Delhi on May 8.

The task force recommended that agencies intensify efforts to control dust from various sources such as construction and demolition sites, handling of construction material waste, roads, stone crushers, and ready mix concrete plants. The task force also advised public to minimise prolonged exposure to high air pollution levels outdoor. "GRAP is already being

implemented. The main source for a spike is dust which is being transported from nearby areas and even generated locally. The weather conditions are ideal for re-suspension," said VK Shukla, head of CPCB's air quality lab in Delhi. Re-suspension refers to dust from local sources continuing to be suspended in the air as opposed to settling.

Air quality has been exacerbated by forest fires in various districts of Uttarakhand over the past week. The state recorded the highest number of forest fires in the past week with about 4,000 fires detected through satellite images by the Forest Survey of India (FSI). "There is a sudden spike in forest fires now because the weather conditions are ideal. Till two weeks back, there was moisture in the soil because of some thunderstorm activity.

'One of the most important endorsements in America right now'

Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren jockey for the campaign backing of liberal heroine Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.



(Insider Bureau)- The Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez primary is heating up. For the second time in five days, the star freshman congresswoman is appearing alongside Bernie Sanders at a high-profile event. Rep. Ro Khanna, co-chairman of Sanders' campaign, is talking with Ocasio-Cortez's staff about the primary. And Sanders' team told POLITICO that he and Ocasio-Cortez "have had phone calls."

Ocasio-Cortez's work on Sanders' 2016 campaign - and the fact that several staffers from that bid went on to work for her and the pro-Ocasio-Cortez group Justice Democrats - suggest the Vermont senator has the inside track for her coveted endorsement. But Sen. Elizabeth Warren is making an aggressive pitch for Ocasio-Cortez's nod, too: She's met with her privately and wrote a gushing essay about her for Time magazine. An aide to Warren said their teams have been in touch.

"She is excited about both of their campaigns and the ideas they are putting forward," said Corbin Trent, a spokesman for Ocasio-Cortez. He added that the congresswoman isn't planning to endorse soon. Khanna put it similarly: "I know [Ocasio-Cortez] has very strong positive feelings toward Sen. Sanders. I know she also has positive feelings toward Sen. Warren."

Sanders and Warren aren't the only candidates wooing AOC. Sen. Kirsten

Gillibrand and former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julián Castro have also made overtures to the first-term phenom.

"I think it's one of the most important endorsements in America right now," said Rebecca Katz, a progressive consultant who advised Cynthia Nixon's left-wing gubernatorial campaign in New York. "AOC has captured the imagination of so many young people, so many women and so many nonpoliticos who really see her as a ray of light."

Plus, Katz said, Ocasio-Cortez has a constituency that she "can really sway." Ocasio-Cortez has spoken positively only about Sanders and Warren when asked about the Democratic field in recent weeks. The competition

between Warren and Sanders for her support represents a new front in the delicate cold war between the two for the Democratic Party's left flank.

Landing Ocasio-Cortez's endorsement would be a coup for Warren; even getting her to hold off on formally backing Sanders might be considered a win. For Sanders, an endorsement from her would symbolize that he was consolidating his grip on the left wing of the party even with Warren, a fellow progressive populist, in the race.

Khanna said he was told that Ocasio-Cortez would decide sometime before New York's primary next year, well after voting is underway. By then, it will likely be clear whether Sanders or Warren has a better shot at the nomination.

Like Ocasio-Cortez, Sanders and Warren have spent their political careers railing against Wall Street. They also both endorsed the "Green New Deal." But there are differences in their ideologies that could influence Ocasio-Cortez. While Sanders is a self-

described democratic socialist like Ocasio-Cortez, Warren has said she is a "capitalist to my bones."

"I think if AOC makes an endorsement, she'll be looking at the candidates' closest to her governing vision and central message: naming the culprits in our nation's ruling class and fighting for a multiracial democracy where all of us are entitled to things like health care, education and a livable planet," said Waleed Shahid, communications director for Justice Democrats, which recruited Ocasio-Cortez to run for Congress. "That means policies that match the scale of our crises like single-payer 'Medicare for All' and a Green New Deal."

The issue of representation of women in government could also play a role in Ocasio-Cortez's decision. When asked about the 2020 primary by The Intercept earlier this year, she spoke about "the power of identity" and said "it's great that we have multiple female presidential candidates."

Trump says he's not considering sending troops to Iran, but he 'absolutely' would



(Insider Bureau)- President Donald Trump on Tuesday dismissed a report that he was reviewing a plan to send hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops to the Middle East, saying he'd send "a hell of a lot more troops than that" if he decided to get more aggressive with Iran. The New York Times reported Monday that top national security officials at the White House were presented last week with an updated plan by acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan that "envisions sending as many as 120,000 troops to the Middle East should Iran accelerate work on nuclear weapons." "I think it's fake news, OK?" Trump told reporters while leaving the White House Tuesday. "Now, would I do that? Absolutely. But we have not planned for that. Hopefully we're not going

to have to plan for that. If we did that, we would send a hell of a lot more troops than that." The conflict in Iran took several turns last week, with the U.S. deploying a Navy strike group and a unit of B-52 bombers to the region early in the week, followed by another warship and a battery of air-defense missiles, in response to what U.S. officials said was intelligence about threats from Iran. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has twice diverted foreign trips in response to moves by Tehran, most recently scrapping a meeting with U.S. embassy staff in Moscow to meet with European leaders in Brussels. Iran last week marked the one-year anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal by announcing that it would stop complying with parts of the pact. That move was met with U.S.

Milleridge Inn and its owners charged with violating Oyster Bay Town code

The companies were charged with a total of 18 violations, including not having a certificate of occupancy or a public assembly license.

(Insider Bureau)- Lawyers for the owner and the operator of the Milleridge Inn pleaded not guilty Monday to multiple code violations in the Nassau County Fourth District Criminal Court in Hempstead.

Kimco Jericho MI, LLC, an affiliate of New Hyde Park-based Kimco Realty Corp., which owns the restaurant property in Jericho, was charged with 11 violations of the Oyster Bay town code, including

operating without a certificate of occupancy. Milleridge Ventures, Inc, which operates the inn under a lease with Kimco, was charged with seven code violations.

Judge Paul Meli granted adjournments to July 8 in both cases.

The violations, issued March 22, include operating a restaurant with neither a certificate of occupancy nor a public assembly license, according to the charges

filed with the court. The two entities were also cited for the construction of a barn without permits.

The town also cited Kimco for allowing the barn and a fenced-off area to be used to house rescued farm animals, which is not permitted on property zoned for general business use, and other violations. The barn was built in 2015 or 2016, historical satellite images from Google Earth show. Oyster Bay Deputy Town

Supervisor Gregory Carman Jr. said Monday that the barn will be removed.

"The violations received were related to the Milleridge, which Kimco does not operate," Kimco spokeswoman Jennifer Maisch said in an email. "We have been in contact with the current Milleridge operator, who is working diligently and cooperatively with the town to resolve the matter."

Maisch said the barn was constructed by the Milleridge operators, not Kimco.

"These are technical, not

safety issues," Milleridge attorney Peter Kramer of Islandia, said after the court appearance.

Milleridge Ventures, a partnership between Isaac "Butch" Yamali and Anthony Capetola, took over operation of the Colonial-era restaurant in 2016. Kramer said the issues predate his client's involvement and they've hired a building consultant to work on resolving the violations.

Kimco and Milleridge representatives have said the other party is responsible for resolving

the violations.

One can understand the Sangh only from the Bharatiya perspective

To understand the organisation is not an easy task and it is certainly not possible to do so through a western perspective that thinks in binaries

(Insider Bureau)- The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has always thought of itself as an organisation which touches all of society. This has not changed even after Independence. Hence in the constitution of the RSS, written soon after Independence, in 1949, it is clearly articulated that should a swayamsevak choose to enter politics, he is free to join any party. This constitution was written before the establishment of the Jan Sangh. Even after the Jan Sangh came into existence and despite the fact that many swayamsevaks and pracharaks were working for it, there has been no change in this provision. As we accepted democracy after Independence, there are bound to be several political parties in the country. Since the Sangh touches all of society, it is naturally expected that a swayamsevak, with his national perspective, would actively participate in every aspect of social life, including in the political arena. Hence, just because some swayamsevaks are active in politics, it is incorrect to say that the RSS is a political entity. A political party stands for a particular ideology to which there will be a counter-ideology. The Sangh makes no such differentiations. Conceptually, the RSS and Hindu society are coterminous and psychologically they are one. Then how can the whole be a party to a part? It is important to understand this distinction. In 1930, the Sangh's founder, KB Hedgewar, along with some swayamsevaks and others, participated in the satyagraha movement in response to the call for civil disobedience by Mahatma Gandhi. Prior to his departure, Hedgewar handed over the reins of the RSS to Paranjpe and made it clear

that he and other swayamsevaks were doing this in their personal capacity. As a consequence, he was sentenced to a year's rigorous imprisonment. Post-Independence, the then home minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, suggested the merger of the RSS with the Congress Party. However Guruji respectfully turned down the invitation, stating that the Sangh wants to work as an organisation for all of society and not as a political party. A few years later, SP Mukerjee approached Guruji and suggested to him that in view of the need for a political party with a right national perspective, the Sangh should fulfil this void. Guruji asked him to take the lead in this direction and offered the Sangh's help. In 1977, during the Emergency, the Janata Party won the elections in which s w a y a m s e v a k s wholeheartedly participated. Many erstwhile parties had merged to form the Janata Party. Balasaheb Deoras, who was the Sarsanghchak at the time, declined the offer of a merger saying that in a special, critical situation in national life, the Sangh took part in the election. But now it would concentrate on its destined mission of organising society. In 2018, the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS) was held in Nagpur. On the invitation of the Sarkaryavah, veteran swayamsevak, MG Vaidya, attended it for a day. As he was 95 that day, he was felicitated by the Sarsanghchak, Mohan Bhagwat. In response to this when he spoke, he said, "To understand the Sangh is not an easy task and it is certainly not possible to do so through the western perspective that thinks in binaries. One can understand the Sangh only with the Bharatiya perspective that is integral (ekatma)." The fifth mantra of the Ishavasya Upanishad, while describing the Atma Tatva, the spirit that pervades everything

animate and inanimate, says: Tadejati tannaijati taddure tadvantike/ Tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyasya bahyatah (The Atma Tatva moves and it moves not. It is far and it is very near. It is inside everything and it also is outside everything.) Atomic scientists had once claimed that the atom is indivisible. Later, they stated that the atom is divisible and contains three particles: neutrons, protons and electrons. Further, they realised that it is not just three but that it contained multiple subatomic particles. Then they said that they are not just particles, they exhibit wave-like properties also. Then a theory came that it can neither be a particle nor a wave, it is both.



It exhibits a dual character and was called duarticle.

Eventually Heisenberg's uncertainty principle came along which said that the position and velocity of an object cannot be measured exactly at the same time, even in theory and it arises in quantum mechanics simply due to the matter wave nature of all quantum objects. "The same thing is described in the Ishavasya Upanishad. If one

understands this and the Bharatiya integral view (not the binary view) then only can one understand reality of Sangh," MG Vaidya said. Since we are now in the midst of the greatest festival of democracy, the general elections, the swayamsevaks will participate in public awareness campaigns to encourage people to exercise their franchise with an emphasis on issues of national significance.

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How the 2020 Election Could Go Off the Rails in Three Easy Steps

(Insider Bureau)- President Donald Trump showed his skill at trolling last week, sending his critics into a frenzy when he re-tweeted Jerry Falwell Jr.'s assertion that "Trump should have 2 years added to his 1st term as payback for time stolen by this corrupt failed coup." The idea of a lunge for extra-constitutional power was then embraced by none other than House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who reportedly said she "does not automatically trust the president to respect the results of any election short of an overwhelming defeat."

It might sound absurd, but for people who understand the mechanics of the U.S. electoral process, her fears have an edge of plausibility.

It's extremely unlikely that a defeated Trump would literally barricade himself in the Oval Office, denouncing the millions of undocumented immigrants and corrupt Democratic election officials who led to his downfall at the ballot box while loyal aides bar the new president from entering the White House. (Something like that actually did happen in 1946 in Georgia, though, when three men claimed

to be the governor, and one of them even set up an office down the hall.)

Less far-fetched is that a president unconcerned with the consequences of chaos for American democracy could cannily exploit our creaky, sometimes incoherent set of rules about how to deal with a disputed presidential election and turn the ensuing chaos into a claim to reelection regardless of the vote.

What would that look like? The key moments would happen at three post-Election Day stages, as long as the vote in one or more decisive states was close enough to trigger the kind of chaos we saw in Florida in 2000. Is that a reach? Hardly. Back in 2016, the three states that gave Trump his Electoral College majority - Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan - all were decided by less than 1 percent of the vote. If the race is that close again, here's what could happen next.

1. A state legislature decides to buck the electoral vote.

It's safe to presume that the 2020 election will be fought with a barrage of charges and countercharges about a "rigged"

election and that these charges will be especially fierce in swing states. As it happens, those three key states - Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin - all have Democratic governors. But their state legislatures are controlled by Republicans. And the Constitution puts the power to choose electors squarely in the hands of legislatures. It's right there in Article II, Section 1, Clause 2. And it says the legislature can do this "in such manner as the Legislature thereof may direct." A governor has no say whatsoever about this.

Indeed, there's no requirement that a legislature has to allow the citizens of its state to vote at all. In their *Bush v. Gore* concurrence, William Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas appeared to muse that a state legislature would be allowed, under the Constitution, to consider the popular vote merely advisory and to allocate the state's electors to another candidate, in defiance of the public's ballots. "There are a few exceptional cases in which the Constitution imposes a duty or confers a power on a particular branch of a State's government,"



they wrote. "This is one of them." Is it fanciful to think a legislature might step in to resolve a contested count in a presidential election? No - it's history. In 2000, as the Florida Supreme Court was ordering recounts, the state's Republican-controlled Legislature moved to take over the process, scheduling a special session to give George W. Bush its decisive 25 electoral votes. "I'm afraid there is little we can do to prevent this horrible outcome from happening," Lois Frankel of Palm Beach County, then the minority leader in the state House, said at the time. "It's inevitable now." The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Bush v. Gore* put an end to the dispute before the Florida

Legislature could act. But if there's a similar too-close-to-call result in 2020, it's not hard to imagine that Republican legislators would have little compunction in taking a similar vote. A Democratic governor might try to certify a competing slate of electors, but she would face serious obstacles in the courts. Wisconsin, for example, has a conservative, politically activist majority on its Supreme Court.

Would the legislators fear the blowback created should they choose to pick a winner in a too-close-to-call recount? The behavior of Republicans in the Senate over the past two years suggests otherwise.

China feels the pain of tariffs: 'This will kill my U.S. market'

(Insider Bureau)- Exporters from China woke up on Tuesday to the news that U.S. President Donald Trump has pressed forward with what was previously considered the "nuclear option" in the long-running trade war. By publishing a plan to roll out tariffs of up to 25 percent on almost all of the remaining goods China sells to the United States, Trump has gone further than many thought possible when the trade war's first skirmishes took place almost one year ago.

Overnight, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) published List 4 of the Section 301 regime of trade tariffs. This pledged to impose tariffs of up to 25 percent on Chinese goods with an approximate total annual trade value of US\$300 billion.

"The proposed product list covers essentially all products

not currently covered by action in this investigation", the USTR notice read, excluding "pharmaceuticals, certain pharmaceutical inputs, select medical goods, rare earth materials, and critical minerals". It was published hours after

China announced tariffs ranging from 5 to 25 percent on US\$60 billion of U.S. goods to be implemented on June 1, in response to tariff increases by the U.S. last Friday. Some exporters were taken by surprise. "Frankly, I am super pissed, because this will completely kill my U.S. market," said Anna Kam, whose company Sky City 2K exports video game console controllers, 85 percent of which are sourced and manufactured in mainland China. They are then transported

to Hong Kong, before being shipped to customers in Europe and the West Coast of the U.S. "This will kill our market because our products have a 12 to 15 percent margin. And imposing a 25 percent tariff would kill our profits," she said, adding that the



code governing "video game consoles and machines", is exactly what they export under - and is included in List 4.

"It has already been quite bad. Actually our sales already dropped off significantly and I do not know what we're going to do

about it," Kam said, adding that before tariffs were introduced, she had experienced non-tariff barriers, such as her goods being held up by U.S. Customs without any explanation.

"Last month a really big shipment of mine got stopped in Los Angeles. It really started seven, eight months ago when my first shipment got stopped in New York. And then afterwards it's just been consecutively, maybe every three or four months, one shipment will be stopped. In the five, six years I've been in this industry, I would say before these 12 months I have experienced two shipments being stopped," she said.

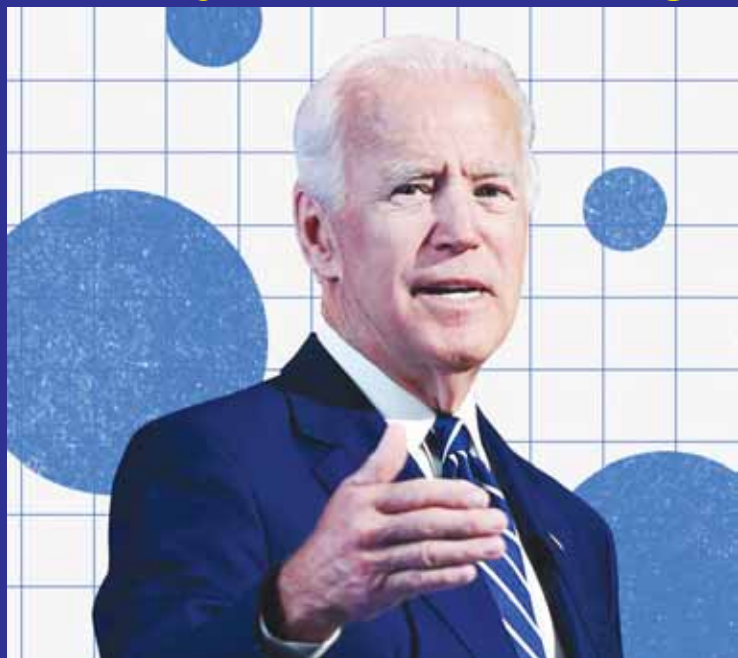
A senior manager of a firm which makes hardware for Apple iPhones in Shenzhen said "if it impacts Apple, it impacts us".

One of the tariff codes cover "telephones for cellular networks or for other wireless networks" - in other words: smartphones.

Products such as smartphones, clothing, toys and other electronics had been excluded from previous tariff lists, reportedly as a way of shielding the U.S. consumer from the worst effects of the trade war. However, their inclusion now brings the reality that consumer prices will most probably rise in the U.S., should tariffs on the products in List 4 be implemented.

The likely process is for a public hearing to take place on the new tariffs on US\$300 billion in products. If it follows the trend of previous U.S. tariff implementations on China, this would take place around June 24. Should it progress from then, the tariffs could be implemented by July 10, according to research from Westpac Bank.

What if Joe Biden runs away with this thing



(Insider Bureau)- The main storyline in the 2020 presidential race is this one: There are just so many candidates!!! And there are! With Montana Gov. Steve Bullock's announcement Tuesday morning, there are now 22(!) candidates running for the Democratic nomination. And that field could grow even larger later this week, when New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio is set to make a decision on his future political plans. But there's another below-the-radar story that is emerging: Joe Biden is way, way out ahead of the rest of the giant field. According to the Real Clear Politics average of national polling, Biden now has a 23.5-point lead over Bernie Sanders (and the rest of the pack). That's a massive leap for Biden from even a few weeks ago, when his lead was just 6 points over Sanders in RCP numbers. Biden is also ahead in Iowa (+4 in RCP averages), New Hampshire (+13 in RCP) and South Carolina (+23.5). (Nevada, which holds an early caucus, hasn't had enough polling to produce real averages.) Now, Biden's bump is quite clearly the result of positive press surrounding his entrance into the race after months of hemming and hawing. The former vice president's rollout has been spot on, with none of the gaffes or negative press coverage that hamstrung his attempt to build momentum in the run-up to the

announcement. The most likely outcome, then, is that Biden's numbers return to earth somewhat after the initial glow of his announcement wears off. But even "returning to earth" will likely mean Biden's lead nationally is in -- at minimum -- the 10- to 15-point range. Which is still significant, especially if he continues to lead in key early states like Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina. All of which raises an interesting possibility: What if, in this giant field, Biden runs away with the nomination? For all the focus on how many people are running, the race could effectively be over on February 3, 2020, if Biden crushes the field in the Iowa caucuses. To be clear: This is not the most likely scenario. Primary voters -- in both parties -- tend to like competitive races. They don't like coronations. Hillary Clinton, at this point in the 2016 election, had a far larger lead over Sanders than Biden does today. And that primary fight wound up being far closer -- and lasting much longer -- than anyone would have imagined at the time. But there are three reasons to think Biden could -- emphasis on could -- run away and hide with the nomination. 1) He's broadly liked within the party. Biden's lead over his rivals is not solely the result of his superior name identification.

Trump's China grudge match may be spinning out of control

A president torn between his love of tariffs and booming markets faces the risk of uncontrollable escalation.

(Insider Bureau)- Donald Trump the Dow Man and Donald Trump the Tariff Man found themselves back on a collision course Monday as U.S. markets tanked and fear of a full-scale trade war between the world's two largest economies reemerged with a vengeance.

The Dow Jones industrial average on Monday plunged 618 points, or roughly 2.7 percent, after a flurry of belligerent tweets from President Trump - and quick retaliation from China in the form of new tariffs - threw gut punches at hopes for a deal between the two nations.

The sell-off framed a central conflict inside the White House - and seemingly within the president's own mind. Trump loves a booming stock market, which he tracks obsessively, and views it as an indicator of success on par with his approval rating. At the same time, he loves his power to unilaterally impose tariffs, and sees winning tough concessions from China as key to his 2020 reelection bid.

But those two political imperatives are once again

at odds. And Wall Street traders and economists say that if Trump doesn't make a deal, and moves forward with a threat to slap 25 percent tariffs on everything China exports to the U.S., he could further rattle markets, tip the economy toward recession and lose his best ticket to reelection.



Worries are also growing that Trump and Chinese president Xi Jinping may have fundamentally miscalculated, allowing their trade talks to become a political duel with a logic of its own.

"Investors have always assumed that these are rational actors who will eventually realize that it's in nobody's best interest to escalate this any further," said Megan Greene, chief economist at Manulife Asset Management. "But that could turn out to be wrong."

Speaking to reporters at the White House Monday, Trump expressed high confidence in his approach. "We're in a very good position and I think it's only going to get better," Trump said of the trade fight so far.

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- The high octane campaign marked by vitriolic attacks and counterattacks by political leaders ended on Friday at 6 pm
- PM Modi and Amit Shah spearheaded the BJP challenge and crisscrossed the country addressing scores of rallies
- Congress made a vigorous push for votes with Rahul, and his sister Priyanka Gandhi leading the party challenge



Bitterly fought LS poll campaign ends; voting in final phase on Sunday

(SAI Bureau) New Delhi: Campaigning in the bitterly fought marathon Lok Sabha elections spread over 38 days drew to a close on Friday as top leaders made a final push in the seventh and concluding phase for the remaining 59 seats that included Varanasi where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking to retain the seat. Modi wrapped up his campaign for a second consecutive term predicting the BJP's return to power with a bigger mandate at his first media event since he assumed charge in 2014 while Congress chief Rahul Gandhi indicated that opposition parties will get together to form the next government.

The high octane campaign marked by vitriolic attacks and counterattacks by political leaders and use of derogatory language and objectionable remarks that forced the Election Commission to step in ended at 6 pm.

Polling will be held on Sunday in the seventh phase in all 13 seats in Punjab and an equal number of seats in Uttar Pradesh, nine in West Bengal, eight seats each in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, four in Himachal Pradesh, three in Jharkhand and the lone seat Chandigarh.

In a first, campaigning in West Bengal came to an end on Thursday, 20 hours before the scheduled time, on the orders of the Election Commission in the aftermath of violence between the BJP

and the ruling TMC in Kolkata during BJP chief Amit Shah's roadshow.

After the close of voting the focus will shift to exit polls which is not always known to be correct.

Counting of votes in the world's largest exercise in democracy will be taken up on May 23.

"The election has been amazing (shandar). Elections were held in a positive spirit. A government with full majority will come back after remaining in power for five years. This is probably happening after a very long time. This is a big deal in itself." Modi said in his opening remarks at the press conference that he addressed with Shah. The BJP got 282 seats in 2014 and the tally of the party-led NDA was 337.

Modi, however, did not take any questions from journalists, citing party discipline, and diverted them to Shah after he made a surprise entry at the BJP party headquarters in the capital. Shah, who gave a detailed report card of the campaigning as well as performance of the NDA government, endorsed Modi's assessment of the BJP returning to power with a comfortable majority.

"We will come back with a much bigger majority. We are confident that we will get more than 300 seats," a confident Shah said.

Rahul Gandhi said regional parties such as the SP, BSP and TDP will not

support the BJP and indicated that opposition parties will get together to form the next government.

Gandhi said his party's strategy was to "systematically close down every door to stop Narendra Modi from escaping."

"We closed 90 per cent of the doors (for Modi), he closed 10 per cent for himself by abusing opponents," the Congress chief said.

He also mocked the prime minister for holding his first press conference just days before the end of polling.

The Modi-Shah event coincided with Rahul Gandhi's media interaction at the Congress party headquarters.


"Why did the prime minister not accept my challenge for a debate on the Rafale issue?" asked Gandhi. The regional parties and the Congress are making a determined bid to keep the NDA out of power in the event of hung parliament and have begun informal parleys.

On the last day of the campaign, BSP president Mayawati termed the BSP-SP-RLD alliance a combine of ideas and said it will not sit silent till it uproots the Yogi Adityanath government from Uttar Pradesh and the Modi government from the Centre.

Modi and Shah spearheaded the BJP challenge and crisscrossed the coun-

try addressing scores of rallies. The Nehru-Gandhi family made a vigorous push for votes with Rahul, and his sister Priyanka Gandhi leading the party challenge.

Sonia and Rahul are contesting from the family pocket borough in Rae Bareilly and Amethi in UP where the Congress president is pitted against BJP's Smriti Irani. Rahul is also contesting from a second seat in Wayanad in Kerala. On the last day of the campaign, Priyanka Gandhi dubbed Modi as an "actor" and said it would have been better if Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan was made the prime minister. Modi whipped up nationalistic sentiments and repeatedly invoked the Balakot air strikes into his campaign speeches to woo voters and also launched an all out offensive against the Congress. Rahul Gandhi's campaign plank was centred over his farm loan waiver promise and the alleged irregularities in the Rafale jet deal. He also accused Modi of practicing the culture of crony capitalism.




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Disney is taking full control of Hulu

Disney's takeover of Hulu is just about complete. Comcast on Tuesday agreed to sell its ownership stake in the streaming video service to Disney. The sale won't happen for at least another five years, but Disney will take full operational control of Hulu right now. The deal is a sign of how much streaming video has changed in the last few years. Hulu was at one time a joint ven-

ture between several media titans: Disney (DIS), 21st Century Fox, Comcast's NBCUniversal and Time Warner (now WarnerMedia). None of those companies had majority control. Now Hulu is effectively a Disney product. The company became the majority stakeholder in the streaming video service after it closed a deal for most of Fox's assets in March. Last month,

WarnerMedia - now owned by AT&T (T) - agreed to sell its 9.5% interest back to Hulu. (CNN is a division of WarnerMedia.) Comcast (CMCSA) owns roughly a third of Hulu. Under the terms of the deal, Comcast will sell its interest to Disney for Hulu's fair market value no earlier than 2024. Disney has guaranteed that the sale price will reflect a minimum total equity value of \$27.5 billion

for Hulu at that time, according to a press release. Moody's called the deal "credit positive" for Comcast. "Hulu represents the best of television," Disney CEO Bob Iger said in a statement, adding that the company is now able to "completely integrate" Hulu into its streaming plans in a way that makes the service "even more compelling and a greater value for consumers." Disney has al-

ready made clear that Hulu will be a critical part of its streaming strategy. When the company debuted its Disney+ service to investors last month, it also spoke at length about the future of Hulu, which has more adult programming, like "The Handmaid's Tale." Disney executives talked about potentially bundling its services together for a discounted price.

SBI writes off loans worth Rs 1 lakh crore in the last two years

(By our staff reporter) - State Bank of India (SBI), the country's largest lender by assets, has written off over Rs 1 lakh crore worth of loans in the two years ended March 31, as it purged its accounts of legacy bad loans.

It wrote off Rs 61,663 crore in the year ended March 31 and an additional Rs 40,809 crore in the previous fiscal year, taking the aggregate to Rs 1.02 lakh crore. This is close to double the Rs 57,646 crore that the lender wrote off in the preced-

ing three financial years.

With a big chunk of bad loans written off in FY19, SBI's outstanding gross non-performing assets (NPAs) declined 23% year-on-year (y-o-y) to Rs 1.72 lakh crore.

Meanwhile, SBI's loan recoveries and loan upgrades (accounts which resumed paying interest) touched Rs 31,512 crore in FY19. To be sure, keeping pace with the increasing write-off, the bank's recovery and upgrades have also increased during the

same period.

While it recovered and upgraded Rs 28,632 crore loans in the three years ended March 31, 2017, in the past two years, SBI could get back Rs 45,429 crore.

It is important to note that banks write off bad loans once it becomes unviable to recover them. Banks have to ensure they fully provide for these loans before they are written off.

However, the provision requirements do not arise suddenly since lenders have to

constantly increase provisions on bad loans as they age, under the central bank's Income Recognition and Asset Classification (IRAC) norms. That apart, banks recover from written-off loans and these recoveries help shore up their other income.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) defines technical or prudential write-off as the amount of non-performing loans which are outstanding in the books of the branches, but have been written off (fully or

partially) at the head-office level.

Last Friday, after announcing the bank's FY19 results, SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar said that while the bank calls it a write-off, it is only an accounting practice.

"We have several times clarified that it is just a movement to advances under collection account (AUCA) and the follow-up is with the same intensity. So, it is an accounting entry, nothing else," said Kumar.

China to impose tariffs on \$60 billion of US goods

China said on Monday it would impose higher tariffs on a range of U.S. goods, striking back in its trade war with Washington shortly after U.S. President Donald Trump warned it not to retaliate. China's finance ministry said it plans to set import tariffs ranging from 5 percent to 25 percent on 5,140 U.S. products on a target list worth about \$60 billion. It said the tariffs will take effect on June 1. The announce-

ment came less than two hours after Trump warned Beijing not to retaliate after China said it "will never surrender to external pressure." The White House and U.S. Trade Representative's office did not immediately return a request for comment. Global equities fell sharply on Monday as hopes of an imminent trade deal between the world's two largest economies were crushed. Major

U.S. stock index futures were down about 2 percent. [MKTS/GLOB]

The trade war escalated on Friday after Trump hiked tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods, saying China had reneged on earlier commitments made during months of trade negotiations. Beijing had vowed to respond to the latest U.S. tariffs. "As for the details, please continue to pay attention. Copying a

U.S. expression - wait and see," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a daily news briefing on Monday. Trump warned China not to intensify the trade dispute and urged its leaders, including President Xi Jinping, to continue to work to reach a deal. "China should not retaliate - will only get worse," he said on Twitter. "I say openly to President Xi & all of my many friends in China that China will be

hurt very badly if you don't make a deal because companies will be forced to leave China for other countries," Trump wrote.

STEADY DRUM BEAT

Trump last week also ordered U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to begin imposing tariffs on all remaining imports from China, a move that would affect an additional \$300 billion worth of goods.

Asked about the threat, Geng said: "We have said many times that adding tariffs won't resolve any problem ... We have the confidence and the ability to protect our lawful and legitimate rights."

Chinese state media kept up a steady drum beat of strongly worded commentary on Monday, reiterating that China's door to talks was always open, but vowing to defend the country's interests and dignity. In a commentary, state television said the effect on the Chinese economy from the U.S. tariffs was "totally controllable." "It's no big deal. China is bound to turn crisis to opportunity and use this to test its abilities, to make the country even stronger."

Japan takes India to WTO over mobile phone import duties

Japan has complained at the World Trade Organization about India's duties on mobile phones, base stations and routers, and the circuit boards and other components that go into them, a WTO filing showed on Tuesday.

Japan's complaint, the first step in a legal dispute, said India had sought to foster domestic production by adjusting various taxes including customs duties, especially since it launched the "Make in India" campaign in September 2014.

Some of the tariffs on goods of substantial interest to Japan were

now "clearly in excess" of the rates allowed by the WTO, Japan said.

India's WTO membership terms



specified that the import tariff on all the disputed goods was zero percent, but India applied a 20% tariff to mobile phones and base

stations, and tariffs of 10%, 15% and 20% on the other products, Japan said.

Trade data provided by the International Trade Centre, a U.N.-WTO joint venture, showed Japan accounted for a tiny proportion of India's mobile phone imports, valued at \$53 million in 2011 and \$43 million in 2012,

but less than \$2 million in all other years in the past decade.

India's mobile phone imports are dominated by China, although its

appetite for foreign phones has shrunk fast, with total imports sliding from a 2014 peak of \$7.1 billion to below \$1.5 billion in 2018, the data showed.

India's imports of switchers and routers, totalling \$5.7 billion in 2018, were dominated by China and Vietnam, while imports from Japan were worth \$52 million, less than 1 percent of the Indian import market.

Under WTO rules, India has 60 days to settle the dispute, but after that Japan could ask the WTO to set up an adjudication panel to say whether India's tariffs break the rules.

Crisis-hit Jet Airways loses its CEO and CFO on same day

The debt-strapped company said CEO Vinay Dube and CFO Amit Agarwal resigned due to personal reasons, without providing further details.



For months, Jet has tried to convince investors, including Etihad, to pump in money and save the airline. But suitors had some qualms and a deadline for any interested parties to submit binding bids for the carrier ended on Friday with no such offers.

State Bank of India (SBI), Jet's lead lender and the bank overseeing the sale

process, said at the time it had only received three conditional offers, including one from Etihad.

"This had to happen," said analyst Ronil Dalal of Ambit Capital. "Considering the kind of bids that have come in and the monetary value of those bids, it seems like it is too little."

"It was long expected that Jet will eventually shut down and I think now that's coming to fruition."

Jet and SBI did not immediately respond to requests for comment on what options exist for the embattled company.

In its regulatory filings, the airline said Dube and Agarwal resigned due to personal reasons, without providing further details. Dube took over as the airline's CEO in August 2017, filling in a spot that had been vacant since early 2016. Agarwal had been acting as CEO during that time. Jet's shares closed 7.33% lower at 128.9 rupees on Tuesday, while the broader Mumbai market closed 0.66% higher.

planes in the wake of the turmoil. It has also lost hundreds of pilots, cabin crew and engineers to rivals and seen its valuable slots reallocated to rivals, further eroding any residual value and hopes of new investors stepping in to rescue the airline.

The departure of Chief Executive Vinay Dube comes hard on the heels of the resignation of Chief Financial Officer Amit Agarwal, announced earlier in the day. Agarwal's resignation was effective May 13, the company said in a statement.

Late on Tuesday, the company said that Kuldeep Sharma, who was its company secretary and compliance head, has also stepped down with immediate effect.

Separately, the Economic Times newspaper reported on Tuesday that Jet's Chief People Officer Rahul Taneja had also resigned. Reuters was unable to confirm the report.

CONDITIONAL OFFERS

(By our staff reporter) - The chief executive and two other senior figures at Jet Airways have quit, the Indian company said on Tuesday, further eroding any hopes of a rescue of the debt-laden carrier that grounded operations last month.

Jet, once the biggest private carrier in the country, owes vast sums to its lessors, employees, fuel suppliers and other parties. It stopped all flights from April 17 after its lenders refused to give it any more funds to keep the carrier flying.

Jet, also saddled with roughly \$1.2 billion in bank debt, was crippled by mounting losses as it attempted to compete with low-cost rivals Interglobe-owned IndiGo, SpiceJet Ltd and Wadia Group-owned GoAir.

The airline has been rapidly shedding aircraft in recent weeks, as lessors have rushed to deregister and repossess

Sanjiv Puri appointed as Chairman and MD for ITC

Sanjiv Puri's elevation comes after noted industry leader and erstwhile ITC Chairman Y C Deveshwar passed away Saturday morning after a brief illness



(By our staff reporter) - Diversified ITC Group Monday announced elevation of its MD Sanjiv Puri as the Chairman and Managing Director of the company.

Puri's elevation comes after noted industry leader and erstwhile ITC Chairman Y C Deveshwar passed away Saturday morning after a brief illness. Deveshwar (72) had stepped down from executive role in 2017 but remained as a chairman in non-executive capacity.

"The Board of Directors of the company at the meeting held

today appointed Sanjiv Puri, Managing Director, also as the Chairman of the Company with effect from May 13, 2019. Consequently, Puri's new designation is Chairman and Managing Director of the company," ITC said in a regulatory filing.

In 2017, ITC had split the role of the Executive Chairman between Chairman and Chief Executive Officer as part of succession planning in the company.

Deveshwar had played the role of mentor to the executive management led by Sanjiv Puri.

Mark Cuban says Uber's poor IPO is a wake-up call for Silicon Valley: 'They just waited too long'

(By our staff reporter) - Mark Cuban, billionaire investor and owner of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, told CNBC on Tuesday that Uber's disappointing initial public offering last week was "not a surprise" because the ride-hailing company waited too long to go public, losing the momentum early companies typically have.

"It's not a growth company," Cuban said in a phone interview with Scott Wapner on "Halftime Report."

"They just waited too long. There's nothing exciting about it," Cuban added. "I don't think you could have expected anything different ... the reality is you're nine years in and you're still having to buy your revenue. That's not a good sign."

Cuban said four years ago he invested \$1 million in Uber's competitor Lyft, which had its own disappointing IPO in March. He believes Lyft, like Uber, waited too long. In Uber's case, he blamed its investors. Even the

underwriters of Uber's offering became worried that the IPO was in trouble, resorting just days before



to an unusual tactic called a "naked short" to support the company's stock.

"I just think we're seeing a reflec-

tion of the Silicon Valley ethos in the public market. The whole attitude was wait, wait, wait, wait," Cuban said. Cuban said Uber reflects poorly on the California region's venture capital investors, saying it "suggests they're not very good at valuing companies and it's not a very efficient market when it comes to late-stage companies in evaluating IPOs." In reaction, he said, a shift in choosing investors will come from CEOs and employees of private companies, who

Cuban said "are going to be smarter." "I think it will impact their hiring abilities first for a lot of unicorns, and that will have the greatest impact - more so than how or when they go public," Cuban said. He said his two largest equity positions are Netflix and Amazon, noting that they have been his top investments "for years." In the CNBC interview, Cuban also did not rule out running for the president in 2020 as an independent.



'Heart diseases, infection leading killers in Delhi'

Heart disease and stroke accounted for 19.25% of all deaths in 2017, which is a 1.6 percentage points increase over reported deaths in 2016. Infectious and parasitic diseases caused 14.78% of all deaths; followed by respiratory ailments, which led to 8.405% of deaths.

Cardiovascular diseases, infections and respiratory diseases accounted for two in every five deaths recorded in Delhi in 2017, the state government's Annual Report on Registration of Births and Deaths which is based on reports of the city's three corporations, said. The report says there were three plague deaths and five deaths due to cholera. Heart disease and stroke accounted for 19.25% of all deaths in 2017, which is a 1.6 percentage points increase over reported deaths in 2016. Infectious and parasitic diseases caused 14.78% of all

deaths; followed by respiratory ailments, which led to 8.405% of deaths. "This is the trend that we see across the country; now fewer people are dying of infectious diseases and increasing longevity is leading to more deaths from lifestyle-related diseases. Heart diseases and strokes are accompanied with diabetes and hypertension, so it is important to address them," said Dr Dilip Kumar, senior consultant of medicine, Safdarjung hospital. In 2017, sixteen deaths were also reported from neonatal tetanus, which was eliminated

(less than one case in every 1,000 live births) in India in 2015. Sex ratio at birth rose to 913 in 2017, compared to 902 the previous year. "It is good to see the increase, but it is important to implement the PC-PNDT law properly to ensure that the gains made are maintained and Delhi can do better in the future," said Sabu George, an activist who has been working to prevent female foeticide for over three decades. The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCP-NDT) Act, 1994, bans sex-determination of the

foetus.

In infants under the age of one year, slow growth of foetus, foetal malnutrition and immaturity were the highest causes of death in 2017, with the numbers increasing threefold over 2016. In 2016, slow foetal growth, foetal malnutrition and immaturity killed 426 (5.31% of all infant deaths) newborns as compared to 1,268 (16.75%) in 2017.

In 2016, the highest newborn deaths were from suffocation from lack of oxygen and other respiratory symptoms, which accounted for 1,358 or 16.94% of all infant

deaths.

"Malnutrition is always a factor for foetal malnutrition and slow growth, but it has always been a problem in India. So, for finding reasons for the sudden jump, we need to examine other reasons such as environmental toxins, pollutants or other such reasons.

The other explanation for the rise could be improved diagnosis because of better imaging techniques and more people getting tested," said Dr Subhashish Roychaudhary, professor of paediatric surgery at Lady Hardinge Medical College.

Spice it up: A healthy, flavourful way to enjoy good food

Spices add flavour, fragrance and good health to food. Follow your grandmother's century old recipe, right down to the last spice to savour every bite.

Good cooks will swear by their spices right down to the last pinch. And food lovers will turn up their noses at dishes that don't have that little bit of dalchini or garam masala. The latest to join the spice bandwagon are food scientists and nutritionists, who are acknowledging the fact that spices have a whole lot more than taste and tang. They possess medicinal qualities and micro nutrients that can make a difference to body health. Cardamom: A steaming mug of elaichi tea works wonders for the sagging spirit, especially on a dull, rainy day. A native of southern India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia, it is an international favourite. Use the seeds powdered or whole, it lends a distinct flavour to milk, tea, curries, Indian sweets and desserts. It is even used for its fragrance in cosmet-

ics like soap lotions and perfumes. Health Benefits: It works as a carminative (relieves flatulence) and digestant (aids digestion). It stimulates the stomach to produce more acids, which in turn improves digestion. And of course after a meal of garlicks and onions, it works as a wonderful mouth freshener! Cloves: Hand in glove with cardamom, the innocuous looking laung is a native of India, Indonesia, Brazil, Madagascar and Philippines. These unopened flower buds are used to spice up curries. They are also used in dental products and cosmetics like soaps, perfumes and body lotions. Health Benefits: Dadimaa was right! Clove oil is a great pain reliever, especially for toothaches. This tiny spice packs in a load of benefits. It combats nausea and

when taken at tea it eases digestion problems and parasitic infections. Clove oil is also a potent antibiotic. When you have a toothache, apply a few crushed cloves to the aching tooth. Pepper: Kali Mirchi, ground or whole, can pep up a bland meal in a jiffy. Grown extensively in India have it in salads, sprinkle it over freshly cut fruits, add it to soups, fruits shakes and curries. Health Benefits: These tiny balls are an incredible powerhouse of medicinal qualities. Pepper works as a diaphoretic (induces sweating), diuretic (Prevents water retention) and carminative. It stimulates the taste buds which in turn increases the production of stomach acids. All this improves digestion. It also has antioxidant and antibacterial properties. The outer layer of peppercorn helps in breaking down of fat cells. So make sure that the



pepper cellar is full and within hands reach at meal times! Cinnamon: Dalchini is the dried inner bark of an evergreen tree native to South West India, South Asia and Srilanka. This aromatic spice is used to flavour vegetables, curries and desserts. It is also used in incense and pharmaceutical, cosmetic and health products. Health Benefits : Research has confirmed that cinnamon has the following qualities:- sedative anticonvulsant (reduces the severity of fits as in epilepsy) antibiotic, diaphoretic, diuretic and antiulcerative. It is useful in treat-

ing common colds. When you feel you have a cold coming up make sure you have a cup of cinnamon and ginger tea with a dash of lime. It will warm you up and make you feel good. Saffron: The queen of spices, kesar doesn't come cheap by any standards. And certainly not when it takes nearly 70,000 saffron flowers to produce a mere kilo of saffron! These delicate dried threads of the saffron flower are found in the cooler climates of northern India. A natural food colorant, it imparts a typical flavour to rice dishes, Indian sweets, vegetables and curries.

Particular memories can be erased, Scientists have found a way



(Insider Bureau) Particular memories can be erased, Scientists have found a way. A new study suggests that memories that trigger anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) could be erased without affecting other important memories of past by isolating molecules blocking their function. While there are many ways to boost your memory, there are certain incidents that you would rather forget. The finding could help develop drugs that can treat anxiety without affecting the patient's normal memory, sources said. Brains create long-term memories by increasing the strength of connections between neurons and maintaining those connections over time. By measuring the strength of each connection, the researchers found that the increase in the strength of each connection produced by the different stimuli was maintained by a different form of a Protein Kinase M (PKM) molecule (PKM Apl III for associative synaptic memory and PKM Apl I for non-associative).

Cool beard styles for this hot summer



The three styles that are doing the rounds in summer are:

Bald with beard

A shaved head complimenting a full beard or a neatly trimmed beard is quite the classic combination that always works. The secret to making it work into a well-groomed look is some brow maintenance as well.

Carved beard

This fashionable and trendy beard style for dusky men often highlights unique facial hair contouring on a prominent jaw line. Cool beard styles Full beard with a man bun The full beard look with a man bun has become quite the rage and a look that gives casuals a whole new expression.

(Insider Bureau) Cool beard styles for this hot summer as a fashion statement. Beard these days have become a signature of fashion for men.

Rohit Jaiswal from Bombay Shaving Company and Karan Chadha, Founder, Gangs of Beard, point out that men are not "price sensitive and will spend on products they relate to". They also added that men "are getting more adventurous in expressing themselves – whether it is growing a beard, being covered with tattoos or even sporting a shaved dome".

Your job could be a reason for high risk of Vitamin D deficiency



(Insider Bureau) Your job could be a reason for high risk of Vitamin D deficiency. Stuck behind your office desk for most part of the day? Your nine-to-five job could be a major factor that puts you at high risk of Vitamin D deficiency.

Shift workers, healthcare workers and indoor workers in particular are at high risk of vitamin D deficiency, researchers at the University of Alberta, Canada suggest. Understanding the prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in different professions could improve public health interventions and prevention efforts. Dr. Sebastian Straube, the corresponding author said: "Our results suggest that occupation is a major factor that may contribute to suboptimal vitamin D levels. Regular screening of vitamin D levels in at-risk groups should be considered for future clinical practice guidelines and public health initiatives. Workplace wellness programs could include education about the importance of adequate vitamin D levels. This could help prevent adverse health outcomes linked to vitamin D deficiency, such as metabolic disorders, psychiatric and cardiovascular disorders, and cancer." The researchers found that prevalence of vitamin D deficiency was highest among shift workers (80% of individuals), followed by indoor workers (77%) and healthcare students (72%).

Among healthcare workers, rates of vitamin D deficiency varied depending on whether they were students, medical residents (65%),

practicing physicians (46%), nurses (43%) or other healthcare professionals (43%).

Dr. Straube said: "Vitamin D production by the body is reliant on sunshine and UV exposure so any activity that reduces exposure tends to reduce vitamin D levels. Sunlight deprivation in young medical professionals, who may have particularly long working hours, and other indoor workers, puts them at higher risk of both vitamin D insufficiency and deficiency."

A high percentage of indoor workers (91%) were also found to have insufficient vitamin D, which means that their levels of vitamin D weren't necessarily as low as those found in vitamin D deficient individuals, but lower than levels recommended for health. By comparison, 48% of outdoor workers had vitamin D deficiency, while 75% had vitamin D insufficiency. In order to evaluate vitamin D levels, deficiency and insufficiency in different occupations and to identify at-risk groups of workers, the authors conducted a systematic review of 71 peer-reviewed journal articles which involved 53,425 individuals in total and spanned a range of latitudes in both the Northern and Southern hemisphere.

Love playing video games?

It might make your brain more efficient



(News Agencies) Carried out by researchers from the Cognitive NeuroLab, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain, and the Laboratory for Neuropsychiatry and Neuromodulation, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, USA, the team looked at 116 scientific studies to see if any trends arose from recent research on how video games affect brain structure and behaviour. Previous studies have shown that it improves skills required for higher education and it can even be used to treat depression. "Games have sometimes been praised or demonized, often without real data backing up those claims. Moreover, gaming is a popular activity, so everyone seems to have strong opinions on the topic," says Marc Palau, first author on the review. From their analysis, which included looking at 22 studies on the structural changes in the brain and 100 on changes in brain functionality and/or behaviour, the team found that playing video games can change both how our brains perform and its structure. Some of the studies suggested that playing videos games can improve several types of attention, including sustained attention or selective attention, with the brain regions involved in attention appearing to be more efficient in gamers and requiring less activation. The studies also showed evidence that video games can increase the size and efficiency of brain regions related to visuospatial skills, with the team finding that the right hippocampus was enlarged in both long-term gamers and volunteers following a video game training program.

Student Of The Year 2 movie review

In Tiger Shroff, Ananya Panday's film, textbooks are props and props are stars

Student of the Year 2 movie review: Tiger Shroff, Ananya Panday and Tara Sutaria star as a new batch of students/professionally bred actors in sequel to Karan Johar's 2012 film.

Student of the Year 2
Director - Punit Malhotra
Cast - Tiger Shroff, Ananya Panday, Tara Sutaria
Rating - 1.5/5
First love works the first time. Pehla Nasha was the loveliest song of the smitten - at least for those among my generation - and it worked because of its wistfulness, where the idea of falling for someone felt as special as your own private whirlwind, something nobody would quite understand. Student

Of The Year 2 aspires to tread on the same tracks as Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar, the film Pehla Nasha was from, but wears romance like an accessory: a medallion that can bounce off the hero's pectorals. "Mere liye school pyar ka mandir tha," says the hero without a touch of irony. "Love temple."

Irony is in predictably short supply. In this laminated depiction of college life, the boy is capable of all superheroics as the girls cheer him from the

sidelines. At some point an actress, whose wardrobe definitely worked harder than she, wears a skirt with the words "Need No Stylist" printed across it. Directed by Punit Malhotra - who once made the insufferable I Hate Luv Storys - this attempt at Archie Comics wants to be frothy but emerges merely aerated. The film exists exclusively to flaunt Tiger Shroff's



physique. The spine of the story comes from the still-refreshing JJWS, as mentioned, but here the college rivalries feel hollow throughout. This is largely because the boy, Rohan, played by Shroff, isn't allowed to put a foot wrong. He sprints record-breakingly fast, is the

king of kabaddi and seems to dance at a different frame rate. It is dashed difficult to root for an underdog when he's the only one on the scraggly team with a sponsor logo on his vest. Still, Shroff is sincere. As is Ananya Pandey, who takes a poorly written character - the super-rich brat who sobs into her birthday cake - and at least attempts to give her a vibe, and Aditya Seal, who has fun playing Reggie With The Good Hair. The kids aren't intolerable, the motives are. The film lacks drama, conflict and narrative tension, with dialogues written for mannequins.

Pokemon Detective Pikachu movie review

Ryan Reynolds' new film has the power to cure millennial depression

Pokemon Detective Pikachu movie review: Ryan Reynolds' new film is a funny, subversive love letter to Pokemon fans. Rating: 3.5/5.

Pokemon: Detective Pikachu
Director - Rob Letterman
Cast - Ryan Reynolds, Justice Smith, Kathryn Newton, Ken Watanabe, Bill Nighy
Rating - 3.5/5
On paper, Pokemon: Detective Pikachu had the makings of a true disaster. But in execution, it comes across as a minor miracle; not a fluke, by any standard, and certainly way better than it has any right to be. It has that innocent sense of wonder that I'd imagine would be very appealing to children, and a self-aware wisdom that'll hit older fans right in the jellies. There is no way it should've worked, but it does. It is, after all, a glossy Hollywood adaptation of a popular

Asian property, starring a rakishly handsome white male actor as the voice of a character who shouldn't really be speaking at all - but boy does it find a satisfying way to justify its decisions. In that regard, as a film born out of pure opportunistic greed, it comes awfully close to emulating the success of The Lego Movie.

But just as easily as Adam Levine is able to spot a false note in an aspiring reality show contestant's voice, hardcore fans are able to notice when their favourite stories and characters have been dumped in the hands of someone who doesn't care about them as deeply as they do. Fortunately, despite his less than reassuring resume,

director Rob Letterman appears to have some affection for Pokemon, and what he can't achieve through storytelling, he compensates for by distracting you with nifty fan service and impressive production values. Notice the luxurious pride Detective Pikachu takes in introducing you to its familiar, yet refreshingly new world. Notice how despite relying rather heavily on exposition - especially in its opening 20 minutes - it takes its time to acclimatise you in its painstakingly designed environments, like an unhurried Snorlax.

The film's main location, Ryme City, is particularly well realised - it looks like a seamless



combination of London's shiny skyline and Shibuya's snazzy streets.

It's where our hero, Tim (Justice Smith), finds himself in after he receives the tragic news of his estranged father's apparent demise. But when his dad's Pokemon partner - a fast-talking Pikachu voiced by Ryan Reynolds - lands on his doorstep, convinced that something sinister is afoot, our story truly begins. Reynolds plays Pikachu like a cross between himself and a hardboiled James Stewart character. It's almost as if he was struck by a thunderbolt of inspiration after

watching the Maltese Falcon with Blake Lively on a lazy Sunday. You'd be surprised to learn how heavily Detective Pikachu leans in on the investigation angle, and how subversive it really is, despite being a kids' movie. It has less in common with the anime series that raised us - this is apparent in its sole Pokemon battle sequence, and the introduction of Kathryn Newton's wet-behind-the-ears reporter - than the gumshoe detective stories of the '30s and '40s. This is certainly not something that I, as a lifelong Pokemon fan was expecting. Similarly, few would have anticipated that Bill Nighy - that gentleman actor who can command more attention by simply loitering in the corner of the frame than most leading men can by growling in your face - would utter the word 'Mewtwo' in Detective Pikachu.

De De Pyaar De movie review:

Ajay Devgn delivers his sincerest performance, Tabu steals the show

The usual alpha male, Ajay Devgn, plays it uncharacteristically calm in the film as most of the good stuff comes from Tabu, who wields the word 'dal' like a loaded gun.

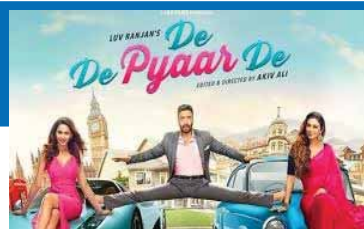
Director: Akiv Ali
Cast: Ajay Devgn, Tabu, Rakul Preet Singh
Rating: 2.5/5
Ajay Devgn has no spine in De De Pyaar De. As a 50-year-old intensely aware of his age, the usually alpha actor plays uncharacteristically calm, handing over his valuables to muggers and unable even to push an old Ambassador without strong women helping him out. Only women, in fact,

wear the pants in this film, particularly around Devgn's Ashish: His estranged wife Manju intimidates him nearly two decades after their separation, and a young woman named Aisha drains his whiskey and leaves him standing around clueless, rattling his ice-cubes.

The comedy has a simple plot: Londoner Ashish brings the much-younger Aisha back to India to meet his wife and kids, but chickens out of telling them

she's his girlfriend. Hi-jinks, as you may have guessed, ensue. There is genuine fodder for situational comedy, but debutant director Akiv Ali can't strike the balance between clever humour and broad farce, making something that wants to be intelligent but looks (and sounds) like a Priyadarshan slapstick climax.

The primary problem is the girl. Aisha, a hard-drinking confident bartender-on-weekends, is



played by Rakul Preet Singh, an unbelievably vacant actress entrusted with far too much screen time. It's not only the actress - the character is incredibly problematic, a girl who passes out drunk in a man's house and wonders why he didn't take advantage of her. "You could do me and you didn't?" she says, incredulous

that he would pass up rape. Tabu, in supreme form as the wife who outgrew Ashish, walks away in De De Pyaar De.

Ali, a long time Hindi film editor, ought to have clipped the Aisha-heavy first half and swapped it for two bearable minutes taking us straight to her meeting her boyfriend's family. When Aisha shakes hands with Manju, the mortification on Ashish's face is priceless: presumably akin to the embarrassment of introducing Singh to this particular actress as a fellow performer.

What does Jacqueline Fernandez need to live her life? 'Sing, dance laugh and never give up'

Actor Jacqueline Fernandez has shared a behind-the-scene video from her latest photoshoot for a magazine.

Actor Jacqueline Fernandez may be missing from the silver screen since months but is making good use of her time. The actor recently posed for a new photoshoot for Cosmopolitan and shared a behind-the-scene video from the same. She captioned it, "What does one do to live life, like actually live your one only life??? I think one should sing dance laugh and never ever give up on that!!"

The actor can be seen having fun on the location of the shoot, teaching crazy moves to her crew members. She can be seen playing around with canvas, brushes and paints in colourful, vibrant costumes.

Jacqueline was last seen in Salman Khan starrer Race 3. The film had managed to stay afloat despite negative reviews.

She will now be seen opposite Sushant Singh Rajput



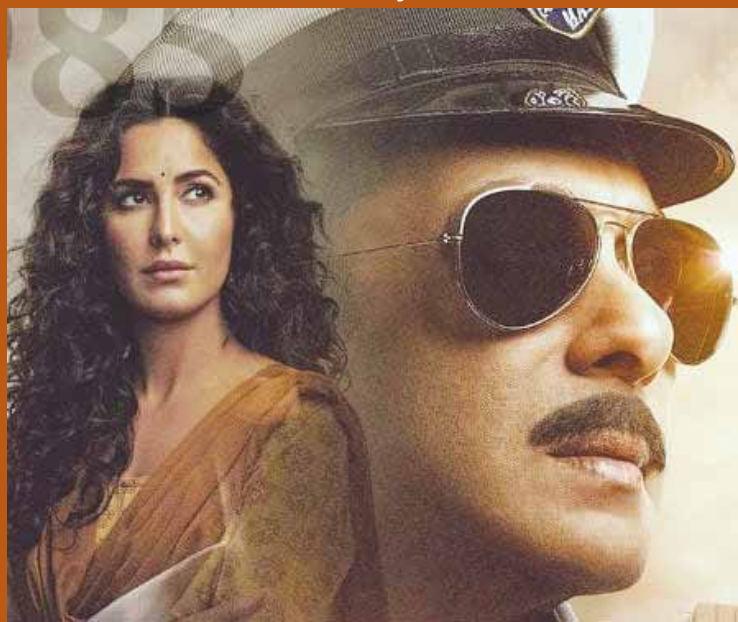
in the action film, Drive. Her character is named Tara in the film. Karan released the teaser of the film in January that showed a few speeding cars introducing the theme of the film. The film is set to hit theatres on June 28 and also stars Pankaj

Tripathi and Boman Irani. The film will reportedly have recreated versions of the song Janabe Ali from the 2004 film Bardaasht and Tauba Tauba from the 2005 film Kaal will be recreated by Tanishk Bagchi. Jacqueline is also working on her fitness. She had shared a video of her headstand on her Instagram account with the caption, "Strength comes from within always! This is a really cool practice

for the handstand which also helps to strengthen the back anddddd is an awesome stretch for the tummy!! Hopefully one day I'll be able to do it without the mirror #happysunday in my fav @justf143."



Filming Bharat's partition scenes were the hardest, says Ali Abbas Zafar



Recreating scenes from the partition of India and Pakistan was the most challenging part of shooting Bharat, director Ali Abbas Zafar has said. Tweeting pictures from the sets of the upcoming Salman Khan-starrer, Zafar wrote, "Partition was the most challenging part of (the) shoot, to recreate the scale of this defining moment of history and to keep the emotions Zinda in the middle of that chaos .is the soul of an extraordinary journey of an ordinary man."

The pictures feature actor Jackie Shroff, among a large group of people, struggling to board a train. A similar scene also features in the trailer of the

film. The trailer, which was released in April, showcased Bharat's story being told in five different chapters, spanning a period of over 60 years. Helmed by Zafar, the film is produced by Atul Agnihotri, Bhushan Kumar, and Krishan Kumar.

Apart from Salman Khan, the film also stars Katrina Kaif, who plays the female protagonist in the film, and Jackie, who essays the role of Salman's father. The cast list also includes Sunil Grover, Nora Fatehi, Disha Patani and Tabu in pivotal roles. Bharat is scheduled to release on June 5.

Cannes 2019

Hina Khan makes her scintillating red carpet debut, Twitter dubs her unstoppable



Actor Hina Khan made her Cannes debut on Wednesday and her fans were delighted. See her pictures and Twitter reactions here. Actor Hina Khan proved she is a diva like none other as she made her Cannes debut on Wednesday. The Kasautii Zindagii Kay actor walked the red carpet and totally owned it. Wearing a grey shimmery gown with a modest train, Hina was in her elements as she smiled and waved at the photographers. She was at the screening of the Brazilian drama film Bacurau on Wednesday. The actor is reportedly at Cannes for the screening of her short film, Lines, which is based on the Kargil War. Earlier, she had shared pictures of herself posing by the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Late on Wednesday, she had shared pictures of herself in a simple yet

elegant pink pantsuit, before her interviews. No sooner did Hina make her Cannes debut, Twitter burst out in praise. A user wrote, "HINA KHAN slayed omg wow" while another user said, "Must say You're Unstoppable Personality. @eyehinakhan". One more user wrote, "Okay so i could just get these Glimpses of #HinaKhan for you exclusively at #Cannes2019 She was looking like a Diva." On Sunday, the actor shot for her last episode of the hit TV show, Kasautii Zindagii Kay. Her co-stars including Parth Samthaan, Erica Fernandes, Pooja

Banerjee among others gave her a warm send-off by organising a mini farewell on the sets. She shared it all as Instagram stories, while others shared pictures on Instagram, wishing her best of luck for future ventures. Hina played Komolika on the Ekta Kapoor show. She also shot for an upcoming video song by Arijit Singh in Delhi. She will be seen alongside actor Priyank Sharma in the video. It is themed around marriage and Hina is dressed as a bride in red lehenga in the pictures, available online. Both Hina and Priyank were part of Bigg Boss season 11. While Priyank exited towards the later part of the show, Hina went on to become a runners-up. Hina will reportedly make her Bollywood debut with a Vikram Bhatt film.



Britney Spears' conservatorship judge orders 'a thorough investigation into all the players' who plan pop star's life...

A California judge has ordered an investigation into everybody who manages the financial affairs, medical care and personal life of Britney Spears. The judge wants 'a thorough investigation of all the players' involved in maintaining the 37-year-old pop superstar's affairs, according to documents obtained by The Blast. The news comes as the Toxic hitmaker's longtime manager Larry Rudolph says Spears 'should not be going back' to her hit Las Vegas residency, casting doubt that she will ever perform again. The judge in Britney's case has ordered a probate court investigator to take a look at those overseeing the conservatorship, including her father Jamie Spears. The conservatorship was enacted in 2008, following Britney's public 2007 breakdown and subsequent hospitalization. Jamie has taken a lead role in overseeing Britney's

affairs, however The Blast also reported that recently the singer's mother Lynne 'has been staying with the singer ever since she made a move to join the conservatorship and take a greater role in caring for her daughter'. According to the gossip site, the court investigator will look at 'medical and financial records, including custody agreements and even contractual obligations ... such as her Las Vegas residency.' The report follows claims by Britney's longtime manager Larry Rudolph that the singer may never perform again amid her mental health battle. The singer was scheduled to resume rehearsals for her Britney: Domination Las Vegas residency after rescheduling the concert earlier this year, but according to the former entertainment lawyer, Britney will not return to the stage. Larry, 55, told TMZ: 'As the person who guides her career

-- based on the information I and all of the professionals who work with her are being told on a need-to-know basis -- from what I have gathered it's clear to me she should not be going back to do this Vegas residency, not in the near future and possibly never again.' He also told Variety that the Free Britney movement is not necessary: 'I understand how much these fans love her and support her and I love that,' said the manager. 'The part that concerns me is that it has no factual basis. The personal issues that Britney is dealing with are highly complicated and the conservatorship is there for a reason. The courts of the State of California take this very seriously. I hope the people allow her to have her private time.'



James Bond 25's woes continue, Daniel Craig injures ankle on set, filming cancelled

The new James Bond film has hit another roadblock after lead star Daniel Craig's injury reportedly resulted in a suspension of shooting. According to The Sun, Craig fell while sprinting on the Bond 25 sets in Jamaica last week and has been flown to the US for X-rays that has led to the hold of the filming. Citing an unnamed source, the publication reported that the actor was shooting one of his final scenes in Jamaica. "He was sprinting during filming when he slipped and fell quite awkwardly. He was in quite a lot of pain and



was complaining about his ankle," the source said. It is currently unknown how long the production might be delayed, the newspaper reported that the shooting at London's legendary Pinewood Studios, which had been scheduled to begin at the end of the week, has been cancelled. This is not the first time Craig, who performs his own stunts, has sustained injury on a Bond film sets. The actor had two teeth knocked out during his first stunt scene for his Bond debut in Casino Royale;

Alessandra Ambrosio takes style notes from Bella Hadid and THAT red dress

Bella Hadid turned heads and set tongues wagging when she took to the red carpet in a barely-there crimson gown at the Cannes Film Festival in 2016. And Alessandra Ambrosio appeared to have taken inspiration from Bella's iconic style moment as she attended the Les Miserables premiere on Wednesday. The mother-of-two model, 38, left little to the imagination as she took to the red carpet in a strikingly similar skin-baring gown at the annual star-studded event. Alessandra's dress also featured knotted detailing around the neckline, while including a cut out keyhole section, offering a flash of her toned midriff. While the front of her showstopping dress was

thigh-grazing in length, the back of the scanty number flowed out into a dramatic train. Alessandra teamed her dress with a pair of strappy gold metallic heels, which added some further inches to her already statuesque frame. The mother-of-two added further touches of gold with her selection of accessories, including a gold tassel bracelet and a pair of dainty statement drop earrings. Alessandra swept her chestnut locks back into a



stylish bun, leaving strands of her hair to frame her model looks which were coated in a glamorous layer of make-up. She completed her incredible film festival look with a slick of red lipstick and a matching manicure, no doubt leaving a lasting impression on her fellow attendees. Back in 2016, Bella stole the show in an extremely racy red Alexandre Vauthier wrap gown which showed off every inch of her phenomenal

frame while blatantly exhibited her choice to forgo underwear during her turn at the soiree. The stunning star pulled her very best poses - exhibiting her perfected model glare - as she showed off her endless legs, perky cleavage and willowy limbs. Her dress was slashed in a number of places. A delicate spaghetti halterneck hung from a triangle cup which was part of a wrap around waistline. Bella's dress then extended into a slinky skirt which featured a lengthy train alongside the sexy split. Her perky bust was on show from every angle with sideboob and cleavage on show from the plunging neckline. She added height to her already statuesque frame with the addition of stunning strappy heels, with a triple strap framing her feet.





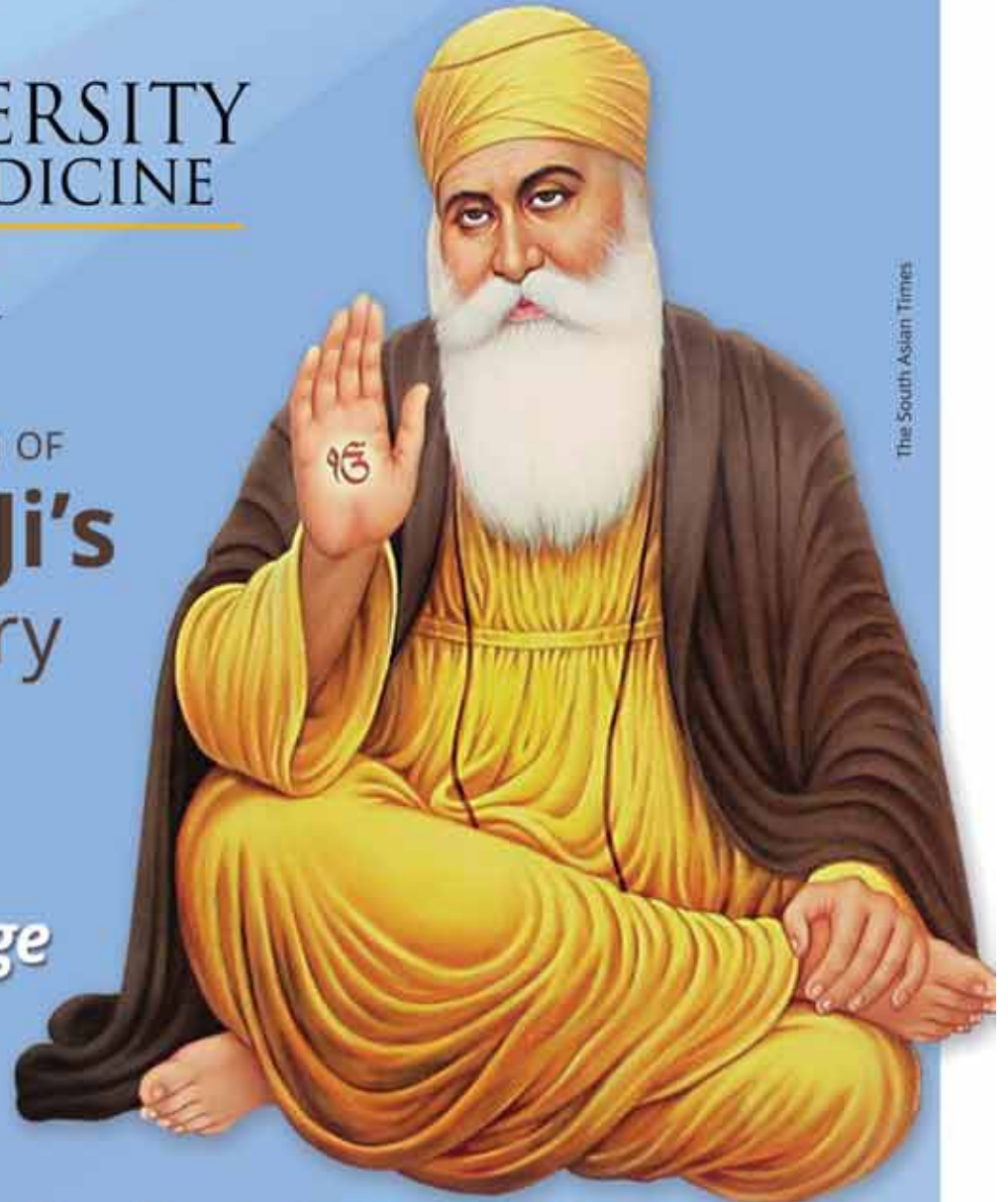
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