



TRUMP

Orders Mexican Border Wall to Be Built and Plans to Block Syrian Refugees



India, Ranked Less Corrupt Than Its Neighbors: Transparency International

(News Agencies) India has been ranked way lower in corruption than all its neighbouring countries, except Bhutan which is at an enviable squeaky-clean position on top of the corruption index list released by graft watchdog Transparency International on Wednesday.

In the corruption perception index

for 2016, India was ranked 79 on the index, above Pakistan at rank 116, but shared the position with China with a score of 40, which is 2 points better than last year. Bhutan is ranked 27 on the list with a score of 65. The Corruption Perceptions Index ranks countries and territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be by

"business people and country experts", which in way has hamstrung the index from telling the entire story on corruption in a country. "It is a composite index, a combination of surveys and assessments of corruption, collected by a variety of reputable institutions," says Transparency International. **(Contd on page 23)**

Padma Shri for H.R. Shah of TV Asia



(By a staff reporter) New Delhi- H.R. Shah, Chairman & CEO of TV Asia has been conferred one of India's highest civilian honors, the Padma Shri, for the year 2017. Mr. Shah, who is among only three recipients of the honor from the United States this year, is being presented the award in the category of Literature & Education-Journalism. The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, is scheduled to present the honors in March/April 2017 at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. Mr. Shah, who has lived in the United States for 46 years, is originally from Bahadarpur, Gujarat. **(Contd on page 24)**

President Trump wants to turn local police into deportation agents and punish cities that don't comply. What happens when they fight back?



The Siege of Sanctuary Cities Has Begun

(News Agencies) After months of demonizing undocumented immigrants on the campaign trail, President Donald Trump signed an executive order Wednesday taking aim at the hundreds of "sanctuary cities" that shield them from federal immigration agents. "We're going to strip federal grant money from the sanctuary cities and states that harbor illegal immigrants," White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said at his daily briefing. "The American people will no longer be forced to subsidize this disregard for our laws." Trump is gearing up to deputize cities

as the foot soldiers in his fight to round up illegal immigrants. But to do so without help from Congress, he must first rely on an unusually expansive interpretation of federal law to find sanctuary cities illegal. That likely means a court battle is imminent, the first turn in a political reversal that will define the Trump era: a GOP administration grasping for federal power pitted against states and cities trumpeting local control. At stake are the livelihoods of millions of immigrant families that have made sanctuary jurisdictions from Boston to Portland, Oregon, home. **(Contd on page 24)**

The community has come of age

Ambassador Sarna at FIA-led reception



(By a Staff Reporter) Edison, New Jersey: The Indian community in the tristate area accorded a ceremonial welcome to India's new Ambassador Navtej Singh Sarna under the leadership of the Federation of Indian Associations in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut (FIA) at the Royal Albert's Palace on January 12.

In his speech Sarna thanked the community for putting together a nice event in his honor. Sarna, who served in the Indian

Embassy in Washington, DC, 14 years ago, noted the tremendous changes that happened in his absence. He pointed out the changes and improvement in the Indo-US engagement. There were political changes, like the changes in the prime ministerial level. There were changes in security engagement too. "But the biggest change is the strength and standing the Indian community has acquired. The community has come of age." "Indians are three million in America

which is only one percent of the US population. Yet 13 percent of all start ups are set up by the Indians, 50 percent of all hotel business is controlled by them and 8 percent of all doctors in the US is of Indian origin.

"It means all of you carry a weight much bigger than what your number of 3 million would have given. Wherever I go I see Indian elected officials in the local level or county level or state level," Sarna said.

He argued that the Fabulous

Five people of Indian origin in the Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives has shown the growing political clout of the community. Sarna said he looks at the community's work from three angles. "The diaspora is constantly engaged with the adopted country," he said. "At the same time they (its members) continue their engagements with the motherland. The third thing I noticed is the passion to bring the two together." Going by these standards the Indian community is a

huge success, he said. The ambassador pointed out that travel to India used to be hard 15 or so years ago when he was in the U.S. He said that is "no more the same, thanks to Air India," and added that "technology has helped the engagement with India. On TV we see instantly what happens in India.

He said things have changed in India, too. "It is not the same India when you had left. Opportunities are many, which you did not see during your time there,"

El Chapo, Mexican Drug Kingpin, Is Extradited to U.S



(Agencies) Mexico City — Joaquín Guzmán Loera, the notorious drug lord known as El Chapo who twice slipped out of high-security Mexican prisons and into criminal legend, was extradited to the United States on Thursday night, officials said, drawing to a close a decades-long quest to prosecute the head of one of the world's largest narcotics organizations. A federal court in Mexico denied an appeal by Mr. Guzmán's lawyers to block the extradition, clearing the way for his transfer to the American authorities in New York, where he faces numerous charges for his role as the chief-tain of the Sinaloa cartel. Mr. Guzmán was put on a plane on Thursday in Ciudad Juárez, near the border with Texas, and arrived in the United States on President Obama's final night in office. According to a Justice Department statement late Thursday, he was flown to Long Island MacArthur Airport in Islip, N.Y. The decision to extradite Mr. Guzmán was an about-face for the Mexican government, which once claimed that he would serve his long sentence in Mexico first. However, after his Houdini-like escape in 2015, when his associates tunneled him out of Mexico's most secure prison, officials began to reconsider. When he was recaptured early last year, after one of Mexico's most exhaustive manhunts, the government publicly said it would allow the extradition of Mr. Guzmán, thus relieving itself of the potential embarrassment of another escape and preventing further souring of its relationship with the United States. Mr. Guzmán's extradition came suddenly, after nearly a year of appeals and legal procedures.

Karunakar Asireddy elected ATA President



(By Prakash M Swamy) Las Vegas : The American Telugu Association (ATA), an umbrella body of the community in the United States, held its board meeting at the Bellagio hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada Jan 14. Karunakar Asireddy was sworn in as the new president of the organization.

Aside from the ATA board members, standing committee Chairs, Regional Coordinators and prominent Telugu community members from across the US attended the meeting. More than 200 delegates came from across the US. Incumbent President Sudhakar Perkari passed on the ba-

ton to the new president. Along with Asireddy, a revamped board of trustees has also been installed.

ATA unanimously elected 13 of its board of trustees (BOT) from different categories: Bhuvanesh Boojala, Parashuram Pinnapureddy, Vinod Koduru, Jayanth Challa, Krishna Dyapa, Ravinder Reddy, Raghuvier Bandaru, Murali Bommanaveni, Soumya Kondapalli, Kiran Reddy Pasham, Raghuvier Reddy, Rinda Kumar Sama, Sharat Vemula. All members of BOT took the oath and promised to uphold the ATA constitution and bylaws. The new trustees will



be in place for a four-year term beginning this year (2017-2020). ATA new board has elected Parmesh Bheemreddy as President-Elect in a unanimous vote and he will serve as President for 2019-2020. President Karunakar Asireddy, in his presidential address, noted that ATA, as an organization, continued to remember its main mission: to preserve and maintain the heritage of all American Telugus; to promote literary, cultural, educational, religious, social and economic activities of the community, and other aspects as mentioned in the ATA charter.

Alarmed by Trump plans, refugees see growing enmity in US

(Agencies) Beirut : Nur Hasan al Faraj's already slim hopes of a new life in the United States have all but died since she heard that President Donald Trump would temporarily ban refugees coming from some Muslim states.

Her flight from the civil war in Syria has taken her only as far as the southern Turkish city of Hatay near the border with her homeland.

Like other Syrians, Iraqis and Yemenis who spoke to Reuters on Wednesday, Faraj was alarmed by media reports that Trump will impose a temporary ban on most refugees and suspend visas for citizens of Syria and six other countries.

The reports have heightened fears that a new era of hostility from the West is dawning, she and other refugees said.

"This reflects the hateful point of view of America, it reflects enmity, in fact it reflected enmity to all humanity," Faraj said outside an immigration office in Hatay where dozens of refugees were queuing in the hope of obtaining a Turkish residence permit.

Asked if she would like to go to the United States, Faraj said: "If there had been such a possibility before, yes, I would like to have gone. But now, after Trump has come, no, I think I will never go"

Faraj, who wore a brightly coloured

headscarf and black coat, said she hoped relatives who have already reached the United States would return "because staying there would be a terrible thing".

Abdulhalim Bekro, a Syrian man who stood nearby, was also concerned by what he depicted as a worsening mood against refugees in the United States.

"Everyone in the world knows that this decision contains hatred. This hatred is not limited to seven countries," he said. "I definitely do not think of going (to the United States), not under Trump's administration, nor the previous, because they are all of the same mentality."

Andy Bhatia elected president of FIA for 2017



(By George Joseph) New York- Noted community activist Andy Bhatia has been elected as the president of the Federation of Indian Association in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, which organizes the largest India Day Parade in New York City.

He took charge on January 1 along with a new team comprising of Srujal Parikh (executive vice president); Alok Kumar (vice president); Chhavi Dharayan (secretary); Jatin Patel (joint secretary); Himanshu Bhatia (treasurer); Anand Patel (immediate past president) promising that an all out effort will be made to expand the activities of the organization.

The signature events of the

FIA, including the India Day Parade, India Day Banquet and the Dance pe Chance will be organized to attract more people with new features which will take them to the next level. A college fair for the youth and a fundraising event for the organization in April are also being planned. Expanding the programs of FIA to Connecticut and Queens/Long Island areas are also being explored.

Andy Bhatia is the president of American Sales and Marketing Partners LLC, who has extensive experience in the airline/travel industry. He retired as the Area Sales Manager for Air India in New York, where he worked for nearly 35 years, both in the field and at the North American Headquarters in vari-

ous capacities.

He has served in the FIA in various capacities for several years. For a quarter of a century, he actively participated in organizing the India Day Parade and Diwali Festival in New York City and Diwali Mela in Jackson Heights, among other community events in the Tri-State area on behalf of Air India.

He was honored thrice by the FIA and the National Federation of Indian Associations (NFIA.)

He is credited with conceptualizing and launching the 'Know India Seminars' in USA and Canada which were attended by more than 6000 American travel agents to qualify as India tourism specialists. He also formulated the concept of

selling co-op tours by agents in non-conflicting sales territories to increase tourist bookings to India. He was also instrumental in the launching a bi-monthly India Travel newsletter and the Traveler's India magazine.

He continues to be engaged in the industry as a consultant and serves as a member of several travel trade associations including the Pacific Asia Travel Association's New York Chapter and the American Society of Travel Agents, Airline Sales Managers Association and SKAL International. He also worked at the Public Relations and Development Office at the University of Bridgeport as executive secretary of the Committee on Informal Education.

He chaired the Halsey International Scholarship Program consisting of community support groups representing sixteen countries including India's Shastri Scholarship Committee. Organizations including the Gujrati Samaj USA, City Council of New York, and Jackson Heights Merchants Association too honored him.

He was also selected for the Paul Harris Fellowship Award of Rotary International for International Relations in 1998. The travel industry honored him several times. Another honor he cherishes was the WICC Radio Station's Community Service Salute (1971, 1974) for community service in the Greater Bridgeport area.

IALI (India Association of Long Island) new President & Team



India Association of Long Island recently held an event to mark the Oath ceremony of their newly elected team. Bina Sabapathy, the newly elected President of IALI was sworn the oath of office along with her team, by Nasrin G. Ahmed, Clerk, Town of Hempstead & other Town officials. Prominent members of Indian community and many others, attended the event.

(Seen in Pictures)

IALI President Bina Sabapathy with Anthony Santino, Town of Hempstead Supervisor. Bina Sabapathy with her team and other members of community with Nasrin G. Ahmed. (By Ruth Alvarez)

Rahul Gandhi sends condolences for death of INOC USA President

(Press Release) Indian National Overseas Congress members are grieving nationwide over death of their beloved President Mrs. Lavika Bhagat Singh. Expressing his condolences the AICC Vice President Shri Rahul Gandhi said "She worked hard to spread the ideology of the congress party". Dr. Karan Singh, MP and Chair of AICC foreign affairs stated "Lavika was a fine lady and a successful President of INOC". I remember she hosted a wonderful event

in my honor in DC" further added Dr. Karan Singh. Former Union Law Minister Dr. Ashwani Kumar wrote, "No words can adequately express our sentiments at this time". Many other Senior congress party leaders from India expressed shock over her death. "It's my personal loss. I have lost my loyal & sincere friend", said INOC Chairman Shudh Parkash Singh. "We are proud of the work Lavika did for INOC over last 15 years as Washington DC chapter President and National President. She was one of the

most fun loving, cheerful and bold lady who always thought big. Despite of a very hard life taking care of a handicap son 24/7, she always had a smile on her face. General Secretary of INOC Rajender Dichpally expressed her shock over her death. "We have lost our dynamic leader. I worked very closely with her. A team of INOC executives led by the senior Vice President Ravi Chopra attended the funeral services held in Washington DC. Lavika was suffering from cancer for

last year. In the end cancer spread all over body and took the precious life of the dedicated mother of two children. She is survived by daughter Angelica, son Heiman and husband Deshpal Singh. Lavika lived in Virginia - a suburb of Washington DC. Her sisters, uncles and other close relatives also live nearby. "She will be missed dearly by us all not just for her contributions to INOC and charities but also for her total personality of a super woman", Added Shudh Parkash Singh.



Intercepted Russian Communications Part of Inquiry Into Trump Associates



(Agencies) Washington — American law enforcement and intelligence agencies are examining intercepted communications and financial transactions as part of a broad investigation into possible links between Russian officials and associates of President-elect Donald J. Trump, including his former campaign chairman Paul Manafort, current and former senior American officials said.

The continuing counterintelligence investigation means that Mr. Trump will take the oath of office on Friday with his associates under investigation and after the

intelligence agencies concluded that the Russian government had worked to help elect him. As president, Mr. Trump will oversee those agencies and have the authority to redirect or stop at least some of these efforts.

It is not clear whether the intercepted communications had anything to do with Mr. Trump's campaign, or Mr. Trump himself. It is also unclear whether the inquiry has anything to do with an investigation into the hacking of the Democratic National Committee's computers and other attempts to disrupt the elections in November. The American government has

concluded that the Russian government was responsible for a broad computer hacking campaign, including the operation against the D.N.C. The counterintelligence investigation centers at least in part on the business dealings that some of the president-elect's past and present

advisers have had with Russia. Mr. Manafort has done business in Ukraine and Russia. Some of his contacts there were under surveillance by the National Security Agency for suspected links to Russia's Federal Security Service, one of the officials said. Mr. Manafort is among at least three Trump campaign advisers

whose possible links to Russia are under scrutiny. Two others are Carter Page, a businessman and former foreign policy adviser to the campaign, and Roger Stone, a longtime Republican operative. The F.B.I. is leading the investigations, aided by the National Security Agency, the C.I.A. and the Treasury

Department's financial crimes unit. The investigators have accelerated their efforts in recent weeks but have found no conclusive evidence of wrongdoing, the officials said. One official said intelligence reports based on some of the wiretapped communications had been provided to the White House.

Trump Nominees Make Clear Plans to Sweep Away Obama Policies

(Agencies) Washington — President-elect Donald J. Trump's cabinet nominees, while moderating some of their stances, have made it clear during two weeks of hearings that they intend to work hard to sweep away President Obama's domestic policy by embracing a deeply conservative approach to governing.

In dozens of hours of testimony, Mr. Trump's nominees told senators that they favored less

regulation, a smaller federal government, more state control over policy decisions and taxpayer money, and greater personal responsibility by Americans across the country.

The sometimes contentious hearings continued up until the day before the inauguration, as Mr. Trump triumphantly arrived in Washington on Thursday to kick off three highly choreographed days that will usher Republicans back into full

political power in Washington for the first time in more than a decade.

After arriving at Joint Base Andrews on a military plane that will become Air Force One the next time he steps onboard, Mr. Trump visited the Trump International Hotel before making an appearance at the Lincoln Memorial, where thousands watched an inaugural concert. "All over the world they are talking about it. All over the world,"

Mr. Trump told the crowd before a fireworks display over the National Mall.

"And I love you folks, and we're going to work together. And we are going to make America great again." That work will be shaped by the new president's cabinet, which is coming under scrutiny as lawmakers from both parties press the nominees about their fealty to Mr. Trump's campaign promises and their adherence to their own long records.

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Trump's flashy executive actions could run aground



(Agencies) Washington : President Donald Trump's team made little effort to consult with federal agency lawyers or lawmakers as they churned out executive actions this week, stoking fears the White House is creating the appearance of real momentum with flawed orders that might be unworkable, unenforceable or even illegal.

The White House didn't ask State Department experts to review Trump's memorandum on the Keystone XL pipeline, even though the company that

wants to build the pipeline is suing the U.S. for \$15 billion, according to two people familiar with the matter. Defense Secretary James Mattis and CIA Director Mike Pompeo were "blindsided" by a draft order that would require agencies to reconsider using interrogation techniques that are currently banned as torture, according to sources with knowledge of their thinking.

Just a small circle of officials at the Department of Health and Human

Services knew about the executive action starting to unwind Obamacare, and only less than two hours before it was released. Key members of Congress weren't consulted either, according to several members. And at a conference in Philadelphia, GOP legislators say they had no idea whether some of the executive orders would contrast with existing laws — because they hadn't reviewed them.

The breakneck pace of Trump's executive actions might please his supporters, but critics are questioning whether the documents are being rushed through without the necessary review from agency experts and lawmakers who will bear the burden of actually carrying them out. For example, there are legal questions on how the

country can force companies building pipelines to use materials manufactured domestically, which might not be available or which could violate trade treaty obligations. There's also the question of whether the federal government can take billions from cities who don't comply with immigration enforcement actions: Legal experts said it was unclear. "You want to make sure when you're dealing with high stakes, important issues you're getting the best information from the breadth of expertise that exists in government," said Max Stier, president of the Partnership for Public Service, a nonpartisan nonprofit that supports the civil service. "You don't know what you don't know." The White House did not respond to a request for

comment.

Trump, less than a week into his presidency, is continuing the improvisational style he used to run his company, his campaign and his transition. He's relying on a small circle of trusted advisers to act decisively. And he's emphasizing the theatrics of autographing official-looking leather-bound documents in the Oval Office.

People familiar with Trump's planning say he wanted daily events to show supporters he would follow through on the items of his campaign agenda. "He was determined to show people that he's getting to work from Day One," one person familiar with his planning said. This person said he wanted to take charge and show his supporters that former President Barack Obama's tenure was

decisively over.

But the process is playing out chaotically both inside the White House and throughout the federal government.

Inside the West Wing, it is almost impossible for some aides to know what is in the executive orders, staffers say. They have been written by Stephen Miller, Trump's senior White House adviser for policy, and Steve Bannon, Trump's chief strategist, according to people familiar with the matter. Ideas for some of the Trump executive orders came from transition officials and so-called "landing teams," sources say, who weren't working in the White House. Aides have also said that it was sometimes a game-time decision if Trump was going to sign a certain executive order that day.

Owner of east Tulsa motel raided by police receives probation

(Agencies) The owner of an east Tulsa motel was sentenced to two years of probation and ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine

forfeit ownership of his business, the Tonight Inn & Suites, 8833 E. Admiral Place, to the federal government.



Thursday in connection with a drug-trafficking ring that operated out of his business.

U.S. Magistrate Paul Cleary, who sentenced Mahendra Parekh in Tulsa federal court, agreed with a U.S. Probation Office finding that a probated term was "reasonable for the circumstances."

Parekh, 72, in an agreement with prosecutors, pleaded guilty Oct. 13 to a single misdemeanor count of knowingly aiding and abetting others to possess cocaine base, or crack.

A grand jury originally charged Parekh with felony drug conspiracy on April 5.

Prosecutors dropped the felony charge and filed the misdemeanor count as part of the plea agreement.

Parekh also agreed to

Local and federal law enforcement raided the business July 29, 2015, following an eight-month investigation of illegal drug activity and prostitution at the 1950s-era-built motel. In addition to Parekh, 12 others were indicted in connection with the probe.

Parekh could have faced up to one year in prison and a fine of no more than \$100,000 on the misdemeanor count, but his attorney, Shena Burgess, requested the judge sentence Parekh to probation.

"Mr. Parekh is not the normal individual who comes before the court for sentencing," Burgess wrote in a sentencing memo filed in December with the court.

Burgess described Parekh as a married, 37-year Tulsa-area resident with children and grandchildren, who is a past president of the Indian Association of Tulsa and an active member of his

temple, which he helped start.

While he owned the motel, Parekh did not actively run it, leaving the day-to-day operation of the business to others.

The manager of the motel, who lived on site, was also indicted and received a similar two-year probated sentence.

Burgess also noted that following the raid in 2015, Parekh had changed policies and procedures at the motel to eliminate criminal activity.

The leader of the drug operation, Vysean Leandre Embry, received a 15-year prison term in November after pleading guilty Feb. 10 to a single count of crack cocaine drug distribution conspiracy.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Joel-lyn McCormick did not object to the recommended probated prison term.

But McCormick said that while Parekh may not have managed the motel, he "was aware of the daily criminal activity" that occurred there and had a "presence" at the business that included having contact and a relationship with Embry.

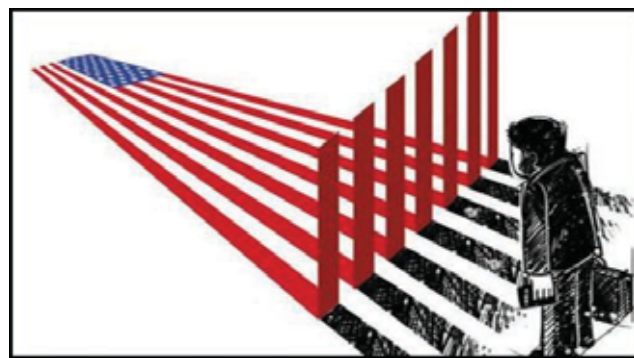
Had the case gone to trial, McCormick said, the

government was prepared to present evidence that Embry gave Parekh \$2,000 to fix the roof of the motel after it was damaged by storms. Since the raid,

McCormick said, police have continued to respond to calls at the motel, noting that in 2016 law enforcement answered 76 calls for service that were

similar to the pre-raid calls. "We view this crime as one that was driving primarily by greed, and that is unfortunate," McCormick said.

Indian-origin man arrested in multi-million-dollar fraud in US



(Agencies) New York: Two persons, including a 36-year-old Indian-origin consultant, have been arrested for allegedly conspiring to commit wire fraud in connection with a false invoicing scheme that defrauded health and retirement funds of about \$3.4 million. Shivanand Maharaj of New Jersey, along with Enrico Rubano, 48, were charged with two counts of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, US Attorney Preet Bharara said.

As alleged, over a period of six years, Maharaj and Rubano generated hundreds of invoices for work they had not performed, which Rubano, in his role as co-head of information technology for the funds, approved for payment.

The two were arrested on Thursday and presented before US magistrate Judge Andrew Peck. According to the complaint, from 2008 through October 2015, Rubano was the co-head of

information technology for the funds and had the authority to approve the payment of invoices from third-party vendors.

Beginning in 2009, and continuing through 2015, he and Maharaj devised a scheme in which companies they owned or controlled submitted to the funds invoices for millions of dollars in information technology services that were never performed. Rubano also received kickbacks from Maharaj. Between 2009 and 2015, the two falsely billed and fraudulently received from the Funds at least approximately \$3.4 million.

They are charged with two counts of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

What will US ? President Donald Trump's Asia policy look like



The first days of Donald Trump's presidency have been as dramatic as they promised to be. His inaugural address painted a dark picture of America, he got into a petulant spat with the media about the number of people who attended his inauguration, did not take kindly to the women marches against him across the US – and he passed controversial executive orders on abortion and Obamacare.

The foreign policy front has been turbulent as well. Trump formally ditched the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a trade pact of 12 countries that represent 40% of the world's economy. He has continued his confrontational line on China. His press secretary Sean Spicer appeared to back Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's view that China should not be allowed access to the artificial islands it has built in the disputed South China Sea. "The US is going to make sure that we protect our

interests there," Spicer said. "It's a question of if those islands are in fact in international waters and not part of China proper, then yeah, we're going to make sure that we defend international territories from being taken over by one country."

China reacted firmly. Its foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying asked the US to "respect the facts, speak and act cautiously to avoid harming the peace and stability of the South China Sea." The Chinese media had earlier said that the US would have to "wage war" to block China's access to dispute islands; Hua, in more understated terms, conveyed that "China's resolve to protect its sovereignty and maritime rights...will not change."

Leaders in Asia will watch this unfolding situation carefully as Trump's reaction to China has a huge bearing on the continent's geopolitical loyalties and its future. As Chan Heng Chee, Singapore's former ambassador

to the US, notes many Asians are watching the great power contest and are hedging their bets. The US has been the dominant power in Asia, "the principal provider of both security and economic related public goods", as Evan Feigenbaum has put it. It is now up against a rising China which believes its "time has come", in the words of David Shambaugh, and is looking to challenge American primacy, that is expressed in its assertiveness in the South China Sea. Trump believes that China is getting the better deal of trade arrangements, that it is not opening its markets to American products while manipulating its own currency to boost exports. In an article in special issue of Asia Policy that dealt with "Assessing US-Asia relations in a Time of Transition", Shambaugh mentions the several issues that US and China do not see eye to eye on. These include US concern about the strategic balance in the region, the investment climate in China, Chinese investments in sensitive technological sectors and China's "cybersecurity and broader technological espionage" in the US. China is wary of "Western hostile forces" and their attempt to subvert Communist Party rule.

There is also a great deal of interdependence with China that Trump will be continually reminded of by his national

security bureaucracy. As Shambaugh relates, US-China bilateral trade is worth \$659 billion, China is one of the US' fastest growing export markets, US investments in China are worth \$75 billion and 328,547 Chinese students studied in US universities and vocational schools in 2015-16, bringing in \$11.43 billion in revenue. Chinese tourists also spent \$24 billion in the US in 2014. There are as a result "a growing number of stakeholders on both sides".

The key puzzle in the US-China relationship, as Shambaugh puts it, is "how to assert one's interests while managing a competitive relationship so that it does not become a fully adversarial one"? He says "neither Washington nor Beijing possesses the experience or a playbook for managing a relationship that is so deeply interdependent yet simultaneously filled with complex bilateral frictions and geostrategic rivalry."

Scholars have offered Trump a fair bit of advice on dealing with Asia. In December the Asia Society issued a 'briefing book' titled Advice for the 45th U.S. President: Opinions from Across the Pacific, which brings together the view of analysts and former practitioners. The common thread in the commentaries was the need for the US to reassure its allies and partners in Asia of its

commitment to the security of the continent in the face of a rising China. Joe Hockey, Australia's ambassador to the US, indicated that Washington is scarcely in a position not to be involved and engaged in Asia (since Trump has spoken about scaling back American commitments abroad). Hockey said "two-thirds of the world's economic growth is coming out of Asia, so [the U.S.] has to engage...We're going to see at least 500 million additional people emerge in the middle class in Asia over the next 10 years, so if you want American manufacturing to turn into American exports, and then turn into consumption in Asia, you need to engage with Asia and trade with Asia."

What Asia wants in this view is for the US to "just show up" – to demonstrate that it is still invested in the Asian balance of power to convince fence-sitters and prevent them going over to China. Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte announced his country's "separation" from the US in October. Chee points out that "Cambodia and Laos, and to some extent Thailand, Brunei, and Malaysia, have all moved into the Chinese orbit without fanfare." To prevent this slide and provide reassurance, Chee wants Trump to "attend every ASEAN regional meeting, such as the ASEAN-U.S. Summit and the East Asia Summit".

(Contd on page 23)

The Abu Dhabi crown prince as the R-Day guest suggests India's renewed West Asia focus

The Persian Gulf, and West Asia as a whole, has been seen as holding a fatal attraction for Indian foreign policy. New Delhi has enormous stakes in the region. That Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan is the chief guest for the 68th Republic Day is proof of India's growing ties with the United Arab Emirates, and, by extension, the Gulf region as a whole. The region is the country's largest trade and investment partner, the primary source of oil and gas imports, all undergirded with a long-standing historical relationship. But it is also riven by mediaeval forms of tribal, ethnic and sectarian rivalries. The sort of instability and violence that regularly engulfs parts of this region serves as a warning to New Delhi which oversee a similar patchwork society.

New Delhi encourages the export of labour and import of fossil fuels, but works hard to ensure that West Asia's poisonous ideologies are not stowaways with the more benign cargo. This uneasy relationship is only further complicated by Pakistan, a country that actively imports the worst that West Asian minds produce — and adds some homegrown hatreds to the brew. Islamabad initially did so as a means to access the wealth of countries like Saudi Arabia. But part of its leadership has come to believe that radical Islam is actually the glue with which a Pakistani state can be assembled. India had, therefore, assumed there was little in the way of strategic convergence between itself and the Gulf states, especially the Sunni monarchies, and shunned such arrangements.

There is now evidence, signalled by the crown prince's presence and an earlier visit by the then Saudi Arabian monarch 10 years ago that a revisiting of both Gulf and Indian assumptions about each other are afoot. The most important, and least mentioned, development is a growing recognition among some Sunni Arab leaders that their past patronage of radical Islamicist movements has proven a double-edged sword, the worst manifestation being the Islamic State.

The United Arab Emirates is at the forefront of this reconsideration with the present ruling faction of the Saudi royal family also struggling to find a reformist path. In addition, uncertainty over the Gulf's strategic utility to the United States — the region's traditional



external power broker — and the rise of India's economy and energy imports has made the Gulf region come to see New Delhi in a new light. Automatically Pakistan has become devalued in this new regional equation and it is the possibility of engendering a giant regional pivot away from Islamabad to New Delhi that has led India to become so much

more proactive in the Gulf.

The actual construction of a new path requires an economic equation that goes beyond workers and crude, a military relationship that at present is largely on paper and, finally, a careful examination of how far each side is prepared to go on promoting the sorts of Islam, such as Sufiism, that have India at their core.

Even in the worst of times, China is no substitute for the US on global stage

As an old West Asia hand, I could hardly have missed the significance of Chinese President Xi Jinping's trip to the region a year ago, which included stops in Riyadh, Tehran and, perhaps most significantly, at the Arab League summit in Cairo. With American influence in West Asia fading under US President Barack Obama, and Russia taking on a larger role in regional affairs, the Chinese leader seemed to be signalling that Beijing, too, wanted a seat at the table. At the summit, he surprised (and delighted) the assembled delegates by announcing China's support for a Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital. "China firmly supports the Middle East peace process and supports the establishment of a State of Palestine enjoying full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 borders," Xi said. "We understand the legitimate aspirations of Palestine to integrate into the international community as a state."

Xi's speech, a sharp departure from China's long-standing foreign policy practice of eschewing intervention on political matters, set off much speculative discussion among those of my ilk. Could it be that Beijing was finally ready to earn its place among the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and actually play a useful role in solving a major international problem? It was just conceivable that China could use its growing economic clout in West Asia to start a new, meaningful process of negotiations between Israel and Palestine, with the approval of Saudi Arabia and Iran — the two other stops on Xi's trip.

Why should China bother? After all, it had been very well served by its business-only foreign policy. Since a sudden attack of altruism could be ruled out, some West Asia experts speculated at the time that there were compelling economic reasons for Beijing's venturing into the international political arena. The argument went thus: China depends heavily on West Asian oil and gas, the steady supplies of which depend heavily on the political stability of the region, which in turn depends heavily on American policing; with Washington no longer willing to perform that function, Beijing might reasonably conclude that economic interests required it to shake off its political inertia.

There were other signs that China was taking on greater responsibility on the world stage. Its contribution of troops to UN peacekeeping missions had more than doubled, to 2,800 — and Xi had committed to increasing the number to 8,000 troops, or one-fifth of the total. (India's contribution, in case you're wondering, comprised 6,750 troops, 900 police, and 60 military experts.) The Chinese president had also pledged \$1 billion to create a UN Peace and Development Trust Fund.

I was reminded of the heightened expectations of Chinese leadership last week, when Xi visited the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. It was the first time a Chinese president has attended, and the timing was propitious. The audience of global grandees was, much like the gathering at the Arab League, anxious by the American retreat from responsibility for world affairs. And as he did in Cairo, Xi gave the appearance of a man with a plan. China, he said, would champion the cause of globalisation, in the face of strong nationalist, isolationist political movements throughout the West. Beijing would lead the effort to maintain trade and economic stability, and would do its utmost to prevent a trade war with Donald Trump's US.

The gathering of capitalists was reassured by Xi's assurance that they could do business as usual in his country, as much as they were charmed by his quoting Charles Dickens — he described the current state of world affairs as "the best of times, the worst of times", an allusion to *A Tale of Two Cities*. Many were apparently willing to overlook some of the more egregious contradictions in his speech; you have to wonder, for instance, what the representatives of Google and Facebook made of his claims to China's "openness". Most of the audience for Xi's speech have by now returned home to their daily routines, and many will have left their heady optimism at the high altitude of Davos. They will also have abandoned any hope that the new occupant of the White House might temper his language and attitudes upon swearing in: Trump has made it clear that he intends to follow through on his "America First" and anti-globalisation agenda. As the jet-lag from the long trip fades away, the Davos set is left with the realisation that China cannot be a substitute for the US during "the worst of times".

That's not to say these won't be "the best of times" for Beijing. There are plenty of scenarios in which Beijing benefits from Washington's withdrawal from international alliances, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which was designed to restrain Chinese ambitions. Trump's isolationism will also allow China to bully its smaller neighbours. But beyond Xi's rhetoric, Beijing has not yet demonstrated any interest or ability in being a solver of prickly international problems.

The Indian National Congress is likely to be in business again, don't write it off

The SP-Congress alliance in Uttar Pradesh has suddenly made things look up for India's grand old party. Everyone knows that UP is a high-stake election for Narendra Modi. Now, suddenly, it has also become a high-stake election for the Congress, which was, till the other day, seen as a non-player in the country's largest state, known for setting the political tempo nationally.

It is not as if the party is about to regain its lost glory. But if it can win Punjab, become part of a post-poll Akhilesh Yadav led government in UP, and retain Uttarakhand, and all are within the realm of possibility, it will be in business again, and perhaps begin to see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. For nothing succeeds like success in charging the flagging batteries of a party.

The 132 year old party is being criticised for clutching onto the coat-tails of regional outfits. It was the junior partner in Bihar in 2015 as also in UP 2017.

In the last 25 years, particularly since 1989, the Indian National Congress has been on the decline, barring two bursts of victory in 2004 and 2009 which led to 10 years of uninterrupted power at the Centre. After 2014, when it was reduced to a measly 44 seats in the Lok Sabha, many an obituary began to be penned about it. The BJP brass has vowed to create a "Congress mukt Bharat", and will do their utmost to bring this about (even though a strong Congress is in the interest of India, as is a strong BJP).

Alliances have been the conventional route taken by weak parties to gain strength, and the BJP deployed this strategy again and again throughout its political journey. When the BJP got two seats in the 1984 elections, many were prepared to write off the party. But within five years, it had become a player, having aligned with the Janata Dal to create a national alternative against the Congress—rather like the Congress is piggybacking on regional parties today.

Undoubtedly, the BJP had the backing of the RSS cadre and clear leadership at its helm at critical moments, whether it was LK Advani during the rath yatra or Atal Behari Vajpayee or Narendra Modi subsequently.

It is not as if there is no political space available for the Congress today. The BJP, after all, garnered only 31% of the popular vote when Modi swept to power with a clear majority. Modi is still popular, and he is trying to carve out new constituencies amongst the poor. But there is also mounting dissatisfaction, movements are erupting, a manifestation of the growing agrarian, socio-political crises, reflected for instance in the Patidar agitation in Gujarat, the Maratha upsurge in Maharashtra or the Jat violence in Haryana. In any case, the regional parties were formed at the expense of the Congress, and the reverse movement is always possible. The core crisis in the Congress today is one of leadership, and it is here that the Congress will have to take a hard look — and hard decisions. There is a virtual vacuum at the top. Sonia Gandhi has taken a back seat, Rahul Gandhi is unable to connect at the popular level, Congressmen and women have tended not to accept each other in the leadership role, and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has not stepped into the breach as yet.



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What Trump's TPP Withdrawal Means For India

Dhruva Jaishankar

In one of his first acts upon assuming office, Donald Trump signed a presidential memorandum confirming the U.S. withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). This move did not come as a surprise. As a presidential candidate, Trump had vociferously campaigned against what he described as bad or unfair trade agreements that the United States had signed onto, claiming that they had led to the loss of American jobs. Among his targets of criticism were the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994 and the United States accepting China into the World Trade Organisation in 2001. But Trump had reserved particular opprobrium for TPP, which was successfully agreed only last February and was awaiting ratification.

TPP is a weighty and complex agreement negotiated painstakingly by 12 countries: the United States, Canada, Mexico, Peru, and Chile in the Americas, and Japan, Australia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and New Zealand in the Asia-Pacific. Together, they comprise almost 40 percent of the world's gross domestic product. The rationale for many negotiating members was to re-engage the United States as a trading partner and - by collectively raising standards - balance what were sometimes one-sided trade relationships with China. A TPP minus America, even if that were possible (ratification by the United States was necessary for its entry into force), makes it far less attractive for most members.

There are several common misconceptions about TPP. One is that it is simply a trade agreement, when it is

actually much more than that. Not only does TPP slash tariffs, it contains anti-corruption measures, intellectual property obligations, human rights and child labour conditions, and environmental commitments. As a result, neither India nor China would have been ready to sign on. Comparisons that are often drawn in India with the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) - which includes China and India, but excludes the United States - are not entirely apt. Countries that are party to both negotiations - Japan, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, and New Zealand - do not see one as a replacement for the other.

A second misconception is that TPP is directed against China and India. This is only partly true. Officials from TPP countries would often reiterate that China and India were hypothetically welcome to join TPP at a later stage, as long as they met its conditions, knowing full well that this could not happen in the short-term, if ever. China's entry would offset many of its comparative advantages, while India's would probably have required (among other things) a much higher stage of development. While TPP is anti-China only in that it made the United States and Japan much more competitive with fellow members, it was anti-India only in that it reflected a frustration with New Delhi's obduracy on trade negotiations at the WTO. While many in New Delhi portrayed TPP as a punitive measure, India's exclusion was, at most, collateral damage.

That said, both China and India would have been disadvantaged by TPP's entry into force, although not significantly.

According to projections made in a working paper by the Petersen Institute for International Economics, the impact of TPP for both China (\$9-20 billion) and India (\$2-6 billion) would have been about 0.1% of GDP by 2030. South Korea and Thailand, by contrast, would have been much more significantly affected, by as much as 0.4% and 0.8% of GDP, respectively.

A third misconception, and one that Trump exploited, is that TPP would lead to a loss of U.S. jobs. The rationale Trump has given for withdrawing from TPP is that it disadvantaged American industry, workers, and wages, and that he believes in dealing "directly with individual countries on a one-on-one (bilateral) basis in negotiating future trade deals."

This is not entirely convincing. American industry has disagreed with Trump's assessment, calling TPP "America's best chance to ensure the United States isn't stuck on the outside - looking in - as Asia-Pacific nations pursue new trade accords among themselves." Moreover, according to the Petersen Institute study, TPP would have led to only a 0.1% increase in U.S. labour market churn and added 9% to U.S. exports by 2030. But rather than try to sell the economic benefits in a less-than-conducive American political environment, the administration of Barack Obama tried to project it as a national security imperative, with U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter saying that "passing TPP is as important to me as another aircraft carrier." Trump's advisors argued, convincingly, that TPP did nothing to curb China's assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific.

It is hard to see who exactly benefits from the United States' withdrawal from TPP. Certainly, U.S. industry and other TPP members will be disappointed. Indeed, this could be seen as a massive self-goal for the United States. Trump's decision has already been criticized by some American political leaders, including fellow members of the Republican Party. Trump will gain credibility with some of his base by actually fulfilling one of his more contentious campaign promises, but that base is weak to begin with, and unless there are tangible gains in manufacturing jobs (due to other factors), the electoral impact is likely to be negligible.

Nor will China or India derive significant benefits from the demise of TPP, other than a short-term respite. The urgency to complete RCEP will now diminish, and it is possible that greater complacency will set in regarding the need to rethink trade in a more protectionist global environment. TPP - while no boon for India - offered the best hope for a more openly competitive international trade order from which India, with its competitive wages and underutilized potential, still has possibly the most to gain. This sentiment was echoed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi only last week. "Walls within nations, a sentiment against trade and migration, and rising parochial and protectionist attitudes across the globe are...in stark evidence," he said. "The result: globalization gains are at risk and economic gains are no longer easy to come by." All in all, Trump's withdrawal from TPP will likely be remembered as a significant step in the slide towards a more protectionist world.

As Theresa May Meets Trump, India Should Watch Closely

Andrew Whitehead

Theresa May is a little short of friends on the world stage. Britain's Conservative Prime Minister doesn't have the easy charm of David Cameron or Tony Blair. She doesn't get on well with Germany's Angela Merkel. She has no obvious allies among major European leaders - hardly surprising when her main task is to navigate Britain's withdrawal from Europe.

So an embattled Downing Street believes it has pulled off a diplomatic coup. On Friday, May will be the first world leader to visit President Trump in the White House. She hopes to be able to demonstrate that although frozen out of European capitals, she has a true friend across the Atlantic - that the world's most powerful leader intends to help her achieve a successful Brexit.

Donald Trump has already gone on the record as endorsing Britain's narrow referendum decision to leave the European Union. "I think Brexit is going to be a great thing", he declared earlier this month. "I thought the UK was so smart in getting out". While Barack

Obama had, unwisely, warned British voters that if they plumped for Brexit they would be at the back of a queue for a solo trade deal with the US, Trump and his advisers have said the UK will be close to the top of the line.

May desperately needs a clear display of support from the new president. That means much more than a photo opportunity; she needs a fast track deal with the United States which offers British business the prospect of new markets and fresh commercial partnerships. She supported the losing side in Britain's EU referendum, though quietly and almost apologetically. It was the Brexit camp that brought the evangelical fervour to the contest - and that, along with distrust of the political establishment and dismay about Britain's lack of control over immigration, is why the country turned its back on the most successful supra-national grouping of our times.

All the same, May has now made clear that she is leading Britain towards a 'hard' Brexit - not simply

leaving the political and legal institutions of the European Union, but its single market as well. Politically, she believes this is her only option.

If the hard right Marine Le Pen's wins the French presidential election this spring - unlikely perhaps, but so too were the electoral triumphs of Brexit and of Trump - the EU is all-but-dead. It feels as if western liberal democracy is close to self-destruction. We could face the sort of mayhem, intolerance and political myopia that marked the fall of the Roman Empire all those centuries ago. One of those moments, perhaps, which marks a sharp shift in the balance of world power from the west towards Asia.

Delhi may stand to gain from some aspects of this turmoil. Both Theresa May and her maverick Foreign Minister Boris Johnson have visited India in recent weeks seeking to strengthen trade ties and so build another bulwark for the UK against the economic shock of Brexit. Whether the British government has the political will to meet one of India's key demands - an easier visa regime for Indian students - is not yet apparent.

But if the west fritters away its global influence in a surge of xenophobic populism, China will be the main beneficiary. And that should sound a note of caution for the world's biggest democracy. India is more comfortable with the US and the UK than with its principal regional rival. It could be in India's interest, paradoxically, to shore up the west in this quiet competition for global primacy.

And a word of caution for the British Prime Minister too as she makes her way to the White House. The type of insurgent, populist nationalism which Donald Trump represents is often too self-absorbed and self-interested to make a stable ally. One of the most Brexit-supporting British newspapers, the Telegraph, reflected that in a cartoon this week. In the first frame, a courteous and smiling Donald Trump is making way for Theresa May at the entrance to the Oval Office. In the second frame, he is angrily pushing her out of the way and shouting: "America First".

Mrs May, you have been warned.

Modi's Takeover Of The RBI And Where It Has Left Us

Mani Shankar Aiyar

The renowned historian, Prof. Satish Chandra, in his magisterial work, *Medieval India (1206-1526)*, quotes Ibn Battutah who visited the court of Muhammad bin Tuglaq as saying the ruler's gravest fault was that he "depended on his own judgement and rarely took advice from others."

Cut to the 21st century and one could say the same about Modi, especially as Modi's demonetization drive has been so accurately described by Mihir Sharma, in his Bloomberg View on this site, as a "foolhardy exercise in pointlessness", as foolhardy and pointless as Tughlaq's experiment with copper coins, withdrawing gold and silver as legal tender without adequate prior preparation and replacing these with copper and brass, then reversing his orders and thus bankrupting the Treasury. (However, history does not record Tughlaq having issued orders, and orders to reverse orders, 138 times in 70 days as the Modi regime has done!) The IMF have just shaved one percent (Rs. 1.5 lakh crore) off their estimate of India's GDP growth rate for the current fiscal year, while Dr. Manmohan Singh sticks to his estimate that the fall-off will be nearer 2-3%, or Rs. 3 lakh crore to Rs. 4.5 lakh crore.

And to what end? Tughlaq thought he could raise funds to fight his wars with Iran and China by demonetizing gold and silver. Modi thought he could end "black money" by rendering "high denomination notes" invalid. Both were wrong because they would not take advice. If only he had cared to ask his own Finance Minister, Modi would have learned that "black

money" in cash constitutes no more than 5-6% of cash in circulation and, therefore, it would be as foolish to target 86% of cash in circulation and 98% of all economic and commercial transactions to find the needle in the haystack as it would be to shift the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad by forcing all Delhi dwellers to move, killing a blind man who said he could not find the way and compelling the lame to drag themselves hundreds of miles on one foot, leaving behind not a dog to bark or a cat to mew. (At least 120 people have died in direct consequence of demonetization.)

It is precisely to prevent such playing around with the economy's lifeblood - currency - that in modern times, central banks have been increasingly given real autonomy, freedom, and independence to manage the nation's currency. That is why the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, describes the RBI's "basic function" as: "to regulate the issue of Bank Notes and keeping of reserves with a view to securing monetary stability in India and generally to operate the currency and credit system of the country to its advantages."

The point to note is that "operating the currency" is not the function of the Government of India. It is a duty enjoined on the RBI and the RBI alone.

An IMF Working Paper (WP/07/88) by Marco Arnone et.al. has elaborated the fundamental features of the central government-central bank relationship as including autonomy in setting the policy rate; not extending direct credit to government; exercising financial supervision; and ensuring the

soundness of the financial system. This requires governing bodies of central banks to be inured from political interference by minimizing government's role in appointments to the governing body and giving members longer terms. Indeed, it stresses the basic consensual "autonomy" principle that "government participation in a policy-making board is not necessary".

The Working Paper goes on to construct an index of central bank autonomy for 163 countries, divided into three categories: "advanced"; "emerging" (in which India falls); and "developing". "Political autonomy" is indexed separately from "economic autonomy" and then combined in an "overall" index of autonomy. Total autonomy scored 1.00; no autonomy scored 0.00. The data related to 2003.

As of that date, the "political autonomy" of RBI was rated at 0.25, just under half the average "emerging economies" score of 0.56. (Extraordinarily, Iraq under Saddam Hussein scored twice as high as India!), but on "economic autonomy", India scored a high 0.75, just below the "developed" average of 0.81. Thus, we were not perfect, as shown by the run-ins that RBI Governors D Subbarao and YV Reddy, to name but two, had with their respective Finance Ministers; but greater autonomy for the central bank was moving in the right direction. The Working Paper establishes a pretty strong correlation between the extent of central bank autonomy and the stage of development of the economy - the more independent the central bank, the better the overall performance of the economy. Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan

is on record as saying that independence of the central bank is "essential for stable sustainable growth". Another former Governor, Bimal Jalan, in his interview to *The Indian Express* (14 December 2016) has held RBI autonomy to be "a very fundamental fact".

Modi's actions on and after 8 November have seriously called into question the autonomy of the RBI and thus seriously damaged both the present performance of the economy as well as its future prospects. Amartya Sen has been blunt to the point of cruelty: "I don't think RBI decides anything at this time". Former Governor YV Reddy has stated forthrightly that had he been presented with such an ultimatum, he would have resigned rather than carry out such instructions.

What was the sequence of events leading to the decision to demonetize nearly nine-tenths of the currency in circulation? When, if ever, did the Prime Minister's Office consult the Finance Ministry or NITI Ayog? If it did, what was their view and was it deliberated on in cabinet or the relevant cabinet sub-committee? Indeed, is it not a fact that PMO issued its "advisory" to RBI of 7 November of its own sweet will, without consulting anyone else? Is this in accord with Section 7 of the RBI Act that sets out the terms and conditions for Government to issue directions to the RBI where this is established as "necessary to the public interest"? Was there any such necessity? For, after all, as former Governor Bimal Jalan told the *Indian Express* (14/12/16), "When you demonetize legal tender, there must be a very good reason for it. War, security threat." (Contd on page 23)

The ISIS Wanted The West To Fear Refugees And Muslims. It Worked.

President Donald Trump had long promised major restrictions on refugees and visitors from Muslim countries. Now that he's president, it looks like he is going to make good on his word.

This week, the Trump administration is preparing a draft executive order that would immediately and indefinitely block Syrian refugees from being resettled in the country. The draft order, which was leaked to activist groups and later obtained by *The Washington Post*, would also temporarily stop all refugee resettlement from all countries and cut refugee admissions from 100,000 to 50,000 a year.

Additionally, the draft order suggests that all visitors from a number of Muslim-majority countries - likely to include Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen - would have their visas to the United States blocked until new visa procedures, including Trump's so-called "extreme vetting," are installed.

These moves described in the draft are likely to be popular with many Trump supporters. Polls have suggested that the U.S. is deeply divided on the subject of

refugees, and there is widespread concern about the threat posed by extremist Islamist terrorism. It's likely that Trump's tough talk on immigration helped his November election win to a considerable degree.

It's also worth noting that the president's campaign rhetoric went far further than the proposals being discussed this week, with Trump calling for a total ban on Muslim visitors to the U.S. - a dramatic policy that would have been globally unique and arguably unconstitutional.

Yet the wisdom of any immigration policies that indirectly target Muslims and seek to block refugees is far from clear. There's little, if any, clear evidence that blocking Syrian refugees and Muslim visitors to the U.S. would help reduce the threat from terrorism.

More alarmingly, the policies described in the draft order would aid the rhetoric of the extremist groups like the Islamic State that it aims to combat.

How many Syrian refugees resettled in the United States have been convicted on a terrorism related charge since Sept.

11, 2001? In 2015, the State Department put the number at zero. There appear to have been no new cases since then.

Refugees of other nationalities have been convicted for their involvement in terror plots - the congressional office of Jeff Sessions, Trump's current pick for attorney general and a fierce immigration critic, completed his own investigation last year that found 24 between 2001 and 2014. However, from Sessions's data, it was unclear whether these cases involved people who had been resettled or people who had claimed asylum at America's borders. Even if they were all the former, they would remain be a tiny fraction of the more than 900,000 refugees resettled since 2001.

Look at the realities of Syrian refugee resettlement to the United States and it's clear why so few, if any, have been involved in terror plots. Most obviously, there simply aren't that many Syrian refugees in the U.S. - less than 20,000 have been resettled since 2001, according to the most recent State Department information.

Though Trump talks about "extreme

vetting," the security restrictions in place on Syrian refugees over the past few years are already considerable. Syrian refugees hoping to be resettled to the United States have to go through a long and complicated vetting process that requires scrutiny from bodies including the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the National Counterterrorism Center and the Defense Department. If you were an organization intent on committing a terrorist attack in America, refugee resettlement would be a highly inefficient and risky route to go. Even Syrians with legitimate refugee claims and honest intentions often drop out of the process due to frustration. Some Syrian refugees have been charged with terror plots in Europe. However, the situation within Europe is far different than that in America. In 2015 alone, 378,000 Syrians applied for asylum across the European Union, and they were part of a far broader movement of refugees and migrants that stood at more than 1.3 million that year. (Contd on page 23)

ISI tele exchange unearthed: Cops



(News Agencies) : The UP Anti-Terrorism Squad claimed to have busted an illegal telephone exchange and spying racket on Wednesday with the arrest of a software engineer from Mehrauli in south Delhi and 10 others from NCR, Lucknow and other parts of UP. The "exchanges" were not only making lakhs of rupees by

routing international calls, bypassing legal gateways, they were being used by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to call Army officials and elicit information from them. The mastermind, engineer Gulshan Kumar Sain, worked with the Punjabi Bagh unit of a leading engineering coaching centre. He also conducted tuition classes for IIT aspirants. On arrest, Sain told cops he had been making around Rs 1 lakh a month from the parallel exchanges that had been operating for a year. Sources said the racket was busted after the defence ministry and Army alerted the military intelligence unit in J&K about some of its officers receiving suspicious calls from "seniors" who sought information on their unit, deployment, strength and

possible movement. Some of these officers, it was found, shared the information unsuspectingly since the numbers from which these calls were made were strikingly similar to the actual phone numbers of their seniors. One of the officers, however, smelled a rat and alerted his seniors. Soon, it emerged that several officers in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere had received such calls. Intelligence officials unearthed the racket after a fortnight of extensive investigations and found that the illegal network was using techniques like call spoofing and SIM box fraud to carry out their spying activities. The callers, based in Pakistan and Bangladesh, made calls over internet on the parallel

exchanges. These calls were converted to voice calls through the SIM box and connected to receivers in India. However, receivers could only see Indian numbers on their phone screens. This also threw off agencies tracking suspicious calls. Two dozen numbers belonging to UP and Delhi were traced and the UP police's ATS was asked to initiate a crackdown. After tracing the network for two months, ATS finally carried out a 12-hour long operation on Tuesday night. Simultaneous raids led by IG Asim Arun were conducted at three places and 11 suspects arrested. They have been charged under IPC sections related to waging war against the nation, fraud and cheating and under the Telegraph Act. Sain belongs to

Sikar in Rajasthan. He got a company, MD Technologies, registered in the name of his father, Matadeen. Sain claimed to have taken a licence for making wireless products. He also began to provide internet services and was executing the con job in the garb of an ISP. With the illegal exchanges, he managed to make substantial money as he did not have to pay the termination charge of 53 paise per minute per call or any taxes. Police have recovered 16 SIM box units, 140 prepaid SIM cards, 10 mobile phones, 28 data cards and five laptops from the accused. A probe has been initiated to ascertain if the arrested men were acting at ISI's behest or were unaware of the identity of the callers.

Nirbhaya fund: Allocation of Rs 1,000 crore remains unspent for third year in a row



(Agencies) New Delhi : In every Budget since 2013, the government has allocated Rs 1,000 crore towards the Nirbhaya fund — for schemes to ensure the safety and security of women. But like every year since 2013, the allocation in 2015-16 remained unspent.

The fund was created by the UPA government in 2013 in the memory of Nirbhaya, a Delhi paramedic who was assaulted and brutalised in December 2012 in a moving bus in the national capital. She later died of her injuries. The fund was launched with the objective of supporting schemes for the protection of women.

However, in the last two Budgets, while continuing with UPA's tradition of allocating Rs 1,000 crore towards this fund, the NDA government failed to come up with any scheme entailing expenditure. The scope of the fund included supporting non-governmental organisations working for the safety of women, but none could be shortlisted in the last three years to utilise the money.

According to the approved

Union finance account for 2015-16, tabled in Parliament in December, the government had devised two schemes — a Rs 653 crore scheme for "safety of women on public road transport" under the ministry of road transport and highways and the Nirbhaya project worth Rs 79.6 crore under the home ministry. Neither of these schemes could take off, resulting in complete savings of the proposed allocation. Many other projects, with allocation made in 2015-16, remained on the drawing board

with 100% savings. The government had allocated Rs 461 crore for employment and rehabilitation of manual scavengers. Again, this project could never take off. There was also a special programme devised for development of road connectivity in Naxal-affected areas, where women and children are often the worst sufferers, with an allocation of Rs 920 crore. This again had complete savings at the end of the year for the road transport ministry's failure to implement it.

Trump says India is a 'true friend', invites Modi to US

(News Agencies) WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has invited PM Narendra Modi for a visit sometime later this year. The invitation was made during a phone conversation between the two in which both pledged to stand "shoulder-to-shoulder" in the global fight against terrorism, the White House said on Tuesday.

A White House read-out on the call was largely anodyne, saying, "President Trump emphasised that the United States considers India a true

friend and partner in addressing challenges around the world." The two discussed opportunities to strengthen the partnership between the US and India in broad areas such as the economy and defence, it added.

According to the White House, they also discussed security in south and central Asia, without explicitly mentioning any country, even as the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), its dissing of Nato, and its general disengagement from global affairs is unnerving many countries that see Washington ceding influence to China.

There was a cautious element to the read-out, which contained none of the gushing superlatives Trump plied on India and Modi during his campaign, and none of the comical hyperbole that was reported by Pakistan in Trump's conversation with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after Trump's win. The fact that the Trump administration chose to identify India as a "friend and a partner" suggested continuity, was consonant with the terminology of the Obama and Bush era, and New Delhi's own outlook, despite the desire in some quarters to elevate the relationship to an "alliance."

Katiyar's sexist remarks on Priyanka spark controversy

(News Agencies) New Delhi : BJP leader Vinay Katiyar triggered a political controversy with a comment on Priyanka Gandhi's looks, saying that it would not help Congress fetch votes. "It will not have an impact. There are several hard working and successful women leaders including MLAs and MPs who are as good looking as Priyanka," Katiyar said when asked whether Priyanka's full-scale involvement in Congress's campaign in UP could benefit Congress. Katiyar also mentioned Union textiles minister Smriti Irani among women leaders of BJP who matched Priyanka's good looks. "I think Smriti Irani is also beautiful and she is

campaigning too," he said.

Priyanka and Congress seized upon the comment to target Katiyar and BJP for what they called their anti-women outlook. Mocking Katiyar for saying that BJP had more beautiful women campaigners, the younger Gandhi sibling said, "He is right... they do! And if that's all BJP sees in my colleagues who are each strong, brave and beautiful women who have battled through all sorts of hardships to get where they are, then he makes me laugh even more. Because he exposes the BJP's mindset towards half of India's population." Calling it an insult to India's women, Congress spokesman Randeep Surjewala said, "Such conduct,

behaviour and words prove BJP's mentality. Time for PM Narendra Modi and Amit Shah to apologise." Even Priyanka's husband Robert Vadra joined in the attack, demanding that Katiyar apologize for his "misogynistic" comments.

A defensive BJP quickly expressed regret. "I regret he has made such a remark. Neither the government nor the party subscribe or support to such views... Vinay Katiyar's comments are condemnable, they are not acceptable," I&B minister M Venkaiah Naidu said. Speaking to TOI later, Katiyar said he never intended to hurt Priyanka and that he had huge respect for women, who were welcome in politics.

Sebi bars Vijay Mallya from stock market, company directorship

(News Agencies) Mumbai : Markets regulator Sebi on Wednesday barred disgraced liquor baron Vijay Mallya from the stock market for fraudulently diverting about Rs 1,881 crore from United Spirits (USL) to various other entities within the UB Group, including now grounded Kingfisher Airlines (KFA).

Sebi also barred Mallya, who has currently fled India to avoid arrest by investigative agencies, from holding director position in any listed company in the country. The regulator also directed USL to initiate action against Mallya and UB Group

companies to which funds were wrongfully diverted by him.

Currently Mallya is the chairman of United Breweries and United Breweries (Holdings). Following Sebi order he will have to relinquish these positions. Sebi also barred another six people, including Ashok Capoor and V K Rekhi, both former MDs of USL from the market. Capoor has also been barred from directorship of any listed company.

Relying on forensic audits by various arms of global audit and consultancy major PwC, Sebi in its report said that Mallya, who was then the chairman of USL, "exerted pressure and influence

over USL employees to arrange funds for KFA." The report, among other documents, cited an e-mail from Mallya to Capoor and PA Murali, then a director with USL, saying that KFA had significant dues towards the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal and instructed that USL "would have to come up with Rs 44 crore, if needed."

In another instance, when Capoor told Mallya that it was not possible for USL to support UB Group companies to meet any of their needs and in fact, USL needed support from UB Group companies in those circumstances, Mallya wrote

that he knew was fully aware of USL's position and asking for support from the company was Mallya's final call. "If you cannot accept my instructions, you are free to decide your further steps ... but let me repeat, my call is final and an instruction," Mallya wrote to Capoor, the Sebi report showed.

Sebi also instructed USL to report to Sebi, within 21 days, about the action it has initiated against Mallya, Capoor and others. Sebi also wants USL to take steps to recover about Rs 1,881 crore from Mallya and the companies to whom those funds were wrongly diverted.

Punjab elections Rahul Gandhi names Amarinder Singh as Congress CM candidate



(News Agencies) Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi on Friday officially announced Punjab Congress president Captain Amarinder Singh as the chief ministerial candidate for the next month's state assembly elections.

Addressing his first political rally in the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) assembly stronghold of Majitha, near Amritsar, Gandhi said only a Punjabi leader could lead the state.

"Amarinder Singh has given his blood and sweat for Punjab. He has worked day and night for the development of Punjab. He has always worked for the Punjabi and Sardar community. He is going to be our chief minister," Gandhi said. Cabinet minister Bikram Singh Majithia, the younger brother of Union minister and wife of deputy chief minister Sukhbir Singh Badal Harsimrat Kaur Badal, represents Majitha.

Captain Amarinder Singh is all set to fight the assembly elections against the SAD

head and Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal from Lambi. Punjab will go to the polls for 117 seats in a single phase on February 4. Votes will be counted on March 1. The Congress is heading for a bitter political fight with the ruling SAD-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alliance and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

Gandhi lashed out at the ruling SAD saying Punjab is under the monopoly of the Badal family. He also said if voted to power, the Congress would bring in such a stringent law against the menace of drugs in Punjab that peddlers would shiver even thinking about drugs. "The Congress will fight drugs and we will win it," he said. The Congress vice-president is on a three-day election tour of the state. The campaign, aimed at launching a mega-offensive against the ruling Badal family, will also see him addressing rallies at Rampura Phul, Talwandi Sabo and Bathinda Urban on the first day.

Punjab elections: Rahul Gandhi guns for Badals over drug abuse, PM Modi hits back



(News Agencies) Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi traded barbs on Friday over drug abuse in Punjab, setting the tone for a potentially fiery campaign over the divisive issue ahead of next month's assembly polls in the state.

Gandhi also named state Congress president Captain Amarinder Singh as the chief

ministerial candidate, ending months of speculation on who will lead the party's battle against the ruling SAD-BJP and the AAP.

All 117 constituencies in Punjab will vote on February 4 and the results will be announced on March 11.

Gandhi has repeatedly targeted the ruling Badal family for failing to address the problem of drug abuse in the state

where an estimated 70% of the youth are said to be addicted to what is locally known as 'chitta'. Chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, however, claims that the problem was being blown out of proportion. Without naming anybody, Gandhi said if voted to power, the party will send to jail all those who have looted the state and failed to address the drugs problem.

"The Congress will fight the war against drugs and will win it," Gandhi said at the SAD-BJP stronghold Majitha, adding the party will also bring in such a stringent law that peddlers would shiver even thinking about drugs. Gandhi is on a three-day tour during which he will address joint rallies with Amarinder Singh and former cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu.



Indian Govt may allow Rs 24k from ATM in single withdrawal, weekly cap to remain

(News Agencies) The government might allow people to withdraw their weekly limit of Rs 24,000 in a single ATM transaction, multiple sources told HT, as a severe cash crunch showed signs of easing nearly three months after the demonetisation of high-value banknotes.

The single-transaction rule could be implemented within a fortnight. However, the weekly limit of Rs 24,000 is likely to be kept unchanged till February-

end, highly-placed sources said. The government recalled 500 and 1000-rupee banknotes on November 8 in a shock announcement that sucked out 86% of the currency in circulation, sparking a severe cash crunch and panic among billions of Indians. At present, customers can withdraw Rs 24,000 in a week though the single-day ATM limit is set at Rs 10,000. With the situation easing, customers are now withdrawing around Rs 3,500 in

a single transaction, which has left the ATMs with extra cash. Sources said the RBI, which is monitoring the pattern on cash withdrawal and supply, will take a decision on this issue soon. "The situation has become almost normal, the average footfall at an ATM has come down and the demand for cash is also normalising," Rituraj Sinha, president, Cash Logistics Association, told Hindustan Times. Cash injection into ATMs has also further increased in the



last five days, he said. On an average, about Rs 12,000 crore is being provided for filling up the country's 2.2 lakh ATMs compared to about Rs 13,000 crore before November 8.

Sanjay Leela Bhansali attacked, set vandalised during Padmavati shoot in Jaipur



(News Agencies) Members of the Karni Sena allegedly attacked on Friday filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali and vandalised the sets of his upcoming movie Padmavati at Jaigarh Fort in Jaipur. The members accused the makers of the film for 'distorting history.'

"We have learnt that the filmmakers are portraying the film as a love story between Alauddin Khilji and Padmini, which is a blatant distortion of history. That is why we stopped

the shooting and told the makers that we won't let them continue unless they make changes," said Narayan Divrala, district president, Karni Sena. Large numbers of people owing allegiance to the Rajput youth outfit reached Jaigarh Fort on Friday morning and disrupted the shooting. "We had learnt that a few intimate scenes between Alauddin Khilji and Padmini were part of the film and it is completely unacceptable for us. On Friday morning, when

members of Karni Sena went to the Jaigarh Fort, an argument happened and some people associated with the shooting party opened fire on air which accelerated the tension," alleged Lokendra Singh Kalvi, founder, Karni Sena. A clash occurred between both the parties and equipment was vandalised. "Later after the police came in, a meeting was organized between us and the

filmmakers. As of now, Bhansali has assured us that there are no intimate scenes in the film. But we won't tolerate the distortion of history and will only be assured after seeing the film," said Kalvi. Kalvi added that the outfit will further protest if historical facts are distorted in the film. "After getting news of the clash at Jaigarh Fort, large number of police personnel was deployed at the spot to maintain

law and order. As of now, no case has been lodged by any of the parties," said deputy commissioner of police (north) Anshuman Bhomia. Bhomia said it is being investigated whether any firing took place.

The movie, which is being directed by Bhansali stars Ranveer Singh, Shahid Kapoor and Deepika Padukone playing Alauddin Khilji, Rawal Ratan Singh and Rani Padmini.

Despite 'Dangal' success, money has little appeal for Mahavir Singh Phogat



(News Agencies) Aamir Khan's 'Dangal' is a super hit, doing business worth over Rs 300 crore within 17 days of its release, but Mahavir Singh Phogat, on whose life the film is based, is happy despite getting just a fraction of the sum.

For sharing his family's journey to the wrestling arena, the former wrestler-turned-coach, it is learnt, received close to Rs 80 lakh. Though Phogat wasn't keen to talk about it, friends and family members say he is satisfied. Since Indian wrestlers are strict vegetarians, milk products form a part of the daily diet and as a result, the Phogats invested some money into buying high-yielding buffaloes.

Phogat's daughters, Geeta, Babita, Sangita and Ritu, are wrestlers too. Ritu, the youngest of the sisters, had said before the Pro-Wrestling League (PWL) that a lot had changed since the film's release, the highlight being more girls taking to the sport in rural areas.

Ritu was offered a role in the film but the father wasn't keen. "I'd rather achieve in wrestling," she said after becoming the highest-paid wrestler, Rs 36 lakh, in the PWL II.

Geeta was the first Indian woman grappler to win gold at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi. The sisters' success on the mat can be attributed to Phogat, who got the Dronacharya Award last year.

Geeta might take a break from the sport after tying the knot recently, but her sisters are looking ahead to the new season.

Mahavir's dream of setting up an academy in his village Balali in Haryana is on hold. "We will talk to the government in this regard, let's see how things work out," he said.

For the time being, he plans to focus on his daughters and nieces, Vinesh and Priyanka. "All five are expected to train under him for the next couple of months and not attend the national camp," said a coach close to the family.

UP election: Rs 87 crore in cash seized after enforcement of model code of conduct

(News Agencies) More than Rs 87 crore in cash and liquor worth over Rs 19.15 crore have been seized in Uttar Pradesh, despite the enforcement of the model code of conduct ahead of UP assembly election.

"After the implementation of model code of conduct (MCC) in UP for assembly polls, Rs 87.32 crores of cash were seized by teams of IT, EC and police. Under the campaign, 7.5 lakh bulk litres of liquor worth Rs 19.15 crores has also been recovered," UP chief electoral officer T Venkatesh said.

He said FIRs were lodged against 2,545 people in 44,321

cases of MCC violation including that of illegal use of blue and red beacon, loudspeakers, meeting without permission and



speeches.

For peaceful elections, 7,69,279 licensed firearms were deposited and 640 arms licences were cancelled, he added. Under IPC section 107/116 (for keeping peace and security), 26.23 lakh persons were bound down and non-bailable warrants have been issued against 15,286, the CEO said.

Salman Khan says didn't kill blackbuck, claims he was falsely accused



(News Agencies) Bollywood star Salman Khan on Friday told a court in Rajasthan's Jodhpur he has been falsely accused of killing two blackbucks, which are an endangered species, during a shooting of a film in 1998 in the district. Along with Salman, actors Saif Ali Khan, Sonali Bendre, Tabu and Neelam are also accused of

poaching the blackbucks while shooting for the film 'Hum Saath Saath Hain' near Kankani village. Dushyant Singh, a local who is accused of helping them in the hunt, was also present in the court. The accused appeared before the court of the chief judicial magistrate to record their statements. CJM Dalpat Singh Rajpurohit asked Salman 65 questions about the allegation framed against him

but he pleaded innocent. The others also claimed to be innocent.

The CJM asked what the actor had to say about the post mortem report of two blackbucks by Dr Nepalia and medical board. On this Salman said the report prepared by Dr Nepalia gave the correct picture, while the second report by the medical board aimed at implicating him in the false case. According to the post mortem report prepared by Dr Nepalia the two blackbucks died of dog bites. The court had ordered the accused to appear before it on January 13 following the examination of all the prosecution witnesses following the examination of all the prosecution witnesses and then subsequently deferred the hearing to January 27. Salman is the key accused in the case while the others are co-accused for allegedly instigating the Bajrangi Bhaijaan actor. The court, following the recording of statements of the accused, asked the defence counsels if they wanted to bring their

witnesses. Hastimal Sarswat, who is representing Salman, requested for more time to present defence witness. Sarswat was granted permission by the CJM. The next date for hearing is February 15. Sarswat told Hindustan Times that the prosecution has examined only 28 witnesses of the total 51. Dushyant Singh and Dinesh Ganware, are accused of helping the actors in the hunt. Ganware has been on the run since the incident and accusations against him are yet to be framed. Salman was booked in at least four cases during the shooting of the Ham Saath Saath Hain. The poaching case is now the only one against Salman in the trial court of Jodhpur. On January 18, Salman was acquitted in an Arms Act case against him. He was accused of keeping and using an unlicensed weapon, but the court let him go, giving him the benefit of doubt based on weak evidence. The Rajasthan high court had last year acquitted the actor in two cases related to the hunting of chinkara deer.

Mob attacks cops with bow and arrow, block road in Burdwan



(News Agencies) A mob on Friday attacked the police with bow and arrow and blocked the arterial Ausgram-Guskara Road in protest against detention of three school teachers and alleged manhandling of them at Guskara in Burdwan district. A police officer

said some of the policemen were injured when a mob, accompanying some teachers of a local high school and it's managing committee members, suddenly attacked the cops during altercation at the Guskara police station. As police dispersed the

mob and detained three of the teachers on charge of instigating the mob and preventing a public servant from discharging duty, it moved to nearby Guskara-Ausgram Road and blocked the road. A section of the crowd also attacked the policemen with bows and arrows as a force tried to lift the blockade, the officer said. The

blockade, which went on for several hours, was lifted after police released the three teachers and promised to look into charges of high-handedness against the IC of Guskara police station. Locals alleged 15 teacherz and 20 students were injured in police lathicharge during the agitation but the police denied there was

any lathicharge. Superintendent of Police Kunal Agarwal said police were looking into the allegations of highhandedness and action would be taken if anyone was found guilty. The teachers and locals alleged police did not take action to stop unauthorised construction near the school gate.

Supreme Court refuses to hear plea seeking total ban on cattle slaughter



(News Agencies) The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea seeking either a total ban on slaughter of cattle or framing of a uniform policy to protect and preserve them from slaughtering and smuggling. A bench comprising Chief Justice JS Khehar and justice NV Ramana said it cannot direct states to frame law banning slaughter of cattle. Various orders have been passed by the apex

court in the past on measures to be adopted to prevent illegal inter-state transportation of the cattle, the bench said, while refusing to entertain the PIL filed by Vineet Sahai, a Delhi resident. During a brief hearing, the counsel for Sahai referred to inconsistencies in various state laws on slaughter and transportation of cattle. He said in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, the statutes were stringent while in neighbouring

Kerala, slaughter was allowed, which led to illegal inter-state smuggling of cattle.

The plea sought a direction to the Centre to frame "a uniform policy throughout India for protection of cattle and to preserve them for all purpose instead of slaughtering them and exporting the said cattle in market, despite the fact that we have the provisions under the Constitution ...to protect and increase our cattle". "Some states allow the slaughter of cattle with restrictions like a 'fit-for-slaughter' certificate which may be issued depending on factors like age and gender of cattle, continued economic viability etc. Others completely ban cattle slaughter, while there is no restriction in a few states," it said adding that the prohibition of cow slaughter is part of the Directive Principles of State Policy under Constitution.

60 Indian fishermen arrested after they strayed into Pakistan's waters

(News Agencies) Pakistan has arrested 60 Indian fishermen after they strayed into its waters, an official said on Friday. The Maritime Security Agency (MSA) made the arrests on Thursday morning, and also impounded 10 wooden boats, police official Lateef Babar said. The 60 men would be taken to the court on Saturday from where they would be sent to jail, he added. Dozens of Indian and Pakistani fishermen are captured in the Arabian Sea each year after straying across maritime borders. They often languish in prison even after

serving their sentences, as poor diplomatic relations between the bitter nuclear foes hamper bureaucracy. Pakistan earlier this month released 219 Indian fishermen as a 'goodwill' gesture. But overall relations between India and Pakistan have plummeted since a deadly attack on an Indian Army base in Kashmir in September, that New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based Islamist group Jaish-e-Mohammed. There have since been repeated outbreaks of cross-border firing, with both sides reporting deaths and injuries.



military brass, besides the diplomatic community.

Motorbike stunt riders and herds of camels wowed the crowds gathered in New Delhi Thursday to celebrate Republic Day, an annual showcase of India's military hardware and cultural diversity.

After the US and French presidents attended the last two events, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, was this year's chief guest as everyone from bagpipe-playing troops to schoolchildren paraded along the landmark Rajpath boulevard.

The day marks the adoption of the country's constitution on January 26, 1950 following independence from Britain in 1947.

The nearly 100-minute parade displayed India's latest weaponry, including missiles and Indian-manufactured radar systems, along with elaborate floats representing the country's different states and union territories.

A contingent of border guards rode into town on



camels, wearing colourful caparisons fitted with round mirror pieces, and were greeted with loud cheers from spectators.

The arrival of the camels followed a show by stuntmen from military units, some of whom balanced themselves precariously on ladders on the back of moving motorbikes.

India showcases muscle & mosaic at the 68th Republic Day celebrations

(News Agencies) India's military might and rich cultural diversity were on display during the dazzling 68th Republic Day celebrations in the national Capital which had Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan as the chief guest. Light rains and overcast skies failed to dampen the enthusiasm of thousands of spectators who witnessed the nearly one-and-a-half-hour-long parade that marched down the majestic Rajpath, India's ceremonial boulevard, amid unprecedented security cover.

The parade was led by a 149-member marching contingent with a band comprising 35 musicians from UAE, marking a significant gesture towards the

visiting dignitary

I am very delighted and honoured to share Republic Day celebrations with the Indian people,' said a tweet on MBZNews, the official Twitter account of Al Nahyan.

Al Nahyan, also deputy supreme commander of the UAE armed forces, was seated next to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who wore a pink color 'safo' (turban). The two leaders were seen sharing some light moments.

For the first time a contingent of the National Security Guard (NSG), popularly known as the Black Cat Commandos, was part of the march past.

The parade was also watched by Vice-President

Hamid Ansari, former PM Manmohan Singh, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and the country's top political and



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In the MOOD for Modi

India Today survey shows PM's popularity on the rise with massive support for note ban and PoK 'surgical strikes' as Rahul and Kejriwal fall further behind



(News Agencies)The widespread support for the principal findings of the latest India Today Mood of the Nation opinion poll reveals that - according to respondents - Narendra Modi is best suited to be India's next Prime Minister and the ruling National Democratic Alliance led by him will romp to power with 360 seats if Lok Sabha elections were held now. The survey also registered

28%
feel Rahul Gandhi is the best alternative to PM Modi and can successfully challenge him in 2019



65%

feel Narendra Modi is best suited to become the next PM of India



45%

believe demonetisation will curb black money and boost economy

12,143 interviews were conducted (53% in rural & 47% in urban), spread across 97 Lok Sabha constituencies



43%

of the respondents say India's relations with the US will improve under Donald Trump's presidency

government's demonetisation initiative and surgical strikes in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Around two-thirds of the respondents see Modi as the top pick to become the next Prime Minister, leading his nearest rival - Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi - by 55 percentage points.

The latest edition of the MOTN

survey was conducted by market research firm Karvy Insights Limited across 19 states from the end of demonetisation deadline on December 30 until January 9.

A total of 12,143 interviews were carried out (53% in rural & 47% in urban), spread across 97 parliamentary constituencies in 194 assembly seats.

The study shows that there will be a three percentage point rise in the BJP's vote share, and 2% & 1% drops in vote shares of 'Others' and the Congress respectively.

The BJP will, according to the results of the survey, get more than 300 seats on its own if parliamentary elections were held now, with substantial gains since the survey done in August.

The PM's score has gone up 15 percentage points, is the highest ever in the past six surveys, and has grown across all religions in the last three opinion polls.

People are also supporting Modi's performance as Prime Minister with 69% rating his performance as either 'good' or 'outstanding'. That's a jump of 16 percentage points over the survey done six months ago. Also, 1 out of every 4 respondents considers his

performance to be 'outstanding' this time, compared to 9% in the edition six months ago and 16% in the survey done a year ago. Modi also seems to have got the thumbs-up from people on the issue of demonetisation as 45% of the respondents believe that the ban on the old 500 and 1,000-rupee notes will help curb black money and corruption while 35% also believe that it will be good for the economy.

Methodology

THE India Today Group-Karvy Insights Mood of the Nation (MOTN) poll was conducted by Karvy Insights Limited. A total of 12,143 interviews were conducted (53% in rural & 47% in urban) spread across 97 Parliamentary constituencies in 194 assembly constituencies in 19 states. In each assembly constituency, starting points were selected and fixed number of interviews were done.

The fieldwork for the poll was conducted from December 30, 2016 till January 9, 2017. All interviews were conducted face to face using a standard structured interview schedule/questionnaire which was translated into regional languages.

The poll was conducted under the supervision of Mr. Ranjit Chib, chairman of Karvy Insights. He was assisted by Dixit Chanana, vice president, Karvy Insights. Results are in percentage points.

How has NDA government handled relations with Pakistan?

Handled it well: **17**
Satisfactory: **45**
Bungled it badly: **23**
Don't know/Can't say: **15**



Who in your opinion has been the no. 1 heroine in the year 2016-17?



Who in your opinion has been the no. 1 hero in the year 2016-17?



Has inflation (the price of essential commodities) risen in the country since the NDA came to power?



Post demonetisation, should Modi govt lower income tax rate in Budget?

Yes, govt should lower income tax rates substantially

32

Yes, govt should lower income tax rates to some extent

36

No, govt should not lower the income tax rates

18

Don't know/Can't say

14

Do you think the recent Supreme Court decision making it mandatory to play the national anthem in movie theatres is a good move?

64

Yes

26

No

10

Don't know/Can't say

Which of the schemes launched by the Narendra Modi-led NDA government is working best?

Swachh Bharat

27

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna

16

Digital India

12

Demonetisation

9

Make in India

7

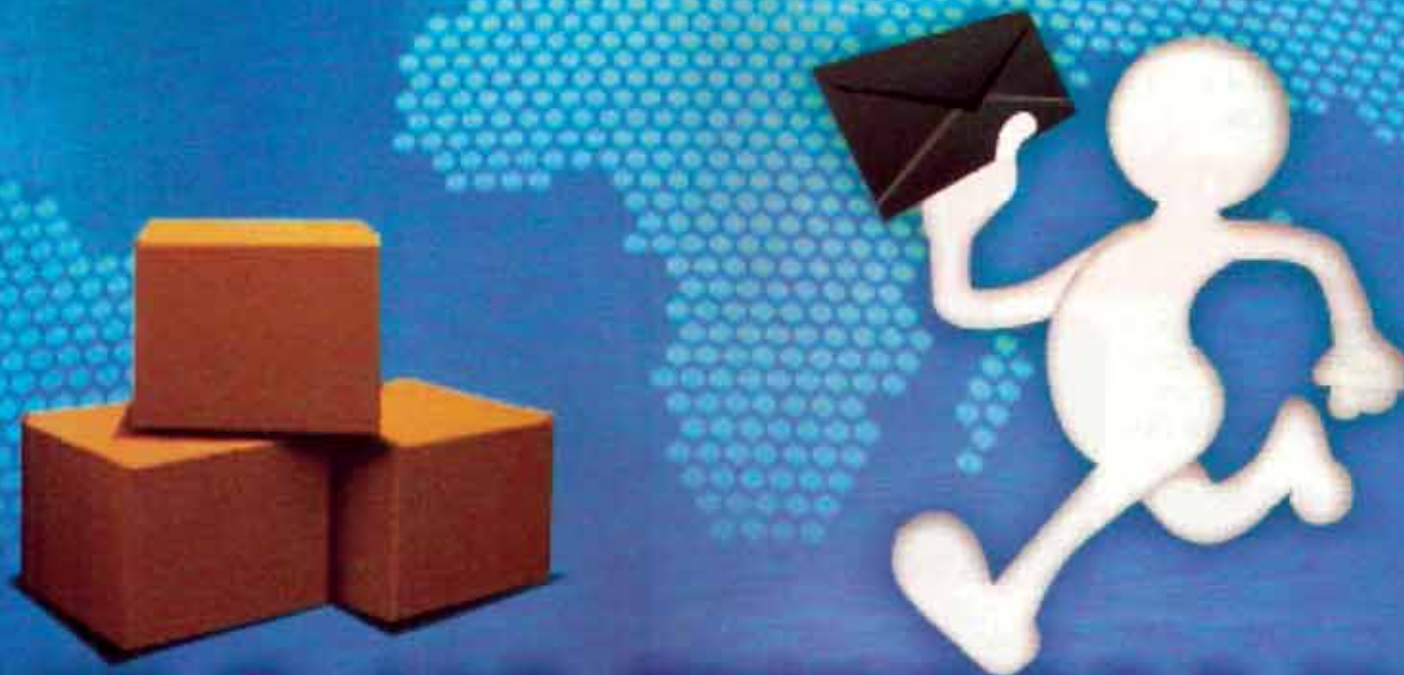
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Indian drone sales rise along with arrests, as confusion clouds descend



(News Agencies) Drones are taking off in India, but buyers are often unaware of the legal turbulence that may lie ahead. While sales are going through the roof, prior permission from authorities is necessary to fly them.

Delhi Police this month detained three foreigners in southwest Delhi's Dwarka area for operating a drone from their terrace.

Four people were arrested in Varanasi for filming Ganga aarti through drone cameras at the Dashashwamedha Ghat without permission in 2014.

A huge aerial photography sector is thriving in the ambiguity as civil aviation regulator DGCA is yet to issue a notification on the use of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) for civilian purposes.

The agency banned the

use of drones for commercial purposes in October 2014. It came out with a draft policy for operations of drones in April 2016, which brought some cheer for the industry.

But the final policy is yet to see daylight. Usage of drones came under the scanner due to security concerns as officials pointed out that the vehicles can be used to carry out aerial attacks and pose a great threat if not regulated.

As the demand for high-powered drones has gone up manifold, it has given rise to a grey market openly selling these gizmos at a premium price.

Bollywood films, high-end weddings and large concerts are often shot using drones to get an eagle-eye view and capture the scale.

'One cannot import a

drone as customs department will not clear it. Only those having permission on government letterheads get approval.

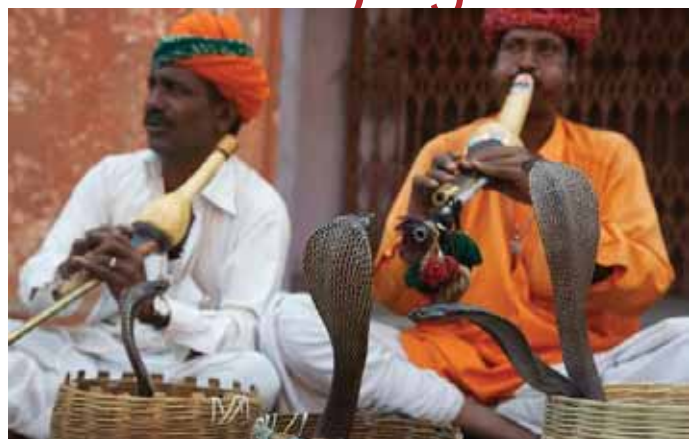
'In India there is no ban on sale of drones but there is restriction on usage. In this situation only the grey market is growing and bribery at police stations and customs for clearance has increased,' said John Livingstone, president of

the Consortium of Unmanned Vehicle Systems India. According to experts, the draft DGCA policy is in sync with best international practices followed in Australia, Netherlands, the US and Canada. Under this, not only would a person have to get his gadget registered but will also need a training certificate before flying it.



'More than seven generations of our families have been doing this

India snake charmers defy ban on practice as they fight to save dying tradition



(Agencies) Buti Nath flips the lid of a basket and a cobra snake slowly emerges.

The deadly reptile begins to sway as Buti, a member of an ancient tribe of snake charmers known as Saperas, plays his gourd flute.

Over the generations, this tribe have thrived on catching venomous snakes and making them dance to their music. 'More than seven generations of our families have been doing this and so

are we,' Buti Nath, 65, told Reuters Television in his dusty village of Jogi Dera in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state.

'We are called upon whenever there are dangerous animals coming into your houses or in your fields - we go and catch them with courage,' he said.

Snakes are revered by Hindus in India and snake charmers are considered the followers of Lord Shiva, the

blue-skinned Hindu god who is usually portrayed wearing a king cobra around his neck.

Snake charmers were once a regular fixture at Indian bazaars and festivals, mesmerising crowds of onlookers with their ability to control some of the world's most venomous creatures. They would often be the main source of medicines if someone suffered from a snake bite.

The snake charmers of Jogi Dera say their centuries-old tradition is slowly dying out as authorities seek to enforce wildlife protection laws, and after an outright ban on the practice in 1991. Modernity is also doing its part to elbow out tradition and these days, saperas don't earn much as there are plenty of other entertainment options available.

'There is no place in

civilized society for people to go around catching snakes and taking them and doing some kind of an entertainment show with snakes,' said 30-year-old Mangal Nath, cradling his infant son in his arms. In Jogi Dera, a snake charmer earns about 200 rupees (\$3) a day, not enough to support a family. Young villagers who had dreamed of a life of snake charming are leaving to find work on construction sites or as rickshaw drivers.

Kuldip Nath, a 14-year-old snake charmer recalled how he joined his father in searching for snakes, and said he regrets not going to school. 'Sometimes, I also feel that I should study, get a proper job or get into some business and work, so that I can take care of my responsibilities for my family and children,' he said.

Modi promises Indus water for Punjab farmers



(News Agencies) Jalandhar: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday promised more water to the farmers of Punjab, saying it will come from the Indus river. "Farmers in Punjab should get more water. We have decided that Indus water, which goes to Pakistan, should be given to India," Modi said while addressing an election rally here.

Punjab goes to the polls on February 4. Earlier in November, the Prime Minister had made a similar statement, saying the water belongs to the Indian farmers. "That water belongs to the Indian farmers. We will do whatever we can to give enough water to our farmers," he had said on November 25 in Bhatinda in Punjab.

Group of Sikhs protest outside UN headquarters on Republic Day



(Agencies) New York: As India marked the 68th Republic Day, several Sikhs held protests outside the UN headquarters here against the Indian Constitution, raising pro-Khalistan slogans and demanding the world body's intervention to protect the community. The Sikhs held a "liberation rally" yesterday alleging the Indian Constitution denies religious freedom to the Sikh community. Carrying placards that read 'Wake up UN' and 'Sikh Referendum 2020', they shouted slogans demanding "freedom" for Punjab.

The protesters also demanded a UN intervention to protect Sikhs and raised slogans in favour of an independent Sikh state of Khalistan.

Rights group Sikhs for Justice sent a communique to Ahmed Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief urging him to condemn provisions of the Indian Constitution, which they claimed violate religious freedom and identity of Sikhs by labeling them as 'Hindus'. SFJ legal advisor said the group will lobby with the UN for bringing a resolution in the General Assembly on the issue of Sikh's religious freedom in India. The rally was organised by the Gurudwara Sikh Cultural Society of Richmond Hill with the support of management committees of Gurudwaras in the tri-state area.

Subramanian Swamy threatens legal action against Arnab Goswami's 'Republic'



(Agencies) Senior BJP leader and MP Subramanian Swamy, who has written to the govern-

ment objecting to the use of the phrase "Republic" for yet-to-be launched news channel of Arnab

Goswami, on Wednesday threatened legal action if the government fails to take appropriate action on his complaint. The Rajya Sabha member had on January 13 written to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry contending that the use of "Republic" would be "contrary to law and a direct breach" of the Emblems and Names

(Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950.

"This is illegal. I will go to the court (if the government does not take action). We have this emblem Act under which one cannot use word 'Republic'," Swami told IANS.

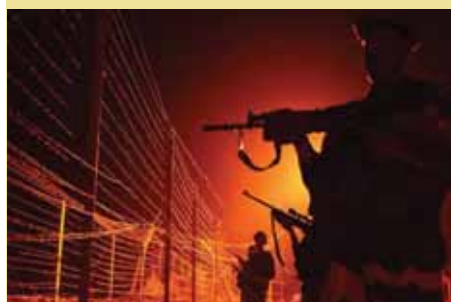
In the letter, Swami had asked the ministry to look into the matter. He said that he had not got a response from the ministry yet. "May

be in a day or two. The entire administration is of the view that my stand is correct," Swami claimed.

Official sources in the ministry told IANS that an under secretary-level officer was looking into the matter for further action. "It may be noticed that certain names and emblems are prohibited from being used under (the) Act for professional and commer-

cial purposes. As per the schedule, accompanying the statute, under item 6, there is express prohibition from using the phrase 'republic'," said Swami in the letter, also posted on his Twitter account. Goswami, the former editor-in-chief of Times Now channel, announced in December last year that his new venture will be called "Republic".

Heroes of surgical strike honoured with gallantry medals



(Agencies) Nineteen soldiers of the 4 and 9 Para, the special forces' units which undertook the daring cross-border surgical strike across LoC, have been awarded gallantry medals, including a Kirti Chakra, while their commanding officers have been given Yudh Sewa Medal.

Major Rohit Suri of 4 Para, who led one of the teams across the LoC targeting terrorists' launch pads, was awarded the Kirti Chakra, second highest peacetime gallantry award, on the eve of the Republic Day. Havildar Prem Bahadur Resmi Magar of the Gorkha Rifles got the Kirti Chakra posthumously.

Col Kapil Yadav, commanding officer of 9 Para and Col Harpreet Sandhu, Commanding Officer of 4 Para, were awarded the Yudh Sewa Medal, one of India's military decorations awarded to mark distinguished service during war time is awarded for a high degree of distinguished service in an operational content, including times of war, conflict, or hostilities and may also be awarded posthumously. The award is the wartime equivalent of the Vishisht Seva Medal, which is a decoration for peace time distinguished service.

Five personnel from the two para units also got Shaurya Chakra while 13 got Sena Medal (Gallantry). The Army conducted surgical strikes on terrorist launchpads across the Line of Control in September last year, after a terrorist attack on an army camp in Uri, Jammu and Kashmir claimed the lives of 19 jawans. The strikes were widely hailed by as a strong retaliation, and the Army's new chief General Bipin Rawat has said it is prepared to use the tactic again if needed.

HC dismisses plea on making national anthem compulsory in courts



(Agencies) LUCKNOW: The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad high court on Wednesday refused to accept a plea that chanting of the national anthem should be made compulsory in every court. A bench of Justice AP Sahi and Justice Sanjai Harkauli said that it would issue a detailed order on February 3. The bench turned down repeated requests of the petitioner to allow him to

place his plea before the Supreme Court and not dismiss the PIL. Petitioner SK Gupta had demanded that the national anthem must be made compulsory in courts. Advocate for high court administration UN Mishra apprised the bench that the same plea had gone to the Supreme Court earlier without finding favour and hence was not maintainable.

Why and how President Pranab Mukherjee wants Indians to work harder: 10 points

(Agencies) President Pranab Mukherjee on Wednesday - the eve of Republic Day - delivered his annual address to the nation. He spoke about the sacrifices made by India's jawans, the health of its economy, and the state of its institutions. And at the end of his speech, he repeated the expression "We have to work harder" ten times. Each one of those lines was an objective he laid out for his fellow citizens.

Here's a list of those goals.

1. Redeeming promises

In a fiercely competitive world, we have to work harder than ever to redeem the promises that we make to our people.

2. The ongoing war on poverty

We have to work harder because our war on poverty is not yet over. Our economy is yet to grow at over 10 percent for an extended period of time to make a significant dent on poverty. One-fifth of our countrymen still remain below poverty line. Gandhiji's mission to wipe every tear from every eye still remains unfulfilled.

3. Food security, opportunities for rural India

We have to work harder to provide food security to our people and to make the agriculture sector resilient to the vagaries of nature. We have to provide better amenities and opportunities to our people in villages to ensure a decent quality of life.

4. Empowering the youth

We have to work harder to provide enhanced employment opportunities to our youth through the creation of world-class manufacturing and services sectors. The competitiveness of the domestic industry has to be improved by focusing on

quality, productivity and efficiency.

5. Safety for women and children

We have to work harder to provide safety and security to our women and children. Women must be able to lead their lives with honour and dignity. Children must be able to enjoy their childhood to the fullest.

6. Protecting the environment

We have to work harder to change our consumption pattern which has resulted in environmental and ecological de-gradation. We have to appease nature to prevent it from unleashing its fury in the

form of floods, landslides and droughts.

7. Defending India's pluralistic culture

We have to work harder because our pluralistic culture and tolerance are still being put to test by vested interests. Reason and moderation should be our guide in dealing with such situations.

8. Fighting terrorism

We have to work harder to keep at bay the dark forces of terrorism. These forces have to be dealt with firmly and decisively. The forces inimical to our interests cannot be allowed to grow.

9. The well-being of India's jawans

We have to work harder to ensure the well-being of our soldiers and security personnel who protect us from internal and external threats.

10. Equal children before 'our mother'

We have to work harder because we are all equal children before our mother - and our motherland asks each of us in whatever role we play to do our duty with integrity, commitment and unflinching loyalty to the values enshrined in our Constitution.





Trump planning to suspend refugee program, block visitors from some Muslim nations

religion of the individual is a minority religion in the individual's country of nationality," according to the draft material.

Such a formulation appears to suggest that Christians, Jews and other non-Muslims will get preference when fleeing war-torn countries in the Middle East. But it's not clear how Trump is choosing to define religion and whether certain sects of some religions could qualify as minorities. Shiite Muslims, for instance, are often persecuted in Sunni Muslim majority countries such as Pakistan.

Trump also insists that the U.S. "cease refugee processing of and the admittance of nationals of Syria as refugees until such time as I have determined that sufficient changes have been made to the [U.S. Refugee Assistance Program] to ensure its alignment with the national interest." The documents do not offer any details as to what conditions would satisfy Trump that the national interest is safe.

The president also directs the Pentagon and the State Department to come up with "a plan to provide safe areas in Syria and in the surrounding regions in which Syrian nationals displaced from their homeland can await firm settlement, such as repatriation or potential third country resettlement."

It is unclear how the

administration plans to define "safe zones" or how it plans to guarantee the safety of those in them.

Trump also calls for a tightening of visa procedures involving other countries. He would suspend the entry of people from countries such as Iran, Iraq, Syria and Sudan for at least 30 days. Other countries that may also fall under such scrutiny are Libya, Somalia, and Yemen.

According to a State Department official who reviewed the material, the president wants his secretaries of State and Homeland Security and the Director of National Intelligence assure him that the U.S. has sufficient information from the governments of those countries to vet their citizens.

But for several of the countries singled out, such cooperation is not realistic, and U.S. officials have long relied on other means to vet visa applicants from those nations. The United States and Iran, for example, do not have diplomatic relations, and Iranian citizens must travel to third countries to make their case for a visa to America. The State Department official said the White House had done next to no consulting with his agency on whether the executive orders are legally tenable or what impact they would have on America's

alliances. He pointed out, for example, that the drafts mention foreign nationals, but don't clarify if that includes dual nationals. So a traveler with dual Libyan and French nationality, who could have traveled to the U.S. in the past on a French passport, may suddenly be barred.

"It's f---ing nuts," he said. "The lawyers are going to have to figure this out."

The draft material does include exceptions for visas or refugee admissions if U.S. officials determine it is in the "national interest." It's unclear what that means, however, and whether it would extend to groups such as Afghan and Iraqi translators who have helped U.S. troops.

Trump's focus on immigration-related security has its backers. John Kasich, the Republican Ohio governor who challenged Trump in last year's presidential race, said a slowdown in the refugee program is "reasonable."

"We got to make sure we know who's coming here. We want to make sure that it's orderly," he said during a visit to the Dutch embassy in Washington. "But, you know, I don't know that anyone can really at the end of the day settle down and think we don't want to have refugees. That is certainly not my position."

(Agencies) President Donald Trump plans to temporarily halt the admission of refugees into the United States — and impose an indefinite ban on those fleeing Syria — while also suspending the entry of citizens of several Muslim-majority countries, according to a draft copy and supporting material for a White House executive order.

Trump may further direct U.S. officials to explore ways to create "safe zones" in Syria, where a civil war has killed an estimated half a million people since 2011, according to the draft material. He also is expected to reduce refugee caps by more than half, while instructing American officials to give priority to religious minorities among those who are eventually allowed into the United States.

The president argues such restrictions are necessary to safeguard American citizens from would-be terrorists trying to infiltrate the country. Humanitarian activists, as well as some U.S. diplomats, worry that the moves will merely boost terrorist recruitment, anger allies and degrade America's moral

standing. Some advocates called the plans blatantly anti-Muslim and indicated they would file suit to stop them.

Trump is expected to issue the directives focused on refugees and visas as early as Thursday. While the details are not yet finalized, the broad outlines in the draft copies being circulated suggest a turn away from the traditional role of the U.S. as a destination for some of the world's most vulnerable people.

The draft documents call for a 120-day suspension of the entire U.S. program that resettles refugees. During that period, the secretaries of State and Homeland Security are instructed to review screening procedures use by the refugee admissions programs.

Once the program is restarted, U.S. officials will be allowed to admit a total of no more than 50,000 refugees this fiscal year — down from the 110,000 authorized by President Barack Obama. Officials also are expected to find ways to prioritize refugee claims made by individuals fleeing religious persecution "provided that the

As Trump raises global trade barriers, India will be further pushed to the margins

(Agencies) In one of his first executive acts, United States President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). He has said he will now turn his guns on the North American Free Trade Agreement. Given he had once pledged to reconsider US commitments to the World Trade Organization, it seems international trade is set to enter an unusually contentious time. Most major multilateral trade negotiations are at an impasse. And anti-trade sentiment has found voice even in an export champion like Germany. India has reason to be nervous but also has few grounds to complain. The forerunner to Mr Trump's protectionist sentiments, if anything, was the trade policies enacted by New Delhi. Morgan Stanley has listed India as among the countries "relatively exposed" to hostile US trade action, specifically because of India's \$7 billion surplus in information technology services. This seems already happening. The new US Congress is moving to shut

the door on H-1B visas and may target L visas next. Generic drugs are also on the firing line. Nonetheless, it is relatively evident that it is countries with large surpluses in goods trades that will face the brunt of Mr Trump's ire, most notably China and Mexico.

The Narendra Modi government seems to hope Mr Trump's perception that he has a convergence with India ideologically and strategically will stay his hand on more punitive actions against India. That will only be clear once all the empty seats in his administration are filled. But the evidence, so far, is that Mr

Trump's economic nationalism will override all other considerations as this directly addresses the job concerns of his white working-class political base.

Mr Modi will not be able to claim



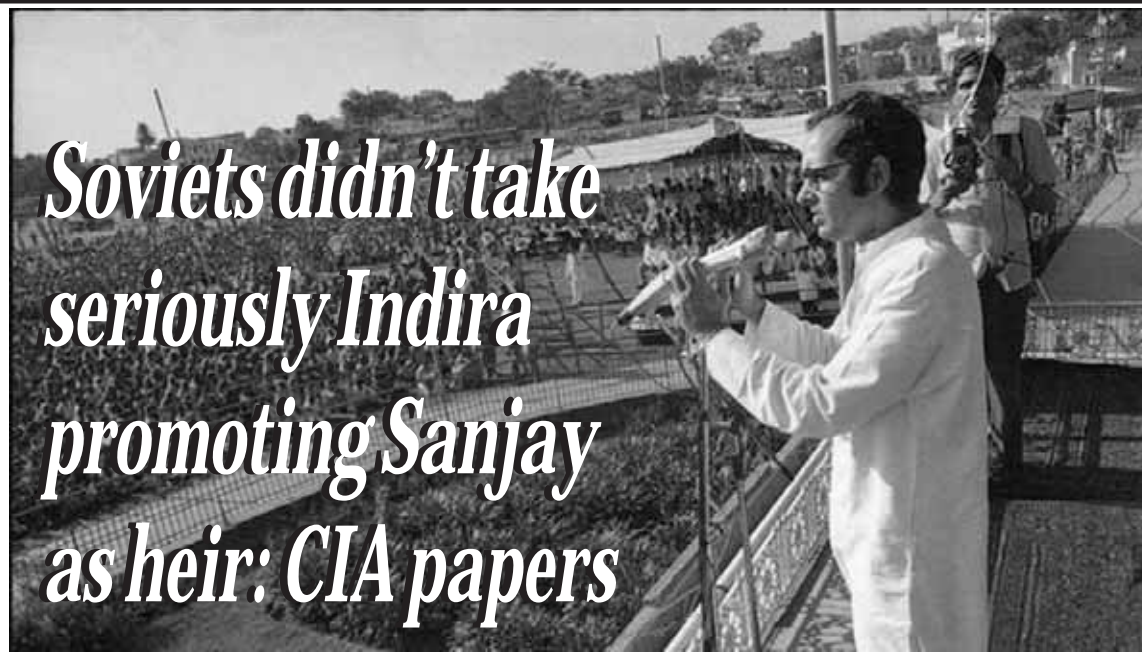
the high road when it comes to trade. India has been among the most obstructionist countries in multilateral trade negotiations, the WTO's Doha round being on its victims. Its use of anti-dumping actions against imports

has more than doubled between 2013 and 2016, and it has imposed tariffs to try and encourage domestic manufacturing, a policy with a long history of failure. India has been a free-rider in global trade, expecting access to other markets even while keeping its own door closed. Mr Trump's unilateral trade policies are likely to inspire similar actions by other countries. India can expect to be at the receiving end of such moves, and recognise that its own stance to trade is partly responsible.

India's only saving grace in a worst-case scenario of unilateral trade actions is that it barely counts in international commerce. Its share in world exports has fallen to 1.6%. While its export picture is less gloomy than figures make it out to be, once exchange rate changes are taken into account, the truth is India remains irrelevant to global trade. And it will be pushed further into the margins in a Trump world of rising trade barriers.

(Agencies) Indira Gandhi's efforts to promote her younger son Sanjay as her successor were not taken seriously by the then Soviet Union and it anticipated that Rajiv would be her heir apparent, as per declassified CIA documents.

In a report prepared a day after Indira Gandhi's assassination on October 31, 1984, the CIA assessed that Moscow will be well placed to manipulate India's heightened security concerns in the wake of her killing and Rajiv's success in containing retribution against Sikhs would strengthen Soviet influence over India. The American spy agency was of the view that the assassination of India's then Prime Minister had cost the USSR one of its "most important" allies in the third world holding her role in forging close



Soviets didn't take seriously Indira promoting Sanjay as heir: CIA papers

ties was "pivotal" though the Soviets had worked painstakingly to institutionalise the relationship. "The Soviets did not take seriously Gandhi's effort to promote her younger son

Sanjay as her successor but did not make the same mistake when Rajiv became the heir apparent after Sanjay's death in 1980," said the report made public recently along with nearly

12 million declassified pages.

The CIA also felt that Moscow would strengthen Rajiv's "internal political position" and try to ensure that his commitment to Indo-Soviet relationship

becomes as firm as his mother's.

It said that in the aftermath of Indira's death, the "Soviet propaganda organs" were charging that her assassins got their ideological inspiration from the CIA.

The report also said Moscow would use its role as arms supplier and trade ties would be manipulated to underscore its commitment to India's economic development under Rajiv.

"Whether this succeeds depends primarily on Rajiv's leadership abilities. If Rajiv can keep the lid on internal retribution against the Sikhs and use his mother's assassination to strengthen the Congress party or if the opposition fragments in the absence of Indira as a unifying force, the Soviets could emerge with their influence enhanced," the report said.

The Real Cost of Mr. Trump's Wall



(Agencies) President Trump on Wednesday unveiled the first proposals to make good on his promise to make America impenetrable to unauthorized immigrants and intolerable for those who are already here.

As expected, he promised to begin building a wall along the Mexican border, an enterprise that is far from certain because Congress would have to approve

billions of dollars in funding. He also outlined a series of ominous regulatory changes aimed at drastically expanding the detention of immigrants who enter without permission. He is also seeking to turn more local police and corrections officials into enforcers of immigration law, while threatening to withhold funding from jurisdictions that have sensibly refused to assume

that role. The steps outlined in two executive orders set the stage for incarcerating thousands of immigrants who do not represent a threat, for widespread civil rights violations and for racial profiling. At the Department of Homeland Security on Wednesday, Mr. Trump said that immigration laws "will be enforced and enforced strongly."

Mr. Trump's anti-immigrant talk worked well on the campaign trail, as he convinced struggling Americans that foreigners were to blame for lost jobs and blighted communities. To carry out his promise of ramped-up immigration enforcement and border security, he will need to convince Congress and American taxpayers that spending billions to execute his plan is a worthy investment.

As is so often the case with

Mr. Trump, the facts are not on his side. Illegal immigration to the United States has been on a downward trend in recent years, even as spending on border security has soared. Between 1983 and 2006, an average of 1.2 million people a year were apprehended trying to enter the country unlawfully. In 2016, just over 415,000 were caught trying to enter; most were Central Americans fleeing violence and poverty. Meanwhile, border security funding has increased from \$263 million in 1990 to \$3.8 billion in 2015. Mr. Trump would add significantly to that spending. He has insisted that Mexico will ultimately pay for the wall — a vow that is either deceitful or delusional. Mr. Trump ordered federal agencies to tally the foreign aid Mexico receives from the United States, which seems like a threat to

withhold future assistance for initiatives such as narcotics enforcement and judicial programs.

Even if Mr. Trump was to cut off aid to Mexico, the savings would be modest; it got roughly \$142 million in 2016, which doesn't begin to pay for a wall along the 1,989-mile border. Besides costing billions, the type of barrier Mr. Trump has proposed would cause severe environmental damage and lead to lawsuits over private land.

The executive orders do not address the fate of hundreds of thousands of young immigrants brought to the country as children who were given a temporary reprieve from deportation by the Obama administration.

While Mr. Trump has the authority to order the detention of all immigrants apprehended while entering without permission and end the practice of releasing them pending court dates — which the executive order appears to call for — Congress should withhold the funding needed to carry out this plan. Leaders in so-called sanctuary cities, like New York and Los Angeles, have rightly recognized that immigrants, including those here without permission, are more of an asset than a burden. Their defiance is likely now to be tested by renewed calls to turn local police officers into immigration enforcers. The courage of local leaders may help stymie Mr. Trump's misguided approach.

President supports note ban, pitches for electoral reforms in R-day eve address

(Agencies) The government's objective was the happiness of people and not the glory of the rulers, President Pranab Mukherjee said in his Republic Day eve address in which he also pitched for simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly polls. In the customary address to the nation, the President on Wednesday said one of his predecessors left a framed note which read, "The objective of government in peace and in war is not the glory of rulers or races but the happiness of the common man."

That happiness, he said, should be the touchstone of public policy as it is "equally the outcome of economic and non-economic parameters".

The note, said sources, was left by late APJ Abdul Kalam. Mukherjee's remarks

come as cash crunch brought in by demonetisation begins to ease after weeks of snaking queues outside banks and ATM kiosks. Though demonetisation "immobilised" black money and corruption, it "may have led to temporary slowdown of economic activity", the President said, expressing hope cashless transactions would bring in transparency. Mukherjee, whose term ends in July, also made a case for electoral reforms. "The time is also ripe for a constructive debate on electoral reforms and a return to the practice of the early decades after independence when elections to Lok Sabha and state assemblies were held simultaneously," he said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, too, has called for a debate on holding the elections together,

to save money and smoothen decision-making that is disrupted every time the poll code kicks in. It was for the election commission to take the exercise forward, the President said. With Parliament's budget session starting Monday, Mukherjee urged both the government and the Opposition to focus on debate, discussion and decision making. The remarks assume significance as the last session was washed out over demonetisation. "We have a noisy democracy... The depth and breadth of our democracy sparkles in the regular elections in panchayati raj institutions. And yet, our legislatures lose sessions to disruptions when they should be debating and legislating on issues of importance," Mukherjee said.

(Agencies) Every year, Republic Day turns New Delhi into a fortress, with threats of a terrorist attack peak to a frenzy. This time, even the scrawny street mongrel is not above suspicion.

It is that time of the year when an extra-alert intelligence bureau believes anything that moves cannot be trusted — drones, kites, animals, trucks carrying apples. Terrorists can enter New Delhi and deploy their tools of destruction in interesting shapes and sizes. Cows, stray dogs and cats could be used as fidayeen or suicide bombers rigged with a lethal pack of explosives, the bureau warns. The warning is taken seriously. From beat constables to patrol cars, the city's men in uniform were told on Wednesday to keep an eye on stray animals.

Wedding photography with camera-fitted drones may be a rage abroad. But not in a city known for its big fat weddings.



Unmanned aerial vehicles could be used as chartered flying bombs. Drones, paragliders and hot air balloons are banned through the year in the Capital.

Even kites could be next in line, despite being the favourite holiday pastime every January 26. Sleuths fear terrorists could use kites to drop bombs. At the central function on World Yoga

Day last year, police banned kite-flying in and near India Gate.

The Yamuna, one of the filthiest rivers in the world, poses a terrorist threat too other than its toxic slime that threatens to kill the city's more than 20 million people. River patrols are common around this time. The bureau has advised Delhi Police

to watch out for vehicles and boats near the riverbank as these could be used to sabotage Republic Day celebrations.

What if terrorists poison the city's water mains? That prospect is looked into. Police have floated tenders to buy kits to test poison in water. The Capital has some of the biggest and oldest markets — wholesale

and retail — in the country. It also is a transit route for trucks laden with goods crisscrossing the Indian heartland.

More than hundred thousand trucks enter the city every day, making them potential movers of terrorist stowaways and their weapons behind, er, apple crates.

Last Diwali, police were asked to be on the lookout for a lorry carrying apples that was apparently ferrying two terrorists.

"Some intelligence inputs say four or five men entered Delhi in a white car and are planning spectacular attacks. If somebody saw them in the white car, why did they wait and allow them to enter Delhi?" a police officer asked. Frustrated, but they can't let their guards down. Besides deploying additional men and women, they are using digital surveillance, stakeouts and stealth to guard the country's capital.

Burj Khalifa in Dubai lit up in tricolour to mark India's Republic Day

(Agencies) Burj Khalifa tower, the world's tallest building located in Dubai, was lit up in the colours of the Indian National flag on Wednesday to celebrate India's 68th Republic Day, a media report said.

The LED shows will be held on Wednesday and Thursday along with complimenting Dubai Fountain shows, the Khaleej Times reported on Wednesday.

The Indian consulate in Dubai also has a flag-hoisting ceremony at the consulate premises by consul general Anurag Bhushan, followed by flag-hoisting at the Indian High

School grounds in Oud Metha.

The ceremony at the school will include a march-past by the students. In the evening, a cultural programme titled Aaj Ki Shaam Desh Ke Naam will be hosted at the school grounds where the students will perform various folk dances and other activities.

The programme, under the patronage of the consulate, will also present people a chance to try various India cuisines.

The lighting comes as the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, is the guest of



honour for India's Republic Day on Thursday. He was ceremonially welcomed by

President Pranab Mukherjee on Wednesday and held talks in New Delhi with Prime

Minister Narendra Modi. Both sides inked a number of agreements.

Time to come down hard on those adulterating food



(Agencies) There have been task forces and committees galore to look into the issue of food adulteration but nothing much has come of these. Clearly, the only solution to this is stricter laws and penalties and this is what the Law Commission has

recommended. It has suggested that those convicted of manufacturing and selling adulterated food should be given life imprisonment or pay ₹10 lakh as fine. In its report The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2017 (Provisions dealing with Food Adulteration) submitted to the law ministry, the law panel has proposed amendments to sections 272 and 273 of the Indian Penal Code. At present the penalty starts from a mere six months in prison. Grading "injury" to those consuming these adulterated products into various categories, the Commission has recommended

different jail terms and fines. Section 272 deals with manufacture of adulterated items, section 273 deals with their sale.

According to the amendments proposed, a "non grievous injury" may attract jail term of one year and a fine of ₹3 lakh. A grievous injury will fetch a jail term of six years and a fine of ₹5 lakh. At the same time, the Food Safety and Standards Act, Rules and Regulations has to be strengthened to stop what really amounts to slow poisoning through unregulated use of pesticides, antibiotics and other harmful chemicals and additives in food and other items of daily consumption. An earlier study found that one in five

of food items contained some form of adulterant. Many of these are used daily like water and milk. The adulteration of milk is particularly worrying as it affects young children the most. One of the most frightening instances of adulteration was that of low quality khesari dal being added to arhar dal resulting in paralysis of the lower body. This toxic dal had been banned since 1961 but was freely used over the years. Another report released a few years ago referred to 'permissible' levels of rat excreta in milled flour. Even high end products in India do not have proper labelling, prime among them being cosmetic products.

What will US ? President Donald Trump's Asia policy look like

India's former national security adviser Shivshankar Menon writes in the Asia Society publication that two things that leaders in the Asia-Pacific region wish to hear and see from Trump "are an assurance that the United States will continue to provide and underwrite security in the Asia-Pacific and that it will remain a benign hegemon, opening its economy to friends and allies." "Without this confidence", Menon says, "Asian leaders could turn to other expedients, and to China, for the prosperity and security they seek." Tillerson's posturing on the South China Sea will reassure America's Asian

partners up to a point. They will wait to see if Washington will sustain this when Beijing pushes back. Barack Obama announced a "rebalance" to Asia but there is a sense that his administration "over-promised and under-delivered". Asian countries, particularly Singapore, Vietnam, India and Australia, will want Trump to get his signalling to Beijing right i.e. convey that Washington is prepared to stand by its partners while ensuring hostilities do not escalate. Scholars have elsewhere made the case that a US-China conflict cannot be ruled out. Wang Jisi, president of the Institute of

International and Strategic Studies at Peking University, writes that the fundamental issue is that reducing strategic distrust between the two countries. The US needs to evaluate its assumption that "China will change its political systems once it prospers economically" or "China will vie with the United States for leadership once it becomes powerful". "Meanwhile, China needs to better explain to the American public and the world at large its long-term goals and intentions." He says both sides must quickly agree on a priority list and work schedule for 2017 and convene dialogues that clarify long-term

intentions on "sensitive issues" like South China Sea, denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, stability across the Taiwan Strait and cyber security. They should also "find practical ways to cope with problem areas such as "currency exchange rates, business environments, trade regimes, and legal disputes." Wang even sees scope for cooperation. He reckons Chinese companies can invest in building US infrastructure that Trump is keen on and that China would welcome US support and partnership in its One Belt and One Road initiative. US-China relations are a long way from adopting such constructive approaches.

Modi's Takeover Of The RBI And Where It Has Left Us

Was there a war on? And as for any perceived "security threat", now that we have three different types of Rs. 500 notes with no new security features and the ink runs off the note, has demonetization ended or promoted "fake notes" bruited around by Modi as a major security threat? Moreover, says Jalan in the same interview, there was "no reason to be secretive" - and so blows away the excuse behind which the government has been sheltering to explain why less than 24 hours was granted to the RBI to consider so economically disruptive a step, the initiative for which, if necessary

in the public interest, should have come from the RBI as the Keeper of our Currency, and not the central government. Also, is it not true that only 8 out of 21 members of the RBI Board (half of whom were government nominees!) met on November 8 before Modi went on the air, one reason being Modi's deliberate and continuing delay in filling vacancies on the Board? And why have the minutes of the Board meeting not been placed on record? Instead of Governor Urjit Patel demonstrating any transparency in the matter, the RBI has actually taken

the stand on a Right to Freedom of Information request that bringing it all into the public domain might jeopardize the very lives of those involved! What is this - some kind of B-grade Bollywood movie? No wonder the United Forum of Reserve Bank's Officers and Employees has written to Urjit Patel on 13 January that "operational mismanagement" has damaged the RBI's autonomy and reputation "beyond repair". Truly, the wearer knows best where the shoe pinches. Does any of this square with the Finance Ministry's claim of 14 January 2017, that "the government fully

respects the independence and autonomy of the Reserve Bank of India"? If the IMF were to update their 2003 paper on central bank autonomy, India would fall precipitately from a relatively honourable position to the bottom of the heap. We now rank with Zimbabwe on autonomy. The Modi-Patel duo would be well advised to remember what John Maynard Keynes - the great Keynes - said: that the surest way of debasing a country is to debase its currency. That is the measure of the tragedy that has befallen us.

The ISIS Wanted The West To Fear Refugees And Muslims. It Worked.

Most of these people were not resettled but instead came across Europe's borders in an informal and largely chaotic manner, meaning security vetting was difficult and often nonexistent.

Even in Europe, it's important to note that the vast majority of Syrians have had nothing to do with terrorism; some have actively foiled terror plots in Germany. In many of the most high-profile attacks in Europe - including the 2015 attacks in Paris and the 2016 attacks in Brussels and Nice - most of the perpetrators were not refugees or migrants at all, but citizens of the very countries they were attacking.

That trend holds true in the U.S. as well. Omar Mateen, the Islamic State-inspired gunman who killed 49 people in Orlando, last June, was a U.S. citizen born in New York. Trump's broader restrictions on visas for visitors from Muslim-majority countries won't do anything about that sort of homegrown Islamist radicalism, nor the persistent and deadlier threat of far-right terrorism in the United States.

More curiously, the visa restrictions mentioned in the draft executive order may omit a number of countries whose citizens have been linked to terror plots in the U.S. - including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Egypt. The White House says this is because adequate security measures are in place in those countries, but it is likely to upset key U.S. allies who will have their movement restricted, such as the Iraqi Kurds.

Further restrictions on refugees and immigrants from Muslim countries may well be inefficient. More worryingly, they may be counterproductive in the battle against the Islamic State.

Muslims living in the Middle East and Africa are far more likely to be a victim of extremism than those in the West. Globally, studies have shown that Muslims tend to make up the largest proportion of terror victims, with countries such as Syria and Iraq suffering the highest toll.

At the same time, groups like the Islamic State seek to win over Muslims not only with violence, but also with propaganda that calls for a Holy War that pits an Islamic caliphate against a Christian West. As WorldViews' Ishaan Tharoor has noted, this rhetoric has clear similarities with that used by some key Trump supporters. For example, Stephen Bannon, Trump's chief strategist, once spoke of the "long history of the Judeo-Christian West struggle against Islam."

Western sympathy and support for refugees from the Muslim world clearly undercuts this idea of a clash of civilizations. The Islamic State knows this. At the height of Europe's refugee crisis, the group's propaganda outfits put out a variety of desperate-seeming messages questioning why Muslims would flee from their caliphate. Aaron Zelin, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, catalogued some of these messages if you want to read.

"Would You Exchange What Is Better

For What Is Less?" is the title of one video directed at Muslim refugees.

In response to this problem, the Islamic State has made clear efforts to disrupt any Western embrace of refugees. It has taken advantage of migrant routes to Europe to transport fighters back to Europe. On a practical level, the tactic helps supporters evade security operations, but it also works on a symbolic level by sowing suspicion about refugees on the continent. At the same time, they have urged their followers in the West to commit violence, with the aim of

eliminating the "gray zone" of tolerance and pluralism that still existed in many countries.

By refusing to allow Syrian refugees into the country and restricting access to others from Muslim majority nations, Trump's draft executive order would help eliminate the common ground to be found with Muslims. Ominously, the Islamic State predicted this in a 2015 essay in propaganda magazine Dabiq, claiming that attacks in the West would compel "the crusaders to actively destroy the gray zone themselves."

India, Ranked 79, Less Corrupt Than Its Neighbours Except Bhutan, Says Transparency International

A country's score indicates the perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0 — 100, where 0 means that a country is highly corrupt and 100 means it is perceived as very clean. In 2015, India's rank was 76 with a score of 38, a slip of 3 ranks. The most corrupt countries are Somalia, South Sudan, North Korea and Syria and the most clean are Denmark, New Zealand with 90 points each. Transparency International said: "India's ongoing poor performance with a score of 40 reiterates the state's inability to effectively deal with petty corruption as well as large-scale corruption scandals. The impact of corruption on poverty, illiteracy and police brutality shows that not only the economy is growing — but also inequality". "Over two-thirds of the 176 countries and territories in this year's index fall below the midpoint of our scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). The global average score is a paltry 43, indicating endemic corruption in a country's public sector," said the group. In the 2016 index, 176 countries and territories are included in the index, eight more than in 2015. This year's results highlight the connection between corruption and inequality, which feed off each other to create a vicious circle between corruption, unequal distribution of power in society, and unequal distribution of wealth.

Trump Orders Mexican Border Wall to Be Built and Plans to Block Syrian Refugees

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Wednesday began a sweeping crackdown on illegal immigration, ordering the immediate construction of a border wall with Mexico and aggressive efforts to find and deport unauthorized immigrants. He planned additional actions to cut back on legal immigration, including barring Syrian refugees from entering the United States.

At the headquarters of the

Department of Homeland Security, Mr. Trump signed a pair of executive orders that paved the way for a border wall and called for a newly expanded force to sweep up immigrants who are in the country illegally. He revived programs that allow the federal government to work with local and state law enforcement agencies to arrest and detain unauthorized immigrants with criminal records and to share

information to help track and deport them.

He also planned to clamp down on legal immigration in another action expected as early as Thursday. An eight-page draft of that executive order, obtained by The New York Times, would indefinitely block Syrian refugees from entering the United States and bar all refugees from the rest of the world for at least 120 days.

When the refugee

program resumes, it would be much smaller, with the total number of refugees resettled in the United States this year more than halved, to 50,000 from 110,000. It would also suspend any immigration for at least 30 days from a number of predominantly Muslim countries — Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — while the government toughened its already stringent screening

procedures to weed out potential terrorists.

White House officials declined to comment on the coming plan, but in a wide-ranging interview that aired Wednesday on ABC, Mr. Trump acknowledged that it aimed to erect formidable barriers for those seeking refuge in the United States. "It's going to be very hard to come in," Mr. Trump said. "Right now, it's very easy to come in."

The Siege of Sanctuary Cities Has Begun

The text of the executive order, titled "Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States," accuses sanctuary cities of causing "immeasurable harm to the American people and to the fabric of our Republic." It restores to full strength two controversial programs of the Bush and Obama years—287(g) agreements and the Secure Communities Program—that harnessed local police and sheriffs to enforce federal immigration law. And it directs the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to publish a weekly public list of crimes committed by aliens in sanctuary jurisdictions: a police blotter of crimes by brown people. What exactly constitutes a sanctuary jurisdiction? That's up to Trump's DHS.

But in other ways, the order exhibits the restraints on what the president can accomplish alone—and how much pain he can really inflict on cities that defy him on immigration. (For example, it promises 5,000 new Border Patrol agents and tripling the Immigration and Customs Enforcement workforce from 6,000 enforcement agents to 18,000—subject to appropriations from Congress.) Its promise to strip federal grants from sanctuary cities is limited to punishing cities for enforcing "don't tell" laws, which prohibit local officials from sharing immigration status information with the feds. Those have been illegal since 1996, when a New York City law was overturned after a suit brought by then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Trump is gearing up to deputize cities as the foot soldiers in his fight to round up illegal immigrants. But to do so without help from Congress, he must first rely on an unusually expansive interpretation of federal law to find sanctuary cities illegal. That likely means a court battle is imminent, the first turn in a political reversal that will define the Trump era: a GOP administration grasping for federal power pitted against states

and cities trumpeting local control. At stake are the livelihoods of millions of immigrant families that have made sanctuary jurisdictions from Boston to Portland, Oregon, home.

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immigration status. The statute been on the books for 20 years and is well-known to city officials. But it hasn't, until recently, been thought to apply to the noncompliance tactics of sanctuary cities.

The Sanctuary Cities movement has been around for decades, but its recent ascent was a direct reaction to the hassle and risk of enforcing the Secure Communities policy, or S-Comm, as I wrote at length last year. Obama abolished S-Comm in 2014. Trump just reinstated it.

Under S-Comm, participating jurisdictions send fingerprints of arrested persons to DHS, which in turn issues "detainer requests" for individuals it suspects could be deported. A city receiving a "detainer request" is supposed to hold a suspect until ICE can come get him or her. Between 2011 and 2013, S-Comm was responsible for 243,000 deportations—about 40 percent of total interior removals.

But the program was fraught with problems. Especially in its early years, detainer requests did not target criminals: More than 50 percent of those deported either had no criminal record or had been arrested for low-level offenses like traffic violations and marijuana possession. The cost to immigrant communities was enormous. Local relations with police deteriorated, causing police chiefs to turn against the program. And finally, a number of court cases implied that the "detainer requests" might be unconstitutional and put cities in violation of the Fourth Amendment.

Here's where things get complicated. When cities refuse to hold someone in a cell or notify ICE of a release date, they're withholding practical information—but not information about immigration or citizenship. That's why sanctuary cities and states believe they don't violate the federal law cited in Trump's order.

There's a clear difference

between telling officials not to share information and telling officials not to detain people, pointed out Adam Cox, a law professor at New York University.

Congressional Republicans disagree. Texas Rep. John Culberson, who chairs the House Appropriations subcommittee in charge of the Department of Justice budget, believes that sanctuary cities do violate that old information-sharing law. And in July, responding to Culberson, the DOJ inspector general appeared to open a door to the validity of that view (italics mine):

We have concerns that other local laws and policies, that by their terms apply to the handling of ICE detainer requests, may have a broader practical impact on the level of cooperation afforded to ICE by these jurisdictions and may, therefore, be inconsistent with at least the intent of Section 1373.

That's not the strongest language. The DOJ asked sanctuary jurisdictions to certify their compliance with the law, and that was that.

But guess who thought that letter constituted a full-blown legal

indictment of cities like New York, Chicago, and New Orleans? Soon-to-be Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who said the opinion "must bring an end to the excuses proffered by numerous Democratic leaders to defend the extreme and dangerous practices of sanctuary jurisdictions."

If Sessions still thinks cities, counties, and states are in violation of that provision, he could move to withhold DOJ grant money as soon as he gets sworn in. It's not a ton of money. California received about \$132,000,000; its total budget is more than 1,000 times that. And cities and states will take him to court immediately to litigate how broadly the statute can be applied.

Real punishment for sanctuary cities and states will probably have to wait for Congress. There's no shortage of GOP enthusiasm for such a measure: Senators like Ted Cruz, Jeff Sessions, and Pat Toomey have proposed bills to ban federal funds for sanctuary cities. Even so, there are limitations on how Congress can punish local noncompliance, which (pace Sessions) has been construed as legal.

Padam Shri for on H.R. Shah of TV Asia

He is also Chairman of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (USA), an institution dedicated to literature, culture, education, music and arts. He has devoted his life to community service as well as fostering close relations between India and the United States through his many endeavors and enterprises over the years, including TV ASIA (see attached bio). When informed of the decision, Mr. Shah reacted: "I cannot believe it and am still trying to fathom this wonderful news. I am deeply humbled, honored and overjoyed that the Republic of India has decided to confer on me the Padma Shri. It is recognition of my work for more than 35 years and I am grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government as well as the people of India for rewarding me with this high civilian honor. I am also grateful to my family, friends and well-wishers who have supported me all these years." Mr. Shah added: "I look forward to receiving the Padma Shri in New Delhi later this year and rededicate myself to helping India and the United States further their close relations, as well as to promote India's rich culture and heritage."

All of Trump's executive actions so far

The new president is chipping away at Obama's legacy, and he's not waiting for Congress to do it.



(Agencies) President Donald Trump has spent his first days using his executive authority to rewrite American policy and undo a string of decisions made by former president Barack Obama. Here's a running list of the new president's executive actions:

1. Providing "relief" from the Affordable Care Act

Trump's first executive order on Inauguration Day involved "minimizing the economic burden" of the Affordable Care Act. This order allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the heads of other departments and agencies to waive or delay the implementation of any ACA provisions that would impose a financial burden or any state or a regulatory burden on any individuals.

2. Freezing all regulations

Trump froze all pending regulations until they are approved directly by his

administration or by an agency led by Trump appointees. The action, given in a memorandum from White House chief of staff Reince Priebus, delays all regulations with the exception of health, safety, financial or national security matters allowed by the Office of Management and Budget director.

3. Reinstating the "Mexico City" abortion policy

The president reinstated the so-called "Mexico City Policy", which blocks the use of U.S. taxpayer dollars to fund foreign non-governmental organizations that perform or promote abortions. It was established by former president Ronald Reagan and has been rescinded by Democratic presidents and reinstated by Republican presidents ever since.

4. Scrapping the Trans-Pacific Partnership

Trump's next executive action withdrew the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership,

which former President Barack Obama negotiated with 11 other Pacific nations. The deal was never ratified by the Senate, so it had not gone into effect. Instead, the Trump administration says it plans on negotiating bilateral deals with individual nations.

5. Freezing the federal workforce

Trump issued a presidential memorandum Tuesday that prohibits government agencies from hiring any new employees, effective as of noon on January 22. The order does not apply to military personnel and the head of any executive department may exempt positions that include national security or public safety responsibilities.

6 & 7. Advancing the Dakota Access and Keystone XL Pipelines

Trump's next actions encouraged the construction of two controversial pipelines, the Dakota Access Pipeline and Keystone XL Pipeline. The DAPL action instructs an expedited review and approval

of the remaining construction and operation of the pipeline by the Army for Civil Works and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Keystone XL action invites TransCanada, the Canadian energy company behind the pipeline, to re-submit its application for a presidential permit to construct the pipeline. It also instructs the Secretary of State to reach a final determination within 60 days.

8. Expediting Environmental Reviews on Infrastructure Projects

On Tuesday, Trump issued an executive order to streamline environmental reviews of high-priority infrastructure projects. The action states that infrastructure projects in the U.S. "have been routinely and excessively delayed by agency processes and procedures." The action instructs the Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality to create expedited procedures and

deadlines for environmental reviews and approvals for high-priority infrastructure projects.

9. Promoting "Made-in-the-USA" pipelines

This memorandum instructs the Secretary of Commerce to create a plan for pipelines created, repaired or expanded in the United States to use materials and equipment produced in the country "to the maximum extent possible." It establishes that all steel and metal used in such pipelines be completely produced in the United States, from the initial melting stage to the application of coatings.

10. Reviewing domestic manufacturing regulation

Trump issued an action that instructs the Secretary of Commerce to contact stakeholders to review the impact of Federal regulations on domestic manufacturing. After the review, the Secretary of Commerce is instructed to create a streamlined Federal permitting process for domestic manufacturers.

'Never Trump' national-security Republicans fear they have been blacklisted



(Agencies) They are some of the biggest names in the Republican national security firmament, veterans of past GOP administrations who say, if called upon by President-elect Donald Trump, they stand ready to serve their country again.

But their phones aren't ringing. Their entreaties to Trump Tower in New York have mostly gone unanswered. In Trump world, these establishment all-stars say they are "PNG" — personae non gratae.

Their transgression was

signing one or both of two public "Never Trump" letters during the campaign, declaring they would not vote for Trump and calling his candidacy a danger to the nation.

One letter, with 122 names, was published by War on the Rocks, a website devoted to national security commentary, during the primary season in March. The other, with 50 names, including some repeat signatories, was published by the New York Times during the general-election campaign in August.

Now, just days before Trump is sworn in as the nation's 45th president, the letter signers fear they have been added to another document, this one private — a purported blacklist compiled by Trump's political advisers. "Before he won, the conversation was, 'We really would love for you to change your mind and join us,'" Peter Feaver, a National Security Council special adviser under President George W. Bush, said of informal talks with Trump aides. Feaver, who signed both letters, added that, "Since he won .??. the conversation is, 'There likely will be a blacklist of people who signed the letters who won't themselves be eligible for a post.'"

Trump transition aides did not respond to a request for comment for this article. The president-elect has virtually no experience in national security and foreign policy, and his transition team could presumably benefit from the broadest pool of applicants for the influential appointive positions in the State

Department, Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security.

But the purportedly blacklisted figures report to their jobs at Washington law firms and think tanks in a state of indefinite limbo as their colleagues, some working in the same offices, are flirting with potential administration jobs. Last week, the Trump transition held a private briefing for secretary-of-state nominee Rex Tillerson to prepare him for his Senate confirmation hearing. One former Bush national security official who works at a Washington think tank said that some of his younger staff assistants were invited to participate but that he was not. He assumes it was because he signed the letter.

"It's hostile," said this person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of further retribution. "It's not just that we're frozen out. .??. I was told they said there was an enemies list." Among those who signed at least one of the letters are Tom Ridge and Michael

Chertoff, the first two secretaries of the Department of Homeland Security; two former U.S. trade ambassadors, Carla Hills and Robert Zoellick; two former heads of U.S. intelligence agencies, John Negroponte and retired Air Force Gen. Michael V. Hayden; a former ambassador to NATO; and several former deputy secretaries of various U.S. government agencies.

Not everyone who signed the letters wants a job, and some remain vocal critics of Trump. But many stand ready to serve or offer guidance if asked.

The letters were explicit in their denunciations of Trump's professed support for torture of terrorism suspects, his pledge to build a wall along the border with Mexico, his anti-Muslim rhetoric and his admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The letters also attacked Trump's character and temperament, asserting that he "lacks self-control and acts impetuously," has demonstrated "erratic behavior" and is "fundamentally dishonest."

Donald Trump will publish a weekly list of crimes committed



(Agencies) Donald Trump will publish a weekly list of crimes committed by illegal immigrants under an executive action he claims will 'enhance public safety'. Trump signed the order on Wednesday which also stated that sanctuary cities that refuse to arrest immigrants over their illegal status will lose federal funding. The list, also known as a Declined Detainer Outcome Report, will include a comprehensive list of criminal activity committed by illegal aliens that will 'better inform' the

public. The document states that the 300 sanctuary cities which currently exist nationwide violate federal law as they attempt to 'shield aliens' from deportation. Trump added that these cities have caused 'immeasurable harm' to Americans. Although the president does not have power to withhold all federal funding, he can pressure cities to comply by cutting grants. The administration also plans to crack down by hiring an additional 10,000 immigration

officers. New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio vowed not to 'deport law-abiding New Yorkers' in a news conference on Wednesday. Mayors in Santa Fe, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle and Boston have all defied the president's order and pledged to protect immigrants. New York Police Department has a list of 170 criminal offenses that are not covered by the sanctuary policy, such as felony assault, rape, murder, terrorism, and gun smuggling and witness tampering, the New York Post reported.

UN chief says populism has triggered a rise in racism, anti-Muslim hatred

(Agencies) The rise of populism has triggered an increase in anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, anti-Muslim hatred and other forms of intolerance, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said.

The new UN chief told several hundred people, including Holocaust survivors, at the UN's annual commemoration of the Holocaust that "a 'new normal' of public discourse is taking hold, in which prejudice is given a free pass and the door is opened to even more extreme hatred."

Guterres, who as Portugal's prime minister spurred Parliament in 1996 to revoke a 16th century letter expelling all Jews from the country, said people like him who grew up after World War II never imagined they would see rising attacks on Jews in Europe. But "anti-

Semitism is alive and kicking," he said. "Irrationality and intolerance are back." Some people still deny the Holocaust



despite the facts, Guterres said, and there is a new trend of Holocaust revisionism "with the rewriting of history and even the honouring of disgraced officials from those days."

He warned that "hate speech and anti-Semitic imagery are proliferating across the internet and social media,"

and violent extremist groups are using anti-Semitic appeals "to rouse their forces and recruit new followers."

Guterres said growing intolerance in many forms is being "triggered by populism." He called the stereotyping of Muslims "deeply troubling," and said he is "extremely concerned at the discrimination faced by minorities, refugees and migrants across the world." The secretary-general said the UN must promote tolerance, strengthen its human rights operation, push for justice for perpetrators of grave crimes, and invest in education and youth. "We need to strengthen social cohesion so that people feel that diversity is a plus, not a threat," Guterres said.

The ultra secure, self-destructing 'black phone' for Donald Trump

(Agencies) It is the high-tech, secretive phone designed to repel attacks and even self destruct if compromised.

The Boeing Black phone was specifically built to handle Top Secret information and, it is claimed, has been given to Donald Trump.

However, confusion surrounds which handset the President is actually using.

On November 1, Lynn and President Obama were the first two, maybe even the only two, who received a Black Boeing phone, claims Patrick Tucker with Defense One.

Tucker this week contacted the DISA asking if Obama's Boeing Black phone had been handed off to Trump.

But the official's only response was that the phone 'goes with the office of that position'.

Before taking the oath of office on January 20, President Donald Trump was at first believed to have handed over his personal Android phone.

The New York Times reported President Trump swapped his personal phone for a 'secure, encrypted device approved by the Secret Service with a new number that few people possess.'

But it seems the story has since changed.

Six days later, The New York Times published another article that included evidence that the President is still using his Samsung Galaxy.

'Mr. Trump's wife, Melania, went back to New York on Sunday night with their 10-year-old son, Barron, and so Mr. Trump has the television — and his old, unsecured Android phone, to the protests of some of his aides — to keep him company,' reported Maggie Haberman with The Times.

The phone uses dual SIM cards to enable it to access multiple cell networks and can be configured to connect with biometric sensors and satellites.

And the Department of Defense Information Networks head Lt. Gen.



Alan Lynn confirmed the Boeing Black works with 'a large amount of encryption.'

Many Android users know that their smartphones can be hacked at any moment, which makes many security experts worry about Trump's decision to keep his phone close.

'This is a consumer device, and it's going to have security vulnerabilities,' Bruce Schneier, an internationally renowned security technologist, shared in a blog post.

Buffett, Gates have hope for America after Trump ascension

(Agencies) Bill Gates and Warren Buffett on Friday expressed optimism that the United States will move ahead as a nation, even as it works through political differences and gets used to the new Trump administration.

The world's two richest people were speaking to students at Columbia University after U.S. President Donald Trump started to unwind the work of his predecessor Barack Obama in a series of executive orders, prompting concern from critics over what the actions mean for Americans and their place in the world.

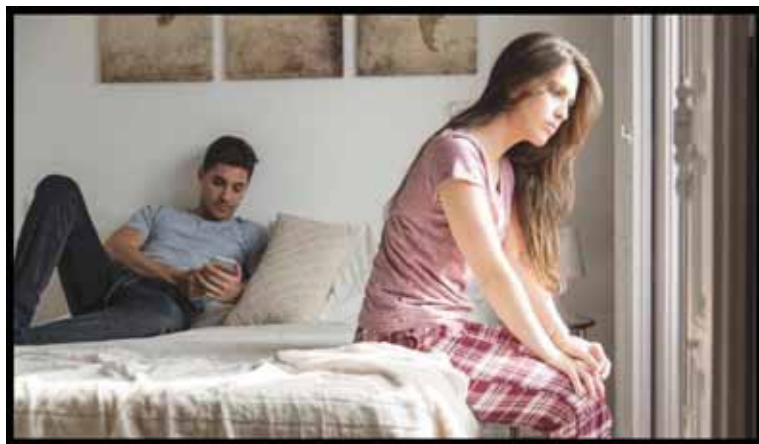
"I am confident that America will move ahead," Buffett said.

Gates, meanwhile, said the desire for innovation and support for research are "strong" and "largely bipartisan," despite differences on how to accomplish and fund both. "This administration is new enough; we don't know how its budget priorities are going to come out," but there is much intensity to ensure that the executive branch and Congress encourage "amazing things," Gates said. Gates co-founded and was the first chief executive of Microsoft Corp, while Buffett runs the conglomerate Berkshire Hathaway Inc. Forbes magazine said on Friday that Gates is worth \$85.2 billion and Buffett is worth \$73.9 billion.

An estimated 1,300 people attended Friday's event to watch the close friends, who have known each other for a quarter century.

Gates is also a Berkshire director, while Buffett is donating much of his wealth to the charitable foundation set up by Gates and his wife, Melinda. Both told students it is important to invest and focus on doing good works over the long term, despite the impulse or perceived need for shorter-term thinking.

Gates said this was particularly true in areas such as climate change and vaccinations, calling it just as important to be sure people can get vaccines as it is to develop them. Buffett said: "It's very hard to have politicians think of something that's wonderful for the country 20 years from now" if the short-term impact might cost them reelection, with their decisions often tainted by too much money, which he called "bad news."



No communication, no sex: Yes, it's time to visit a marriage counsellor

no longer interested in each other.

3) They have differences, but don't know how to fix it.

4) When there are regular arguments and disagreements about issues.

5) When partners are unable to adjust or respect each others' families.

6) Women often dream of a fairy tale marriage and men also have some expectations. But when both or one of the partners find it different, that reduces their attachment to each other.

7) Different opinions about parenting also can lead to differences among couples.

8) It is found that good

friends become good couples. Whenever you feel weak as a partner, friendship helps and you can discuss it. When this kind of a relationship starts missing, gap increases. An early intervention of experts can save the marriage.

9) One of the basic requirement of any relationship is mutual respect and when respect for each other reduces, that can be sorted out with the help of a professional counsellor.

10) When partners start keeping secrets with each other and you get to know about it, but don't know how to ask.

11) You start go to bed angry and the result is — no sex.



(Agencies) Do you think the spark is gone from your relationship? Are you finding yourself having less conversation with your partner or thinking of an extra-marital relationship? If so, it's time to consult a marriage counsellor, suggests an expert.

Anil Sethi, a relationship counsellor and motivational speaker, has shared possibilities when you should seek a professional's help in your marriage.

1) One of the most important indicators is communication between partners. Communication can be negative, stressful and disrespectful also. If there are no discussions between partners other than children, then that also means professional help is required.

2) If partners are getting attracted to others or thinking of extra-marital relations, that is a clear sign that they are

Want to lose weight? Try not to eat anything after 5pm

(Agencies) If you have been trying to shed those extra kilos and have been unsuccessful so far, this is for you — do not eat anything after 5pm and before breakfast the next day, and you'd be surprised by the results, claim researchers.

According to them a cut in daily calories by a fifth can also ward off lifestyle diseases such as cancer and diabetes.

Their study, published in the journal Nature Communications, follows research showing that fasting in middle age, or going without food after dark, can help people to live longer, healthier lives.

Scientists have found it is possible to turn back the clock and live longer using extreme dieting in middle age.

In monkeys, stopping them from eating between 5pm and 8am extended their lives by 10 per cent, compared to eating normally.

Researchers say the findings that dieting can fight ageing will also apply to humans, who share

93 per cent of the same genes. Restricting the food we put into our bodies appears to make them more able to fight off the illnesses which accompany old age.

Lead author Professor Rozalyn Anderson, from the University of Wisconsin, said: "Cutting your calories delays ageing, probably because the body uses energy from food differently to become more resilient. By targeting aging itself we could, instead of fighting cancer or cardiovascular disease individually, target the full spectrum of disease simultaneously."

The latest study is hoped to settle a debate which has been raging for the last seven years on cutting calories. The University of Wisconsin found in 2009 that rhesus monkeys given 20 per cent less food, compared to those who ate at will, lived far longer — lasting nine years beyond the average lifespan of 26 years.

These monkeys were less

likely to get cancer and cardiovascular disease, and to develop the insulin resistance which causes diabetes, leading scientists to believe calorie cutting could reverse the process of ageing. But a subsequent experiment by the National Institute on Ageing dashed their hopes after finding no impact on survival and only very negligible health benefits.

Now, however, the scientists from both teams have reviewed their work and a third study, using fewer calorie-restricted monkeys, to determine that young animals may have skewed the previous result.

Professor Anderson said: "The low-calorie intake diet worked in the rhesus monkeys in their teens and twenties, but not in monkeys started on the diet early in the pre-teen years. This shows it may be better for people too if started in later life."

The research team conclude that eating less, in the case of the Wisconsin study between the hours of 8am and 5pm only, increases survival. It does this by preventing the killer diseases which strike people when they get older, and which are shared by monkeys, such as cancer and dementia.

The reasons why are not yet fully understood, with one theory being that eating less may send the body into survival mode so that it focuses on protecting itself. The results of all three previous studies in monkeys suggest older men could benefit most from calorie-

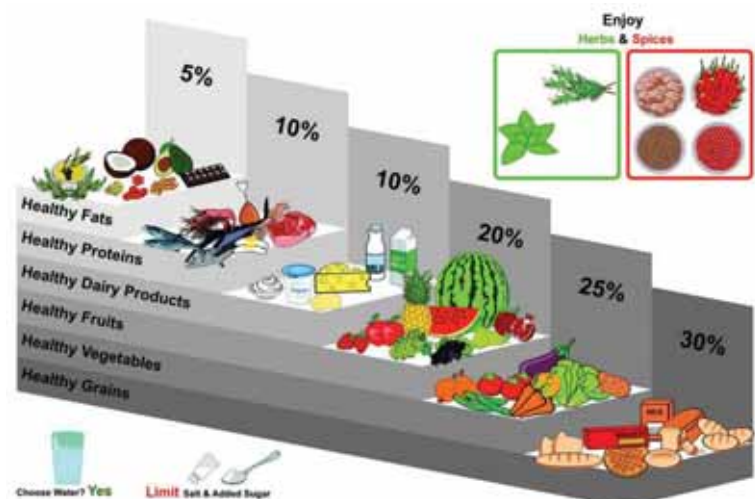


cutting, because males are most vulnerable to putting on weight from an unrestricted diet and developing the insulin resistance which leads to diabetes.

The weight loss seen in the animals is expected to have its own impact on people's health, with people who are obese at greater risk of 13 separate types of cancer. The study follows work

by the University of Southern California, which found a four-day diet, slashing calories almost in half, reduced people's risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Lead author Valter Longo said following the study: "It's about reprogramming the body so it enters a slower ageing mode."



Why fat shaming could be lethal



BODY shaming drives up an obese person's risk of developing heart disease, a new study claims. The research published in the journal *Obesity* found the stress of cyber-bullying takes a potentially fatal toll on the health of overweight people. Experts warn too many of us believe taunting will motivate people to slim down.

But they insist obesity — a disease — is far more psychologically complex than simply overeating, and stigma will only have a detrimental affect. "There is a common misconception that stigma might help motivate individuals with obesity to lose weight and improve their health," lead author Dr Rebecca Pearl, from the University of Pennsylvania, said. "We are finding it has quite the opposite effect."

"When people feel shamed because of their weight, they are more likely to avoid exercise and

consume more calories to cope with this stress," Dr Pearl added. "In this study, we identified a significant relationship between the internalisation of weight bias and having a diagnosis of metabolic syndrome, which is a marker of poor health." The team examined 159 adults with obesity who were enrolled in a larger clinical trial testing the effects of weight loss medication. The majority of participants were African American women, a group typically under-represented in weight bias research. They were asked to complete baseline questionnaires measuring depression and weight bias internalisation.

"Health care providers, the media, and the general public should be aware that blaming and shaming patients with obesity is not an effective tool for promoting weight loss, and it may in fact contribute to poor health if patients internalise these prejudicial messages," said co-author Tom Wadden, PhD, a professor of Psychology in Psychiatry and director of Penn's Centre for Weight and Eating Disorders.

EMMA WATSON'S MEDITATION MANTRA WORKS

A STUDY has found mindfulness really does reduce stress. The Buddhist philosophy holds that the problems and worries of everyday life can be eased by paying greater attention to what is happening in the present. Researchers found this mindset, along with some light stretching and careful breathing, lowered stress levels far more than typical stress management techniques.

An eight-week course of mindfulness was found to lower levels of stress hormones which can lead to high blood pressure. Mindfulness, championed by Hollywood stars Emma Watson and Angelina Jolie, worked better in a trial of 89 people than conventional stress-busting tactics, which include time management, eating better and exercising more. The study's lead author, Dr Elizabeth Hoge of Massachusetts General Hospital, said, "We think it works because it helps people create a little bit of distance between their thoughts and themselves, seeing that their worries will pass."

The research, published in the journal *Psychiatry Research*, included 89 patients with generalised anxiety disorder — a condition of chronic and excessive worrying. They were randomly divided, with half taking an eight-week mindfulness course. In two-and-a-half-hour sessions, these people went through the three main tenets of mindfulness. When tested for levels of adrenocorticotrophic hormone, triggered by stress, their levels were lower than the other half of the group. These people had done a more traditional stress management course over the eight weeks, involving advice about how to use their time, nutrition and sleep, with recorded tapes to take home.

A study has found that mindfulness, championed by stars led by Emma Watson, lowered stress levels far more than typical techniques.



CAT POOP MAY GIVE YOU ALZHEIMER'S



A parasite found in cat feces was found to alter brain function.

CATS may be increasing their owners' risk of Alzheimer's. A new report warns a parasite commonly found in cat feces alters the chemistry of the human brain, making it fertile ground for the disease to take hold. It builds on previous studies that linked the parasite — *Toxoplasma gondii* — to increased risk of brain cancer, anxiety, and schizophrenia. Though pregnant women are already advised to avoid kitty litter, experts say the new study shows even more people should be cautious.

About one-third of people worldwide are suspected of having a *T gondii* infection, and many more are at risk. This includes cat owners,

who don't wash their hands thoroughly after handling contaminated litter, and pregnant women, who can pass the infection to a child in the womb. Once infection occurs, the parasite moves to the brain.

Symptoms can vary widely, with some people revealing no outward signs of infection and others becoming acutely ill and showing behavioural and body-chemical changes that mimic schizophrenia. However, because this chronic infection targets the brain, researchers have been investigating whether it could actually be a cause of Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, or mood disorders as opposed to simply mimicking the signs of such illnesses.

The study published in the *Journal of Parasitology* focused on mice, some that were infected with the parasite and others that were altered to create an Alzheimer's disease model. The mice were then tested for behavioural and molecular changes. The authors, from Lorestan University of Medical Sciences in Iran, found that after infection with the parasite, mice had impaired learning and memory function, just as they would with Alzheimer's disease.

The infection also altered their brain chemistry compared to uninfected mice. In one group, the infection increased the likelihood of Alzheimer's disease.

Binge eating can be treated

THE URGE to binge-eat can be treated by electrically stimulating specific parts of the brain, research has shown. The technique can reduce key symptoms of the eating disorder bulimia nervosa, including the urge to binge-eat and restrict food intake, say scientists. Bulimia is characterised by a vicious cycle of repeated obsessive eating and vomiting, extreme dieting, or the misuse of medicines. For the study, 39 sufferers of the disorder underwent a procedure called transcranial direct current stimulation which uses electrodes placed on the head to stimulate targeted brain regions. The results were compared with those from a placebo treatment. Bulimia symptoms were significantly reduced by the 'real' tDCS therapy.

Lawn L'affaire



sense.

Amidst, all this, there was one life saver "PTV". Have to admit this.

Their Television way back in 1984 was far ahead of our "Doordarshan". I could watch - Mind your Language, Knight Rider, Full House to name a few. Became so used to their "Khabarnama" and the way their news readers addressed "Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim". My favorite English news reader, be it from any country, has been "Shaista Zaid" from PTV. Still cannot get over her pronunciation, style and clarity.

Shaista Zaid's and Late Benazir Bhutto's speech personification appear's same to me. PTV's sharp prayer times, in melodious voice are still a clear memory. Mauseeki program-my love for their singers had begun. PTV Darma's were very popular and well directed - till date no match to "Tanhaiyaan" and "Dhoop Kinare".

Episode's duration was 45 minutes, with "wakfa" time --- dad would read Urdu for us. During this Wakfa/intermission were their ads. I still remember their melodious, vibrant lawn ads. The most famous jingle of Sitara Lawn. "Dekha hai Ek payara sa Sapna..... Sitara ka hai Sapna Lawn", Husein Lawn ads and many more. They did not only market the Pakistan audience but surely I became a big admirer of their Lawn prints and visual shoots abroad even way back in 1984. Their ads were far more edgier than Indian counter parts.

Lesser, did I know, one day I would land in Lawn business. As they say, If. you are destined for a certain thing, Universe conspires for you, way before.

My Affair started with Pakistan's Lawn way back as a kid. Lawn Industry in Pakistan has become a serious business with

many designers and celebrities having their own launches year after year.

Past times past, when Lawn was a running material. Professionalism has taken over it and it's all about floral's, abstract's, urban prints with allowance for edgier silhouette, which beyond doubt are, far afield, from the traditional salwar kameez.

Every year, we see more of boho touch in their prints and stitching style. 2016 was a year of "peek a boo" Cut shoulders and tulip pants.

Pret wear collections by

Manan, Al Karam, Gul Ahmed, Nishat Linen, Khaadi, Sapphire, Sobia Nazir, Mina Hasan, Threads and Motifs.

Chicken Feed's from SS 2017 lawn collections...

Kareena Kapoor, will not be the face of Faraz Manan lawn this year. Eagerly waiting for the new muse.

Noor by Saadia Asad has already shot her SS,17 lawn catalog. Her Lawn 2017, teasers are worth the wait.

Sapphire lawn is being shot in Italy at different locations from Ravello, Amalfi and Rome. We



Sapphire, Ivy and Beechtree have taken the industry to a higher pedestal.

Those who count chickens, for Spring Summer collections ev-

The Lawn Muse (By Komal Minhas Bindra)

ery year, get drenched in Lawn madness. Brands prophecy, worth eyeing this Spring Summer 2017 would be Elan, Faraz

have high expectations from Khadijah Shah.

Nishat Lawn is being shot at exotic locales of Balli.

Our Favourite fashion photographer from across the border is NFK. Loved his last year's Mina Hasan Lawn shoot. Sapphire lawn 2017, is already seeing ace photographers, magic in Italy. Waiting to see more of his work in luxury lawn collection's this year.

Lawn Fever and War are bound to raise the temperatures of all. Not only the designers, but the whole team of make up artists, hair stylist, models and photographers, are eyed by one and all.

We are looking at some serious Lawn launches this year with a few changes!!

Wider color palette's. No repetition of similar designs in different volume. The biggest game changer would be designers controlling the replicas made by many renowned names and other's as first copies. Meanwhile let me gear, to add greenery (Pantone's color for the year) to my Lawn before spring equinox sets in.

As an Indian, certain set of things, automatically corresponds to Pakistan, our neighboring country. Way back in 1984, we shifted from Delhi, staying in line, with Dad deputation orders, to Amritsar. His transfer, from militant disrupted North Eastern India to Amritsar, then with terrorism at its peak, was justified by Centre Govt. But for me as a Primary school kid it came as a bolt. Amritsar in those days was gloomy, sad, agitated and shivered. Curfews, isolation and staying for the first time in Police campus, had its ups and downs. Moving from Hauz Khas, New Delhi,

where the only staple view from our balcony was Qutab Minar's majestic structure by the day, and the same lit to glory at night, planes flying over from Palam Airport. Walk's in Deer Park, Rose Garden Or IIT campus was so much fun. In strong-armed Amritsar, I was among kids, from defence background, studying with me mainly because they too had been uprooted from their comfort zones as I was. Other's were Civilian Kids..... Strange, I learned this terminology.... Civilians and Police/ Defence Kids. There was always this line of demarcation not in the best of

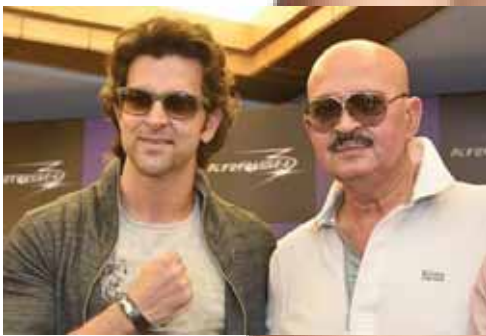


Lara Dutta roots for Roshmitha Harimurthy for Miss Universe

Former Miss Universe and actress Lara Dutta Bhupathi has come out in support of Roshmitha Harimurthy, who will be representing India at the upcoming 65th edition of Miss Universe pageant to be held in Manila. Lara, who was crowned as Miss Universe in 2000, says she believes in Harimurthy and urged her fans and followers to vote for her. "This is a girl I believe in, now it's time for you to make her win. Tweet Miss Universe India to vote! India, it's time to stand united and vote," Lara posted on Twitter. Former Miss Universe and Bollywood actress Sushmita Sen will be on the judges panel for the upcoming pageant, which will take place at the Mall of Asia Arena, Pasay in the Philippines' capital on January 30.

My father doesn't need anyone to take his legacy forward: Hrithik

Hrithik Roshan is proud that his father Rakesh Roshan has achieved everything in his life with hard work and his own will. The actor says his dad doesn't need anyone's support to take his legacy forward. Hrithik, who made his acting debut as a leading hero with his father's 2000 directorial "Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai", also said he is happy to work with him as a team member, and doesn't think of it as a legacy. "My father has a spirit (that) is undying. He doesn't need anyone to take his legacy forward... He will live for forever and he is going to be working forever. He is somebody who has built everything on his own, and he will continue doing that," Hrithik said here. The actor added: "I am always here working (with him) as a team. I am sure that he is going to go on for the next 20-30 years. He will continue making movies. That question (of carrying forward his legacy) is premature." The 43-year-old actor emphasised that it will be better to ask him about his father's legacy "when I am at my 80 because he will still be making films".



AbRam gets angry when not allowed to be clicked, says SRK



Shah Rukh Khan may rule the big screen but AbRam is quite a sensation online and the superstar says his youngest son wants to be part of every picture being taken of his father. The 51-year-old actor feels AbRam has got used to being with everyone in his team and also waves to the fans. "Everybody is kind to him, including the media. He is used to being with my team and me because he has been hanging out with me so much this year. We went to Imtiaz Ali's films for two-three months. So, he has gotten used to everyone around me. He waves out to everyone," Shah Rukh said in an interview. Sharing a recent anecdote while he was returning from Dubai, the actor says AbRam wanted to be part of every picture which was clicked of his father. "I was at the airport, had to get back from Dubai and there were lots of people taking pictures with me. So, I said let me stand here, finish the pictures and board the plane and he wanted to be part of every picture. "Halfway through, Ravi (bodyguard) just took him away but he got so disturbed. He said 'You're not allowing to me take pictures'. He speaks a lot. He has also been giving me lowdown on demonetisation now," the actor quips. Shah Rukh recently travelled to Delhi from Mumbai by a train for the promotion of his latest release "Raees". The actor, who took a train journey "after years", said it would've been wonderful to bring AbRam along.

Jacqueline Fernandez joins mixed martial arts league

Actress Jacqueline Fernandez has been announced as the brand ambassador of Goa Pirates for the Super Fight League (SFL), a mixed martial arts (MMA) league. Jacqueline along with her brothers, Ryan and Warren, has also become the new co-owner of the team.

The league, which began on January 20, already has celebrities like Ajay

Devgn, Arjun Rampal, Salim and Sulaiman, Tiger Shroff and Randeep Hooda co-owning Mumbai Maniacs, Delhi Heroes, UP Nawabs, Bengaluru Tigers and Haryana Sultans teams respectively. "It is with great pride that I welcome Jacqueline to the Super Fight League. I have always believed Indian MMA

the fans to the stadiums and in front of television," Bill Dosanjh, SFL's CEO and Principal Founder, said in a statement. Jacqueline says she is happy to "be able to support so many things in this one opportunity" "There's the family aspect, t h i s t h i n g

team sport as well as the woman competing that demonstrates woman empowerment. I really admire the discipline it takes to compete and the courage and confidence it inspires in others," she added.



As Spontaneous as possible

Hrithik Roshan did not conduct any rehearsals for the action sequences in Kaabil !

The Kaabil team is on a roll as they have released a unique Making Of Video. This video is not based on the making of the movie, but it is based on the making of the action in the movie. Shooting a movie wherein the hero of the film plays a visually impaired character is nothing short of a herculean task but looking at the phenomenal visuals of Rohan Bhatnagar AKA Hrithik Roshan essaying the role

of an ordinary man on an extraordinary mission, one can safely state that this is the best of Kaabil so far.

Speaking on this, the captain of the Kaabil ship, Director Sanjay Gupta says that, "All the action sequences in Kaabil have been designed keeping in mind that the protagonist is visually impaired, has no super powers, is an average man, does not know any martial arts so it had

to look as realistic as possible. The character is using his brains throughout the action sequences and that is visible in the making video as well. He is extremely resourceful and is on a mission for revenge, but at the same time, he does not know what is going to hit him and from where. A lot of home work has gone into these sequences by the action director, Shyam Kaushal and

we have brainstormed for months beforehand. In fact, even while we were in the process of writing the script, we wrote the same in such a manner that it ties all the action in an effortless manner." Further, it is interesting to note that No rehearsals were under taken prior to the shooting of the action sequences as Sanjay and Hrithik both wanted them to look as instantaneous as possible.



Rakesh Roshan on Raees-Kaabil clash: I am straightaway losing 150 crores!



The 'Raees' and 'Kaabil' clash is said to be one of the biggest box-office clashes of all time. The makers of both the films are at

announced that they will be releasing the film on 25th January, which was the same date Hrithik Roshan's 'Kaabil' was to release, Rakesh Roshan slammed the makers of 'Raees' for playing dirty games.

However, Shah Rukh maintained that they took this decision before the makers of 'Kaabil' announced the date. Both the films have finally hit theatres today, and right when we thought that the verdict would finally be box-office numbers, Rakesh Roshan released yet another statement that suggests foul play by the makers of 'Raees'. To his shock, this morning he woke up to find out that the exhibitors had given them 60-40 screens (60 for Raees and 40 for Kaabil) against the 50-50 screens promised. Speaking about the same to losing 150 crores! Everybody from the producer, distributor, exhibitor and audience lose as

they don't have so much money to spend on two films. It's not a lose-lose situation for all. Going by today's 60-40 screen distribution, my collections will be lower tomorrow but God is with me. In my films, I have always made the weak stronger. I make a weak person strong because I don't see anybody as weak. I have made different films like 'Karan Arjun', 'Koi Mil Gaya' and 'Krrish' where I show that the common man can rise above anything. I thought even our film industry will rise with the corporates coming in but now I am very shocked to know we have actually taken a backwards step by succumbing to such pressures. The exhibitors are very powerful people and they had to set box office right. I am keeping my fingers crossed though I don't know what the results are going to be but as a producer who has given this film industry 50 years of my work, this practice is not correct."

Bollywood gives a thumbs up to Kaabil

Hrithik Roshan has impressed B-Town celebs with his performance in 'Kaabil', which he has always maintained is a "small film with a large heart". Anil Kapoor said, "Sanjay Gupta and Rakesh Roshan have delivered a film with incredible performances by Yami Gautam, Ronit Roy and Rohit Roy. Hrithik, you are a revelation in Kaabil! You've shown us how there's no such thing as a weakness... only strengths in disguise!" Shabana Azmi, who was floored by the Sanjay Gupta-directorial, tweeted, "What a bravura performance by Hrithik; he takes your breath away..."

Meanwhile, Rishi Kapoor has congratulated the entire team of the movie, including producer Rakesh Roshan, cinematographer Sudeep Chatterjee and sound designer Resul Pookutty. He said, "Thrilling, chilling, entertaining. A winner all the way. Loved it." Author and columnist Twinkle Khanna was all praises for the film. She said, "Hrithik is absolutely wonderful in this engrossing movie." Her actor husband Akshay Kumar also agreed, saying, "Hrithik's sincere effort is commendable, he has evidently given it his all. A sensitive film with a captivating storyline."



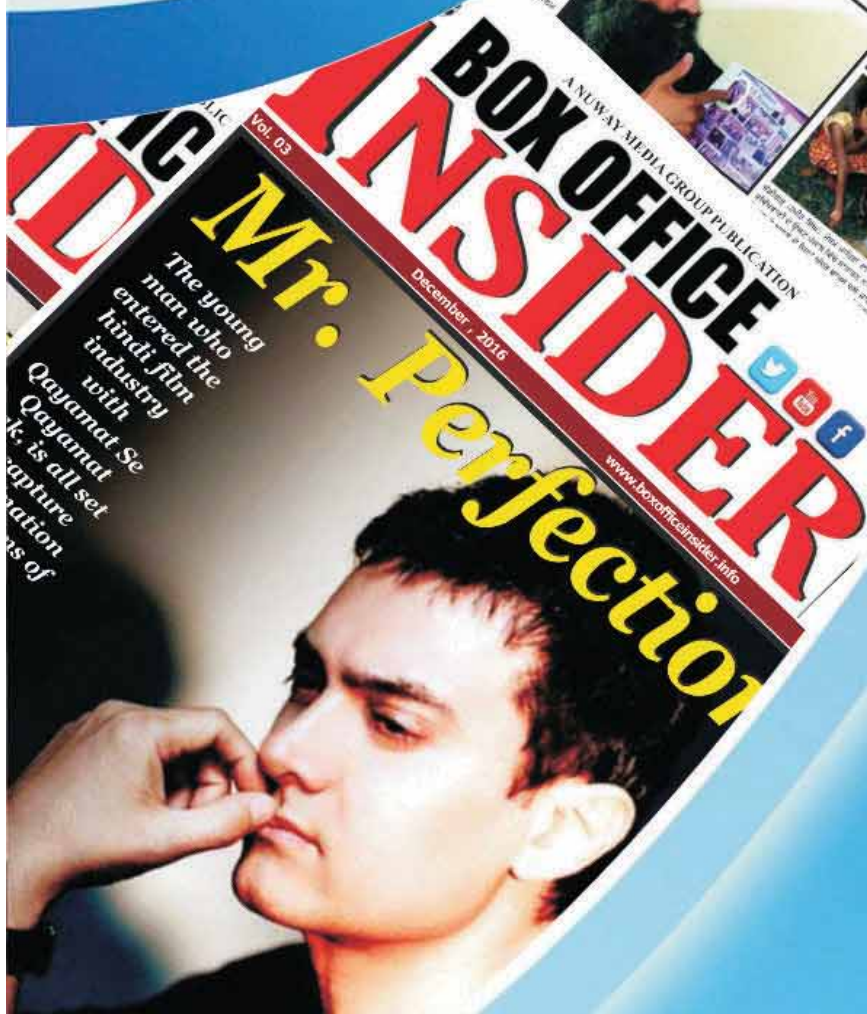
The Los Angeles red carpet premiere for xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE was held on January 19 with stars Deepika Padukone, Vin Diesel and other cast members and celebrity guests attending. The film is now playing in theaters across North America.





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