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I take everything as it comes :Sunney Leone

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The Politicization of Everything

Is no part of American life safe from politics in the Age of Trump?

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Latest On H-1B Visas India sends feedback to Team Trump

The new proposal asks for the minimum salary of those on H-1B visas to be doubled to \$130,000 a year and makes it difficult for tech giants to hire foreign workers, including Indians, over Americans.



(Agencies) American lawmakers are now considering revised guidelines for H-1B visas, used to bring foreign workers to the United States to fill high-skilled jobs, and a crucial component of the business of Indian outsourcing firms like Infosys, Wipro and TCS. The new proposal asks for the minimum salary of those on H-1B visas to be doubled to \$130,000 a year and makes it difficult for tech giants to hire foreign workers, including Indians, over Americans. IT stocks fell up to 9 per cent today, with the top 5 Indian IT firms losing Rs. 50,000 crore in market value. President Donald Trump is also expected to sign this week new rules that would make it much tougher for Indian firms to avail of H-1B visas. (Contd on page 21)

Western Union Admits Anti-Money Laundering and Consumer Fraud Violations, Forfeits \$586 Million

(Agencies) The Western Union Company (Western Union), a global money services business headquartered in Englewood, Colorado, has agreed to forfeit \$586 million and enter into agreements with the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, the Central District of California, the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and the Southern District of Florida. In its agreement with the Justice Department, Western Union



admits to criminal violations including willfully failing to maintain an effective anti-money laundering (AML) program and aiding and abetting wire fraud.

"Western Union's failure to comply with anti-money laundering laws provided fraudsters and other criminals with a means to transfer criminal proceeds and victimize innocent people," said Acting U.S. Attorney Lappen. "Western Union

has agreed to forfeit \$586 million, the largest forfeiture ever imposed on a money services business, and has agreed to take specific steps to ensure that it complies with the law in the future. This office will continue to vigorously enforce the anti-money laundering laws and regulations, which are necessary to prevent those engaged in fraud, terrorism, human trafficking, drug dealing and other crimes from using companies like Western Union to further their illegal activity."

Indian Budget 2017: Analysis Of Intent And Implementation Reveals A Yawning Gap

Spooked by Economic survey, Jaitely has increased allocation for infra sector by 80% but, figures say, achievements are way below target



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Credit Suisse Agrees to Pay \$5.28 Billion in Connection with its Sale of Residential Mortgage-Backed Securities

(Insider Bureau) The US Justice Department announced today a \$5.28 billion settlement with Credit Suisse related to Credit Suisse's conduct in the packaging, securitization, issuance, marketing and sale of residential mortgage-backed securities (RMBS) between 2005 and 2007. The resolution announced today requires Credit Suisse to pay \$2.48 billion as a civil penalty under the

Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery and Enforcement Act (FIRREA). It also requires the bank to provide \$2.8 billion in other relief, including relief to underwater homeowners, distressed borrowers and affected communities, in the form of loan forgiveness and financing for affordable housing. Investors, including Credit Suisse to pay \$2.48 billion as a civil penalty under the

dollars in losses from investing in RMBS issued and underwritten by Credit Suisse between 2005 and 2007.

"Today's settlement underscores that the Department of Justice will hold accountable the institutions responsible for the financial crisis of 2008," said Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch. "Credit Suisse made false and irresponsible

(Contd on page 21)



Dr. Neeta Jain sworn as the Democratic District Leader for Assembly District 25

(By a staff reporter) New York- Dr. Neeta Jain was recently sworn in as the Democratic District Leader for Assembly District 25 (That includes areas like Flushing, Kew Gardens Hills, Hillcrest, and Hillside Avenue). A large number of Democrat party leaders, members and other guests attended the event at Queens College on January 21st, 2017 for the swearing in ceremony. Celebrity broadcaster and activist Renee Mehra was the emcee of the prestigious event. Over 400 people attended the ceremony which including Dr. Jain's constituents, civic leaders, members of the South Asian community and Queens district leaders. The ceremony opened with the presentation of colors by Francis Lewis High School JROTC color guard commanded by Sergeant Major Charles Cabrera. Dr. Uma Mysorekar,

President of the Hindu Temple Society of North America, recited the auspicious opening prayer to Lord Ganesha and Anandita Guha performed Ganesha Vandhana, a traditional Indian dance honoring Lord Ganesha.

Dr. Jain joined the Queens community over 20 years ago and has a long history of serving the community both socially and politically. Her core values of humanity and peace have fueled her passion to serve the community. She has also represented the South Asian community and worked hard to give them a voice in politics. Due to her hard work as a team member of Diwali Stamp Project and collaboration with other officials and organizations, the US Postal Service launched a forever stamp for the Indian New Year Diwali in 2016. She would like to further advocate for the

Hindu Holidays Campaign and continue to petition for Diwali as a religious holiday in New York City schools calendar.

Dr. Jain's passion for the South Asian community extends to all in the community as is evidenced by the support from officials and district leaders of all faiths and backgrounds. Diversity and inclusiveness was a common theme among the speakers at the event. Keynote Speaker, Congressman Crowley chairman of the House Democratic caucus administered the oath of office to Dr. Jain over the Jinvani, the sacred book of Jains. Dr. Jain was recognized for her laurels and accomplishments by Congressman Gregory Meeks, Queens Borough President Melinda Katz, NYC Public Advocate Letitia James, NYC Comptroller Scott M. Stringer as well as NYC Council members



Rory Lancman, Barry Grodenchik and Peter Koo. New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo and Lt. Governor Hochul send her congratulations and good wishes for her new endeavors. Mayor De Blasio, who could not be there in person, sent a congratulatory letter to Dr. Jain applauding her for her civic work. Attorney Ravi Batra and Harish Thakkar congratulated Dr. Jain on behalf of the Indian American community. In her speech, Dr. Neeta Jain made a commitment to address issues of her district including healthcare, education, women and senior citizens. The program concluded with entertainment from Sandra Productions, Korean American Association of Queens and the NYC Bhangra Group.

Why UK's Rekha Patel Sold Her Home For 2 Pounds



living in the property for a monthly rent of 50 pounds.

"I had tried everything possible and had no other choice. There are proper agreements in place with the two private companies and these are people I trust. The people of this village have been absolutely lovely. Many have taken days off work to come out and support me," she said. Ms Patel, who was born in the UK to an Indian

family from Navsari in Gujarat, got embroiled in a dispute with her next door neighbour over some roof stones that got damaged during renovation work on the two-bedroom house, which has a market value of 250,000 pounds. The dispute landed in court, which ordered Ms Patel to pay damages and legal costs to her neighbour. While she paid part of the amount, Ms Patel disputes the

remaining bill imposed on her. She was evicted from her home in June last year over non-payment but re-entered a month later and has since been fighting against a court order for her home to be sold. She applied for the legal bill to be quashed by Manchester County Court last week. "I feel the justice system needs to be fairer and accessible to everyone. I want to now put this entire matter

behind me and move on. I want to travel to India and try and work on a book that would help educate others who get caught in a similar situation of being scared out of their own homes," said the maths teacher, who works at Glossopdale Community College in Glossop. "Forgiveness is the way forward. It is between her and her conscience, she knows what she did was not right," she said, in reference to her neighbour.

(Agencies) London: A 43-year-old Indian-origin teacher in the UK has sold her home, which has a market value of 250,000 pounds, for a token of mere 2 pounds to ensure that she cannot be evicted from the property.

Rekha Patel has been locked in a feud with her neighbour over some building work dating back six years on the home. She spent 200,000 pounds buying the dilapidated two-bedroom cottage in 2010 in Simmondley village in Glossop and turning it into her dream home.

A court order had directed that the home be sold to recover legal fees and costs of around 76,000 pounds.

"I realised I will have more rights as a tenant than the owner so I decided to sever all legal ties with the house in order to live in peace in my own home," she told Press Trust of India.

She sold the home, built in the early 18th century, to two private companies recently and has signed a 10-year tenancy agreement with them to carry on

H-1B visa overhaul: Indian IT firms face cost rise, dearth of skilled workers

(Agencies) Indian IT firms face the risk of higher operational costs and shortage of skilled workers with the proposed overhaul of popular H-1B visa regime by American President Donald Trump, leading to a sharp slide in tech stocks and prompting India to convey its concerns to the US.

A US legislation that proposes doubling of the minimum wages of H-1B visa holders to US \$130,000, sent IT stocks plunging by 9% on Tuesday on fears that headcount expenses will go up hitting the sector's profitability.

Industry body Nasscom conceded that the Lofgren Bill contains provisions that may prove "challenging" for the sector. It plans to take a delegation to the US in February to meet US administration on this issue. "Specific provisions of the bill that need to be considered are that the it does nothing to address the underlying shortage of STEM-skilled workers, which has led all companies to have a calibrated strategy of hiring locally and bridging the skills gap by bringing skilled workers on non-

immigrant visas including H-1Bs," Nasscom said.

The apprehensions come at a time when the US \$150 billion industry is already unnerved by reports that Trump has drafted an executive order aimed at overhauling work visa programme.

The US protectionism could spell more trouble for firms like TCS and Infosys that are already facing strong headwinds from currency fluctuation and cautious client spending.

"Since the rationale for the administration and the legislative wing is to protect job opportunities for Americans, our strong suggestion is that they should carefully calibrate the conditions keeping in mind the skill shortage in the US," Nasscom President R Chandrashekar said. Raising wage levels under new rules for certain set of companies will nullify the objective of protecting jobs for American nationals, he added.

Ministry of External Affairs has said India's interests and concerns on the issue have been conveyed both to the US

administration and the US Congress at senior levels.

Some analysts are of the opinion that Indian companies could easily witness around 60-70% rise in salaries of the H-1B visa dependent workforce.

"Hence, this could have significant impact on the net profit," Angel Broking said. Greyhound Research estimates that average margin hit for an IT services provider will be 5-10%, depending on the total base of employees currently on H1-B visas. The current H-1B minimum wage of US \$60,000 was fixed in 1989 and has since remained unchanged. Companies like Tata Consultancy Services and Infosys, which derive more than half of their revenues from the US, declined to comment given the sensitivity of the matter. On the other hand, global tech titans like Google CEO Sundar Pichai, Microsoft chief Satya Nadella, Apple's Tim Cook and others have already gone public with their views on Trump's protectionist stance.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Charges Two Individuals In \$17 Million Real Estate Scam

(Press Release) Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Patricia Tarasca, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Region for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Office of Inspector General ("FDIC-OIG"), announced the unsealing today of an indictment charging ISSAK ALMALEH, a/k/a "Issak Izrael," and ANTOANETA IOTOVA with conspiracy to commit bank fraud, bank fraud, wire fraud, and making false statements to the FDIC, in

connection with a wide-ranging scheme to falsely claim ownership of more than \$17 million worth of property in New York and Florida. As alleged, ALMALEH and IOTOVA used forged documents to claim ownership of real estate in New York and Florida, and then used those real estate documents to victimize individuals and tenants. ALMALEH and IOTOVA were arrested today in Hollywood, Florida, and will be presented later today in federal court in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The

case is assigned to Chief U.S. District Judge Colleen McMahon. Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: "Issak Almaleh and Antoaneta Iotova allegedly forged documents to falsely claim ownership over \$17 million of property in New York and Florida. As alleged, the defendants' brazen scheme led to at least one victim being wrongfully evicted from the victim's own home and others signing leases and paying deposits to the defendants for homes the defendants did not actually own.

Thanks to the work of the FDIC Office of Inspector General, the defendants' alleged frauds have now been foreclosed." FDIC Special Agent-in-Charge Patricia Tarasca said: "The FDIC Office of Inspector General is committed to investigating allegations of fraudulent activity that threatens to harm FDIC-insured financial institutions. Our office worked vigorously to uncover the details of this alleged real estate foreclosure scam to ensure integrity in the banking industry and hold guilty parties accountable."

Trump has done what he said he would. So, what's next?

The best guide to what Donald Trump would do as president appears to be what he said he would do as president.

(Agencies) Republicans hoped he would turn out to be a conventional conservative. Democrats hoped he would not do anything too drastic, and maybe even strike a few deals. But the best guide to what Donald Trump would do as president appears to be what he said he would do as president. Trump's executive order banning immigration from certain Muslim-majority countries — one of his most controversial and widely dismissed campaign promises — has sparked a panic among his critics about what else President Trump might actually do: create a Muslim registry, deport undocumented immigrant children, try to take oil from ISIS or kill

terrorists' families. Those campaign promises were all laughed off and dismissed by many, just like when he tweeted about sending federal enforcement into Chicago or stripping flag burners of their citizenship — or even changing libel laws to sue reporters or throwing Hillary Clinton in jail. "I was one of the folks that had hoped that he was just saying things to get elected and that he didn't really believe in them," said Rep. Ted Lieu (D-Calif.), who after the election sent an email to his supporters urging them to move past the election and be proud of a peaceful transfer of power. "I'm now convinced that I was wrong. We should not give him a chance to govern. I

believe he is a danger to the republic."

To the people who latched on to the distinction between taking Trump seriously and literally on the campaign trail, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra said only, "Just watch." Becerra's counterpart, Eric Schneiderman of New York, noted that Trump showed during his first week in office that the political landscape had shifted in a way some had not expected. "People are just not prepared for the fact that we're not dealing with a regular Republican-versus-Democrat battle here, we're dealing with an administration that



in its first week has demonstrated that it doesn't have much respect for the rule of law," Schneiderman said. "We're in for a bigger challenge to our constitutional fabric than we've faced in a very long time in this country."

To Trump's circle, there's nothing surprising or problematic about anything he's done so far, in either substance or manner. "President Trump talked about

this throughout the campaign and the transition, and he's doing exactly what he told the American people he was going to do," White House press secretary Sean Spicer said on ABC's "This Week" on Sunday. Trump has been running his White House as he ran his campaign, down to the intense pace of news to keep changing the focus and his aggressive tweeting. And to the surprise of few, he's been running his White House with the same tiny circle of controversial but empowered aides that he staffed his campaign with — including Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller, Kellyanne Conway and Jared Kushner. "If anybody thinks that anything Donald Trump said during the campaign is off the table because he's now president, they haven't been paying attention to Donald Trump," said Brad Woodhouse, president of Americans United for Change. "I think Donald Trump is capable of doing anything and everything that he would do on the campaign trail." Republicans are just as unclear about what happens next. Nebraska Sen. Ben Sasse, who has been a frequent Trump critic, became one of the first to put out a statement criticizing the immigration executive order with a statement on Saturday. His office declined a request to discuss how it's changed his own sense of what's ahead in the Trump presidency.

What History Teaches Us About Trump's Immigration Order

(Agencies) In October 1850, two white slavecatchers arrived in Boston, determined to bring Ellen and William Craft back South in cuffs and shackles. Two years earlier, the Crafts, a slave couple from Macon, Georgia, had enacted one of the most daring and celebrated feats of escape in American history. Her hair cropped short, light-skinned Ellen donned men's clothing and posed as "a most respectable looking gentleman." Her husband, William, played the part of her black manservant. It worked. Traveling by train and steamship, they arrived in Philadelphia, where Quaker activists took them in, and then traveled onto Boston, where white abolitionists taught them to read and write and helped them find employment — Ellen as a seamstress, William as a cabinetmaker. Their story was well known. There was no denying that they were fugitive slaves. Within hours of the slavecatchers' arrival, an angry



mob heckled and menaced the two Georgians, while the Protestant clergyman Theodore Parker hid the couple in his house. Unlike their Quaker brethren in Philadelphia, the Bostonians were not pacifists. Parker kept a loaded gun in his study, and members of the Vigilance Committee — an ad hoc group of concerned citizens — assembled a heavy battery of rifles and powder kegs in his basement. White abolitionists posted "wanted" posters around the city, with sketches of the two "man steal-

ers," who in turn withstood five days of increasingly taut heckling and threats wherever they traveled. Egging on the crowd, leading abolitionists like Wendell Phillips promised to "trample [the Fugitive Slave] law under our feet." "As moral and religious men," another activist warned, "[we] cannot obey an immoral and irreligious statute." In the end, the abolitionists spirited the young fugitives to Canada, and ultimately to London. The slave catchers returned empty-handed. Opposition to the Fugi-

tive Slave Act of 1850, which gave Southerners additional legal resources to reclaim their runaway "property," seems relevant again today, with President Donald Trump's rushed and seemingly unconsidered imposition of an immigration ban on citizens of seven majority-Muslim nations. The chaotic action of border officials prompted massive, spontaneous demonstrations at airports all over the country; while more peaceful than the Boston Vigilance Committee, activists assembled with the same spirit of immediacy and outrage. More fundamentally, protesters and journalists gave a human face to the cause by focusing on the breakup of families — husbands separated from wives, parents from small children, the elderly from the young — and by appealing to the conscience of people who recoiled at the site of ordinary people being detained and shackled because of the color of their skin.

Amid Trump's shake up, many wondering what's coming next



(Agencies) Donald Trump's determination to recast the role of government has a whiff of Reaganism, and his plays on divisions are reminiscent of Richard Nixon, a historian says. But many Americans have a simpler assessment of the opening days of the new administration's governing-by-upheaval: It's unsettling, even to some who voted for the shake-up that Trump promised.

right now," said Margaret Johnson of Germantown, Maryland, who runs a small translation business. "We don't know what's coming next. The country's divided. There's a lot of fear. And I think we're kind of at that point where things can go any kind of way, and it's really hard to say which way they're going to go."

That uncertainty finds an echo in Pastor Mike Bergman's church in Adrian, Missouri, 40 miles south of Kansas City, where many congregants count themselves as conservatives and embrace the new administration's order cutting off funding to international groups that provide abortions. But as church members consider another order — restricting refu-

gees — worries about security are tempered by concern about the needs of refugees and whether Trump's rhetoric is widening the gulf between Americans, Bergman said. There is worry about some of the political rhetoric ... about how all that is going to cause the divide in the community to deepen and more bitterness to spring up between the people of our country. I wouldn't say we're really optimistic right now," he said.

Trump is hardly the first president to take office promising wholesale change in the face of substantial skepticism. But Kevin Boyle, a professor of American history at Northwestern University who compared Trump to Reagan and Nixon, said the clashes set off by the admin-

istration are unique.

"I cannot in my adult life think of a moment that compares to this," he said. "The level of tension between these two competing visions of the country needs to be resolved in some way or another." Trump's actions have unsettled Suzanne Kawamleh, 24, a graduate student born in Chicago to parents who emigrated from Syria. On Saturday night, Kawamleh said, she joined protesters at O'Hare International Airport to protest the executive order stopping Syrian refugees from entering the country. The next day, she told a crowd gathered at the county courthouse in Bloomington, Indiana, about how her relatives had fled Syria by boat and ended up in a refugee camp before finding refuge in Germany.

Website Operator Charged With Defrauding More Than 2,000 Victims In New York City Apartment Search Scam

(Agencies) New York : Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Philip R. Bartlett, Inspector-in-Charge of the New York Office of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service ("USPIS"), announced today the filing of a criminal complaint charging ROBERT GUZMAN with mail fraud in connection with a fraudulent apartment rental scheme that claimed more than 2,000 victims. As alleged, GUZMAN posted apartments supposedly available for rent in New York City on websites he operated, amazingapartmentrentals.com and www.equityproject.net [external link] (the "Websites"), that charged a fee to view the apartments on the Website. Between 2013 and 2016, victims paid GUZMAN (who has no real estate licenses) more than \$100,000, but were never able to view the apartments purportedly available for rent on the Websites, some of which were not, in fact, in New York City, and others of which were not, in fact, available for rent. GUZMAN was arrested this morning and will be presented before the Honorable James C. Francis IV later today. Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: "Robert Guzman allegedly defrauded more than 2,000 victims who were searching for a place to live in New York City. He allegedly created websites that took advantage of

these victims' desire to find affordable housing in New York City, taking fees from victims to view apartments, when in fact some of the apartments were not even in New York or available for rent. Thanks to the work of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Guzman's alleged scam has been put to an end." USPIS Inspector-in-Charge Philip R.

Bartlett said: "Mr. Guzman took advantage of the need for affordable housing by allegedly devising a scheme to defraud those who could least afford to lose their hard-earned funds to a scam. Today's arrest by Postal Inspectors, exemplifies our Agency's commitment to bring individuals to justice whose greed overshadows honesty and de-

century." From 2013 through the present, GUZMAN would post on the Websites apartments supposedly available for rent in New York City, and would charge a fee to view the apartments (the "Application Fee"). The Website included listings for apartments that were not, in fact, in New York City, as well as some that were, in fact, listed for sale, not for

rent, by actual real estate companies. After the victims mailed the Application Fee to a P.O. box GUZMAN provided on the Website, the victims would never be able to view the apartments purportedly available for rent. Between 2013 and 2016, GUZMAN defrauded more than 2,000 victims of over \$100,000.

Hafiz Saeed detention a policy decision in national interest : pakistan army

(Agencies) Pakistan's army said on Tuesday the detention of Mumbai attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed was a "policy decision in the national interest" as the government announced that the Jamat-ud Dawa leader's 90-day house arrest could be extended if required.

"The detention is a policy decision taken in the national interest. The relevant department may give more information in a day or two and the situation will become clearer," military spokesperson Major General Asif Ghafoor said. Saeed and four other JuD leaders were put under house arrest after order of detention was issued by Punjab Province's interior ministry on Monday in pursuance to a directive from the Federal Interior Ministry on January 27. His aides - Abdullah Ubaid, Zafar Iqbal, Abdur Rehman Abid and Qazi Kashif Niaz - were detained and placed under house arrest in Chauburji near JuD's Lahore headquarters. "Although they belong to different districts of Punjab but the government has decided to place them under arrest in one house in Lahore," a senior police officer told PTI. "The government has detained Saeed and four other JuD and Falaha-i-Insanyat (FIF) leaders for 90 days with effect from



January 30 but this detention may further be extended on completion of this period if required," an interior ministry official told PTI.

"The government may take some further steps against the JuD and its sister organisations in coming days," he said, adding that the names of several JuD and FIF activists have been placed on Exit Control List to stop them from leaving the country.

Maj Gen Ghafoor said Pakistan wants peace with India and resolution of all issues including Kashmir through talks held on the basis of self-respect and honour, but it should not be considered as weakness.

"We want the Kashmir issue to be resolve via United Nations resolutions and

dialogue, but this desire for peace should not be misconstrued as a weakness," he said. After the Punjab Home Department declared Saeed's Jauhar Town Lahore residence as sub-jail, the JuD chief was shifted there from its headquarters Al-Qadsia Chauburji.

First Saeed was allowed by police to hold a press conference before he left for his home along with dozens of his supporters amid high police security.

"My detention order has come from Washington and not Islamabad. If someone thinks that after placing me under house arrest will help check freedom movement in Kashmir he is living a fool's paradise. My arrest will give a fresh impetus to the Kashmiris' struggle against India," Saeed, the founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba who carries a USD 10 million bounty on his head, told reporters. Saeed further said if Prime Minister Narendra Modi thinks that he would get respite in Kashmir after his (Saeed) arrest he is seriously mistaken. "We have declared 2017 a year of solidarity for Kashmiris. All programmes we planned for Feb 5 will be held across Pakistan and (Pakistan-occupied) Kashmir," he said, and vowed to challenge his detention in the Lahore High Court.

Trump Stumps : World nations struggle to deal with new us president

(Agencies) The question of how to handle Donald Trump is proving to be a major headache for governments around the world, and there is no agreement on how best to do it. The shared fear, reflected across the international community, is that everything that can go wrong, will go wrong.

After braving the White House last week the UK prime minister, Theresa May, was castigated for

her allegedly fawning behaviour towards the new US president. But the UK government believes, pragmatically, that Trump's objectionable views and actions, such as his support for torture and his travel ban on seven mainly Muslim countries, must not be allowed to undermine the "special relationship".

Saudi Arabia, which was not on Trump's hit list, is also taking a practical approach. King Salman

did not raise the travel ban when he spoke to Trump on Sunday, according to official accounts. Khalid al-Falih, the Saudi oil minister, emphasised the positive instead, welcoming Trump's policy on fossil fuels and ignoring the rest. Pakistan, also exempted, is keeping its head down too.

Acquiescence, or what critics call appeasement, has not found favour in some European capitals. The French approach,

typified by François Hollande, the country's outgoing president, has been visceral and emotional. When they spoke last weekend, Hollande lectured Trump on democratic principles and the dangers of protectionism. "Withdrawal into oneself is a dead-end response," he said.

In contrast, Germany's official reaction to a week of unpleasant, Trump-related shocks was cool and



rational, if not a little patronising. Unlike Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, was quick to signal her opposition to Trump's ban on Syrian refugees.

But she has not retaliated over his insulting description of her open-door policy as "catastrophic". Instead, Merkel talked down to him when they met last weekend. "The [1951 UN] refugee convention requires the international community to take in war refugees on humanitarian grounds. All signatory states are obligated to do so. The German government explained this policy in their call," Merkel's spokesman said.

Some countries may feel they have little to lose.

Iran is one. It described Trump's ban on Iranian travellers as "a shameful act". Tehran suspects the new administration is looking for reasons to abrogate the 2015 nuclear deal. The US complaint at the UN on Monday about an allegedly illegal Iranian ballistic missile test was a "politically motivated" sign of things to come, Iran's foreign minister, Javad Zarif, suggested. Suspicions in Iran and so-called "rogue" states such as North Korea or Sudan that Trump may deliberately try to provoke them has been strengthened by his brutal treatment of Mexico, ostensibly a close US friend and ally. North Korea has been behaving itself, waiting perhaps to see what happens.

Kansas Man Indicted on Child Pornography and Sex Tourism Charges

(Agencies) A 70-year-old Kansas native who was residing in Panama was indicted today and charged with multiple crimes involving sexual conduct with minors in a foreign country, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Blanco of the Justice Department's Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson of the Southern District of Texas.

Jebediah Dishman, 70, of Fredonia, Kansas, was arrested in Houston on Nov. 8, 2016, and originally charged by criminal complaint. He later appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge

Mary Milloy who found him to be a flight risk and ordered him into custody. Today, a grand jury in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas indicted him on one count each of engaging in illicit sexual conduct with a minor in a foreign country, production of child pornography, sex trafficking of children, and obtaining custody and control of a minor for the purpose of producing sexually explicit visual depictions of the minor. According to the indictment, from September 2014 through March 2015, Dishman traveled

from the United States to the Republic of Indonesia and engaged in illicit sexual conduct with minors. While in Indonesia in February 2015, Dishman allegedly used a minor to produce visual depictions of the minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct. In addition, the indictment alleges that between September 2014 and March 2015, Dishman attempted to recruit and entice minors in the Republic of Indonesia and other countries outside of the territorial jurisdiction of the United States to engage in commercial sex acts.

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Pak's Action Against Hafiz Saeed To Placate Trump - And China



Jyoti Malhotra

On Monday night in Lahore, soon after Hafiz Saeed was placed under "preventive detention" at his Jamaat-ud-Dawa charity office, he called a press conference and accused Narendra Modi and Donald Trump of putting pressure on the Pakistan government to take action against him, then drove off home in his own car. That was when his house was declared a "sub-jail."

But the mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks - and the leader of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba or LeT, after which he created the JuD as a cover - was not the slightest repentant. Tweeting under his own name @AmeerJamataDawah, Saeed said: In one stroke, Hafiz Saeed was trying to incite public support against the Pakistani government's move to confine him, in the name of Kashmir.

Second, by putting China front and centre, he was warning Pakistan's establishment (read, the Army and ISI, which has kept him afloat all these years) that an international conspiracy was being waged by the US and India against it and its "iron brothers," the Chinese.

For the time being, though, nobody seems to be listening to Hafiz Saeed's rants. Fact is, the so-called house arrest could not have taken place without the acquiescence of the ISI chief Naveed Mukhtar and army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa, both recently appointed by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, even if it was initiated by his own government.

For the time being, at least, it seems that Nawaz Sharif and his army and ISI are on the same page - a victory for the Pakistan Prime Minister in these unsettled times. The "watchlist"

means that Hafiz Saeed and the JuD's assets have been frozen, their passports and arms licences cancelled in accordance with the UN resolution 1267.

Certainly, Nawaz Sharif must have warned his security establishment to lie low in the face of a rampaging US President. As Donald Trump disrupts decades-old policies by banning foreign workers and refugees from seven Muslim-majority countries and threatens to add Pakistan's name to a list for "extreme vetting," Sharif is said to have suggested that this was a good time to shut up Hafiz Saeed, even if it was in the comfort of his own home.

Certainly, the Indian government is watching and waiting to see which way the wind turns. For the record, spokesperson Vikas Swarup said, "Exercises such as yesterday's orders against Hafiz Saeed and others have been carried out by Pakistan in the past also. Only a credible crackdown on the mastermind of the Mumbai terrorist attack and terrorist organisations involved in cross-border terrorism would be proof of Pakistan's sincerity."

So why has the former Lashkar chief been locked up

for six months?

The most obvious answer is that the US president is calling in the \$10 million bounty on Saeed's head, awarded in 2012, because 12 US citizens were also killed in the Mumbai attacks. The point is that this bounty was put in place by the previous Obama administration, which refused to follow through the 2011 killing of Osama bin Laden because it needed the Pakistanis too much to purportedly stabilise Afghanistan.

As Vikas Swarup pointed out, Hafiz Saeed was similarly incarcerated once before, in 2008, but let off soon enough because he challenged the courts that there was no real evidence on his involvement in the Mumbai terror attack.

In the wake of Trump's deeply disruptive order on the weekend, it seems that Islamabad has finally decided to pay heed to the advice of its ambassador in the US, Jalil Abbas Jilani. It seems Jilani was told by US authorities last month that the matter of the JuD's financial activities were raised in the Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), a 41-member international organisation which closely

follows money-laundering activities and its links with terrorism.

In Rawalpindi, the spokesperson of Pakistan's intelligence agencies Maj-Gen Asif Ghafoor said the house arrest was a "policy decision that the state took in national interest." If Pakistan did not address the concerns of the international community on Hafiz Saeed, Jilani was told, it could be blacklisted by the International Cooperative Review Group. If that happened Pakistani would have to make a request to global financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF each time it wanted to make an international transaction. The US authorities gave Pakistan a deadline: January 31. Pakistan Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry is believed to have had two meetings in this regard with Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and National Security Advisor Lt Gen. Nasir Janjua. There is a third purported reason as to why Pakistan has made this move: China. The noted Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir referred to China's purported involvement, saying that China put pressure on the Pakistanis to arrest Hafiz Saeed (Contd on page 23)

Karan Affairs: Yes, It Felt Like A Hostage Video. I Admit It

Karan Johar

Hi, guys! It's been a while and, well, a lot has happened. Let's see... We have new currency notes, America (God help them) has a new President, and Donald Duck has now become the word that rhymes with it! I have had a movie stalled, managed to release it, have started a new season of Koffee with Karan, released a book, spawned a 1,000 blogs about my sexuality, have been called craven, cowardly and 1,000 other things. And it's just the beginning of 2017! Happy New Year, by the way. It's been a mad, bad, glad, sometimes sad few months. I've been the lull and I've been the storm and also somewhere in between. But that's ok. I love the limelight after all. I absolutely love it and you may have noticed that I've rarely been out of it these last few months! And I have come to realise that I'm fine with that. I like to be in the news! I like to be a trending topic and

wonder when I'm not. I manically monitor the sales of my book and cheer that it's on bestseller lists. I find myself telling my PR person that she slip this or that titbit out. Add it all up, and I am an attention-seeker. And proud of it! The things I do.

When I'm feeding a story that I've drafted, that praises me, I'm still like "left side of the page please" because that's what gets noticed the most. I don't want to be the bottom half of a newspaper, I want to be top left (exactly like my profile in case you're wondering!) On social media, of course, no one (or very few) is in the limelight for the right reasons - you're either trolled or you're the travesty of the day! But as the wise man said: as long as you're trending! (Which I don't nearly as often as I think I should.)

I find myself asking questions that as a filmmaker I never thought I would ask. Like I get a call from a magazine for a feature and my first question is:

"Cover or not?" Interview invite from a leading channel? I have stopped asking the topic, I'm just like "Primetime or not?"

If I am invited and put in the second row, I can be distraught for days! Why am I not in the first? Of course, that's actually rarely a problem because I am invariably on the stage! (Which is better than the front row, because I'm being paid for it.)

At a red carpet event, I make sure I'm not walking behind a bigger star. You must understand the strategy behind the limelight isn't easy either. It's like this: if I walk in behind Mr Bachchan, I will get ignored, so I make sure I pause a little longer, talk to people I wouldn't talk to otherwise, I make sure he's gone and been seated in the auditorium - and then I make my entry. Only then will they be able to see and appreciate my sparkling shoes! (I wear such expensive shoes for these functions and what is the point if no one notices?)

I rarely get a reality check, because of all my very generous reality cheques! Besides I never wanted to be intense director-saab hiding behind my beard or my camera. Give me the flash lights, the red carpets and all that goes with it. Please!

Oh and I love hoardings. I love them. Nothing makes me happier than my face splashed all over the city. (Other may not be so happy, but I LOVE it!)

Mahesh Bhatt once warned me "The end of the star is when the flowers stop coming." And now I check out my arrangement bouquets on my birthdays. I haven't yet counted the flowers themselves, but Give. It. Time.

I also want to say that there is a big difference in being publicity-hungry and being a limelight-seeker. Publicity-hounds are these who will do anything just to get any attention, like arriving for the opening of an envelope. I am not a hound, I am an attention-seeker. Very different animal. My kind of

attention requires greater finesse.

Or being threatened by a political party. That gets you attention. It's not my favourite kind, but there it is.

And this is the irony, of course. Being in the limelight also puts you straight in the crosshairs. So you're still in the news, no one is indifferent, but you kind of wish they were. My comments about my sexuality, for example, which is apparently annoying LGBT communities and they're writing blogs (so many blogs!) either complaining about me or defending me. I read both and I'm really happy I'm the point of the debate. (Yes, I'm still not saying it, that remains my prerogative.) Sorry, all flagbearers, if you think I've offended you. I think I've done more for the community than many. And so to all those viewpoints: those who appreciate me, thank you for responding to my candor, to

(Contd on page 23)

Had Muslim gunmen killed six white Christians, half the world would have Canadian flags as profile pictures

On Sunday night an anti-Muslim white nationalist allegedly walked into a mosque in Canada and shot and killed six people and left at least eight others critically wounded in a hail of gunfire. All by itself, that news is utterly devastating — or at least it should be — but something truly despicable is going on.

For nearly a full day, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of conservatives all over the internet blamed the shooting on Muslims. The words "Allahu Akbar" were the top trending topic in the United States as the rumors spread that multiple Muslim gunmen screamed this as they shot worshippers in the mosque. Even right now, when I just Googled the words "Allahu Akbar," the top links were news stories from all over the world declaring that multiple gunmen were heard chanting this as they shot and killed those six people.

But the initial reports weren't accurate. The shooting had one lone gunman — not two, as officials initially said. The suspect was not a Muslim. He was not from Morocco. He was not bearded or wearing Muslim garb. He didn't speak Arabic. Yet, 24 hours later, Fox News still has not retracted or addressed their widely shared tweet that it was a Muslim Moroccan who did the shooting.

Instead, the suspected shooter was a bigoted 27-year-old white man known to many as a conservative online troll and white nationalist who voiced support for Donald Trump. Perhaps this is why Donald Trump has not personally mentioned this mass shooting even though it was the deadliest single incident in North America since he was inaugurated?

What I know is this — had the shooter actually been a Muslim who walked into a quaint little Baptist church full of white folk singing Amazing Grace, not only would Trump be genuinely outraged right now, the entire conservative machine would be mobilizing against what they call radical Islam. It appears that radical whiteness simply does not bother them. But you know, and I know, that had this shooter been a Muslim, who killed white Christians, tens of millions of people all over the world would've changed their profile picture to the Canadian flag. We'd be hearing harrowing tales of the survivors and seeing emotional reflections on those who lost their lives. The coverage would be non-stop.

That's damn sure not our reality right now though. A Muslim life taken by a white bigot clearly does not matter as it would if the roles were reversed. And that's just gross. It gets to the root of what I really think happened here — now that conservatives, including Donald Trump, learned that the shooter was a white conservative, they aren't outraged, because they really don't mind what he did.

Even when they thought the shooter was a Muslim, the surge of conservative energy was not being expressed as grief for the victims, but a big "we told you radical Islam was dangerous" to rub it in everyone's face. Otherwise, where's the grief? Where's the concern? Where are the fundraisers? Where are the interviews with families of victims? Where is the compassion from Trump? Yet here we are, with another incident of an angry white bigot walking into a place of worship and slaughtering people at will and people are still speaking like this shooting and the mass shooting by the white nationalist Dylann Roof in Charleston are unrelated.

They are deeply connected. Dylann Roof was radicalized online. This much has been proven. He admitted it openly. The Canadian suspect, Alexandre Bissonnette, was also reportedly known for his online obsession with white nationalism and the leaders, like Donald Trump, who he thought advanced it.

Dylann Roof and Alexandre Bissonnette were not lone wolves. They are a part of a dangerous white nationalist movement that is actually growing around the world. And here's the thing — this act of terror would not have been stopped by Donald Trump's ban. Neither would Charleston or Orlando or Oklahoma City or Columbine or Sandy Hook or San Bernardino or 9/11. Because Trump's ban has nothing to do with American safety — nothing at all. Trump's ban is about bigotry and who he could discriminate against the most to appeal to his bigoted base without actually disturbing his personal business interests. I grieve for the families of the victims of this mass shooting in Quebec City. And I also grieve for how obviously bigoted the lack of concern we see from our government is.

(By Shaun King) NY Daily News

Donald Trump is doing exactly what he said

In the stretch run of the 2016 campaign, columnist and CNN contributor Salena Zito identified a fault line in the tumultuous relationship between the news media and Trump supporters. The press, she wrote, had taken then-candidate Donald Trump "literally, but not seriously," while his backers regarded his statements "seriously, but not literally."

If you're not familiar with her now pervasive chestnut, Zito's point was this: many reporters missed out on Trump's appeal because they were too caught up analyzing (or criticizing) the details of his most extreme promises and threats. Trump supporters, by contrast, were less concerned with the vagaries of border wall construction than hearing their frustrations and resentment recited back to them.

As a piece of cultural analysis, the argument still resonates. But when pressed up against the reality of the new administration's first ten days, it dissipates. Trump has shown during his brief time in office that he should have been, and should be, taken both seriously and literally -- by everyone. In an unprecedented blitz of executive actions, the new administration continues to implement or set the traps for a raft of the campaign's most controversial pledges. A vague order delivered late Friday night, immediately and without notice to a number of federal agencies and hundreds of affected travelers, barred for 90 days the entry of "immigrants and nonimmigrants" from seven Muslim-majority nations into the US. The same order temporarily shutdown the US refugee program. Syrian refugees have been denied safe harbor indefinitely.

Trump's executive actions capped off a dizzying week that saw congressional Republicans, dedicated for a generation to blocking new spending, promising to pay for the border wall, while the mostly Democratic mayors of sanctuary cities began to carve out a legal bulwark against the President's demand they be cut off from federal funding. Whether or not Trump's early actions will withstand a growing backlash that began on the streets and has spread to corporate boardrooms and into the offices of some elected leaders is an open question. But there are few signs he plans to defer to public opinion -- at least that of the public which opposed him from the outset. There are also legal questions. Some of the initial flurry, like the travel and refugee bans, have arrived in the form of enforceable orders. They will face court challenges, but there are already worries the administration will ignore or sidestep judicial orders. His memo inviting the pipeline company TransCanada to "promptly re-submit its application" to jumpstart the Keystone XL project was, in effect, a very formal press release, but one that represented a clear statement of intent.



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For BJP, Ram temple in Ayodhya is an issue with diminishing political returns



Sunita Aron

As their pet issue of a Ram temple is caught in a legal rigmarole, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is marketing a heady mix of soft Hindutva and development to the people of Uttar Pradesh.

While releasing the manifesto for the assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, BJP's national president Amit Shah had proudly highlighted nine key issues that included everything for everybody--except the now forgotten promise of a Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Instead, finding prime position were the two inflammable issues of the Kairana exodus and cow slaughter that instantly trigger communal polarisation, especially in western part of the state that witnessed the 2013

Muzaffarnagar riots. Without wasting time the party high command also deployed its most polarising figure, Mahanth Yogi Adityanath, whose influence area happens to be Gorakhpur in east of the state. He will be addressing many meetings in an already polarised west UP.

The new issues have taken centre-stage relegating the most exploited, yet emotive, issue of Ayodhya to page number 20 of the 24-page manifesto. Here too, the party stuck to the resolution of the knotty issue within the constitutional framework, instead of its earlier commitment of finding a legal solution if negotiations between Hindus and Muslims failed.

This was a cut-and-paste job from the party's 2014 manifesto, and is a line the BJP has adopted since the countrywide frenzy

subsided in mid-1990s.

Interestingly, the BJP's vision document before the 2004 general election was much more categorical on the temple issue. It read: "The BJP remains committed to its stand that the judiciary's verdict in this matter should be accepted by all. However, we believe that dialogue, and a negotiated settlement in an atmosphere of mutual trust and goodwill, are the best way of achieving this goal."

The two central governments led by socialist leader Chandra Shekhar and Atal Bihari Vajpayee had initiated a dialogue to find a solution to the contentious issue that scarred the Hindu-Muslim relationship in India. The Narendra Modi government, however, has not moved an inch in that direction. The sants associated with the movement are awaiting an appointment with the prime minister ever since he came to power. As for the legal remedy, the case is pending since 1949.

The BJP has buried the issue as it lost its mass appeal after the loss of the disputed shrine on December 6, 1992. The BJP citadel also collapsed along with the shrine as people realised it was an empty promise, a mere election stunt. During elections,

it can best ignite communal tensions but not necessarily deliver votes.

The BJP's revival in 2014 was possible primarily because of Modi, in whom people saw both development and Hindutva.

There are valid reasons besides the proven fact that no issue can be perennially milked in elections.

The sangh parivar has not carried out any public mobilisation campaign, the backbone of the temple movement, to revive the issue. Some half-hearted yatras were organised till mid 2000, but they too lost their steam. Now even the much-touted customary celebration on December 6 hardly attracts any public participation as the construction of a Ram temple remains a distant dream for the devout. The VHP-BJP leadership that had spearheaded the temple movement is either dead or sidelined — Ramchand Paramhans, Ashok Singhal, Lal Krishna Advani, MM Joshi, Kalyan Singh and Vinay Katiyar among others.

And while the VHP continues to intermittently play the Ram dhun, most of the BJP leaders have moved away from Ayodhya, unlike in the 1980s when they

had come to the streets, walking shoulder-to-shoulder with the sants. The cadre have picked up new slogans like "Bharat Mata ki Jai" and "Bhagwan Gautam Budh ki Jai" while dropping the catchphrase "Jai Sri Ram" from their public discourse. Now newer divisive issues like "love jihad" and cow slaughter pay more political dividends. This is also because of the sangh parivar's efforts to consolidate the Hindu vote-bank by bringing in the lower castes to its fold. Temples in the countryside are symbolic of untouchability even though Dalits form bulk of the pilgrims to temple towns. Moreover, the issue is now history for a generation born after 1992. The temple does not excite them any more unless their emotions are whipped up. Or else the Centre's surrender on Jallikattu, a bull taming sport in Tamil Nadu in the south, would have kicked off murmurs among the hardliners. The government brought in a law to circumvent the Supreme Court order. The question, however is, can the temple still kick off an emotional storm like Jallikattu did? Or it is merely a matter of faith for both the public and the politicians. For the BJP, the Ram temple exists. Only it has to be made magnificent.

Punjab polls: Can Messrs Sidhu and Sidhu push back the AAP tide in their dominion

Vinod Sharma

Will Messrs Sidhu and Sidhu pull it off against Arvind Kejriwal and Associates in Punjab? Before you look askance, let it be known that Captain Amarinder Singh, like Navjot, is a Sidhu from Patiala, their common Malwa home-base.

That they're now together in the same party has lent the Congress's bid for power a gravitas it direly needed. Navjot fuels the Captain's charge with the horsepower Bhagwant Mann, another Malwa man, lends to Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party.

In the final leg of the bitterly-fought campaign, the winner will be the one who is perceived as better-placed to dislodge the hugely unpopular Badal & Badal enterprise. In my travel across Majha and parts of Malwa, I heard no loud expression of support for the Akali Dal the Badals are accused of having converted to a tightly-held family company. But it'll be a gross misjudgment to assume the Dal

that has had deep roots in the state, is about to vanish without trace. The party's prospects are dreary as its traditional backers are at once despondent, diffident and alienated.

The urge to fight back has dissipated among the Akali cadres even as Sukhbir Badal goes around seeking support from influential Deras with following across the state: Sirsa's Ram Rahim, the Rada Soamis, the Ramdasias.

The irony is that Sukhbir and his brother-in-law, Bikram Majithia, are faces that evoke anger; their names associated with the repression, the highhandedness of the decade-long Akali rule. The retribution the people seek against them is as tangible in Gurdaspur as it is in the adjoining Amritsar district.

In fact, the slogan at Majitha, where Bikram is fighting Sukhjinder Laali (Congress) and Himmat Singh Shergill (AAP), is symptomatic of the public mood: "Jhandi (flag) Akali di, vote Laali

di." The AAP man isn't doing too badly. But he's branded, like Arvind Kejriwal, an outsider. They insist that every Majithia is a Shergill but not all Shergills are Majithias. Clans matter in Punjab like castes do in Uttar Pradesh.

Akali flag flutters atop most houses even in Gurdaspur. But of its seven assembly segments, the Congress is projected to win five, even six. The Akali candidates there face three adversaries: anti-incumbency and their two main political rivals!

The AAP's presence in the area is minimal despite its state convener Gurpreet Ghuggi in the fray for the Batala seat. In acceptance perhaps of his party's dim prospects, Kejriwal hitherto hasn't invested much time in Gurdaspur, where Navjot Sidhu addressed a big gathering recently. The turnout was more from rural areas than from the city.

That Messrs Sidhu and Sidhu are better mobilisers of public opinion than Ghuggi --



who has lately started flaunting his Warraich clan name -- was evident from Navjot's crowd-connect. "The audience cheered as he attacked the Badals," recalled a local journalist. The adulation, he said, is no less for Amarinder in the border belt. Navjot is actually the Congress's force multiplier in Majha's four districts, including Tarn Taran and the BJP belt of Pathankot, where the Congress has good prospects in two of the three seats. His carpet-bombing style compliments the political sniper

that's Amarinder.

As electioneering climaxes, the Captain will spend more time in Malwa where Kejriwal and Associate's growing presence has come to daunt the Congress. The big question remains whether Messrs Sidhu and Sidhu can push back the AAP tide in their dominion?

The stakes there are way higher for Amarinder to keep his captaincy. The Lambi and the Patiala seats he's contesting are on the western and eastern tips of Malwa that houses more than half of legislative Punjab.

The inside story of Rahul-Akhilesh alliance for UP polls



Barkha Dutt

On September 29 as the Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) dramatically announced the surgical strikes across the Line of Control - a limited cross-border raid to avenge the terror attack on an Indian Army camp at Uri - Congress mastermind Prashant Kishore ('PK') quickly understood - and Rahul Gandhi apparently agreed - that the BJP had just got itself a significant lead in the Uttar Pradesh election. The game had changed and at this point an old-style Congress would have pretty much given up the battlefield. Though six days later Rahul Gandhi did lash out at the prime minister contentiously accusing him of "khooon ki dalali (trading on the blood of soldiers); this comment could have easily ended up in the same league as Sonia Gandhi's 2007 "maut ka saudagar" (merchant of death) barb about Narendra Modi - inflammatory rhetoric without a follow up plan.

It became clear now that the Congress needed an alliance. Other variables had changed too. The original 'PK' plan - where Sheila Dikshit as the chief ministerial candidate would have been, to quote a Congress leader, "the Manmohan Singh of UP" while Priyanka Gandhi would have been the main face of the campaign, canvassing across the breadth of the state - had not fructified. October 11 had even been earmarked as the date when she was meant to kickstart her larger political debut. But an already wary party leadership felt bringing out Priyanka after the surgical strikes would be a "double risk."

This was the moment when a serious rift emerged between PK and the Congress leadership; he argued that to make the party a contender it had to stick to either Plan A (Priyanka as the face of the polls) or Plan B (a public, pre-poll alliance with Akhilesh Yadav). The party agreed to the need for

an alliance but initially rooted for a covert understanding - giving the impression of going it alone (while working out an 'arrangement') to keep the morale of an already weakened cadre intact. After all Rahul Gandhi had just completed his one-month-long 'khaat yatra' to energise the flagging worker base. How would they break the U-turn to their workers? "We had to find a parachute instead of a plane crash," said one Congress leader.

By the end of the month, the disagreements over strategy were so serious that drafts were exchanged between the Gandhis and PK over how he would phrase his resignation announcement on Twitter; he also told the party he

would walk out from the Punjab campaign along with the UP mission. Priyanka Gandhi then reached out to their main spinmeister and they just about managed to pull back from the brink. They now agreed to begin the heavy lifting for a proper coalition between the Samajwadi Party and the Congress. And Rahul Gandhi and his sister began directly working the hotline to the UP chief minister.

But there was another factor that needed delicate handling. In the initial meetings with the SP patriarch, the Congress would discover that Mulayam Singh Yadav was keen to be CM himself and was counting on their support to make this happen. For the first meeting with PK, Mulayam sent man-about-town and the bête-noire of his son Amar Singh to personally fetch Kishore from Delhi's swish Lodhi hotel.

Congress leaders say the senior Yadav all but declared that he - not his son - expected to lead UP in 2017. At this stage Mulayam was threatening to call a party convention and still believed he would win over the MLAs. The Congress had to take

a call on whether to back a 'new SP' or the old one; Rahul Gandhi, it is said, was firm about throwing his weight behind the son.

Mulayam was especially miffed when Kapil Sibal chose to represent Akhilesh in the legal battle for which faction would get the party symbol of the cycle. A fly on the wall reports that the two men accidentally bumped into each other in the Election Commission elevator where Netaji complained about the 'beta' getting Congress support and the absence of 'izzat' for him. Sibal is said to have assured Mulayam that his arguments never included any personal attack on Mulayam and the party was mindful of this as well.

But it was the symbol victory that emboldened Akhilesh Yadav and nearly broke down the negotiations. In the Congress version of events, Akhilesh had agreed to approximately 140 seats for them which he then whittled down to 121 seats - on which both sides assented. The surprise announcement for 210 seats by the incumbent Chief Minister - including some won by Congress legislators in 2012 - took them totally by surprise.

Akhilesh's final offer of 99 seats was conveyed to the Congress through PK - which is when it looked as if the alliance was off. For several hours, the CM did not even take the phone calls of Congress interlocutors like Ghulam Nabi Azad or even the Gandhi siblings. The see-saw continued for a few more hours till the magic number was settled on 105 seats for the Congress to contest. The alliance has converted a four-cornered contest (which gave the BJP a natural advantage) into a triangular one; the focus of the PK brains trust will be to push the fight into a bipolar space - a direct fight between Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi on one side ('apne ladke' as Kishore's slogan goes) and the Modi-led BJP campaign. Despite the prominence to Priyanka Gandhi on all the poll posters, her role is confined to the family boroughs. Congress leaders argue that that the hard-talk and tight-rope walking in the Uttar Pradesh negotiations have seen a maturing of Rahul Gandhi. "A little bit of the politician in him finally came to the fore," said one aide.

In 2017, UP's big riddle - where is Mayawati ?

Ten years after she stormed to power with an outright majority in India's biggest state, Uttar Pradesh, where is Mayawati?

That is the big question of 2017. Opinion polls show her as third in a triangular contest. As Akhilesh Yadav has been in the news for the Samajwadi Party's internal feud or the tie up with Congress, or BJP has been the subject of scrutiny for demonetisation or ticket distribution or communal campaign, the BSP has been conspicuously absent from the discourse.

Does this mean that the BSP does not matter in UP elections?

Not at all. Anyone who jumps to that conclusion is ignoring both recent political history and the electoral record of India's tallest Dalit leader. At the peak of the Narendra Modi wave in UP, the BSP still got close to 20% of the vote.

Mayawati is a contender in UP 2017. People remember the good law and order under her with nostalgia. She is also strongest in west UP - which is where the elections begin, and a



wave this side could extend into the rest of the state. Her biggest asset is the headway she has got in terms of time, for she narrowed down on tickets almost two years ago in many seats and in a centralised party, there was little space for rebels to disrupt it. Her candidates have been on the ground, even as others squabble. And she has the arithmetic, based on careful social and demographic calculations.

But what is also true is that this is Mayawati's toughest election. For the BJP, in this election, the big challenge is that it has no agenda, and no local leaders. For the SP-Congress combine, the big challenge is it

has no time, and its campaigning has barely started. But for the BSP, the challenge is even bigger, for Mayawati is now a mass leader without any mass contact. She is also the first preference of only her core vote, and has done little to build a base among other communities. All that the BSP has going for it is arithmetic.

This is also an election she cannot afford to lose.

If Akhilesh loses, he still has time and can return to power. If BJP loses, there will be internal convulsions, questions over Modi's demonetisation and Amit Shah's electoral management, but the party will still remain India's dominant political force.

But if Mayawati loses, it may mark the beginning of the end of her political career - for it will be extraordinarily difficult for her to keep both the BSP organisation and her voters intact. By the time next elections come around, she would have been out of power for over 10 years in the state; depleted strength in the assembly would also mean depleted strength in the Rajya Sabha - remember she has no Lok Sabha seats left. Indian politics is ruthless. Unless a political leader is in power, and is in a position to deliver goods to supporters through patronage, sustaining an organisation is tough.

Most importantly, it will open up her loyal vote base to penetration by others. The Dalit vote is no longer as static and fixed as it used to be. In 2014, there is enough evidence to conclude that a section of even her Jatav vote moved to BJP; Modi himself is making a strong push for the Dalit constituency; other leaders may well emerge if the base feels Mayawati's time is up. (Contd on page 23)

Former Executive of Tenet Healthcare Corporation Charged for Alleged Role in \$400 Million Scheme to Defraud

(Agencies) A former senior executive of Tenet Healthcare Corporation, was indicted for his alleged role in an over \$400 million scheme to defraud. The indictment alleges that the scheme to defraud victimized the U.S. government, the Georgia and South Carolina Medicaid Programs, and prospective patients of Tenet hospitals.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Blanco of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, Special Agent in Charge David J. LeValley of the FBI's Atlanta Division and Special Agent in Charge Derrick L. Jackson of the U.S. Department of Health and Hu-

man Services Office of Inspector General's (HHS-OIG) Atlanta Field Office made the announcement.

John Holland, 60, of Dallas, was charged in an indictment filed on Jan. 24 in the Southern District of Florida with one count of mail fraud, one count of health care fraud and two counts of major fraud against the United States. Holland made an initial appearance today, Feb. 1, at 2:00 p.m. EST before U.S. Magistrate Judge Edwin G. Torres of the Southern District of Florida.

According to the indictment, Holland formerly served as a senior vice president of operations for Tenet Healthcare

Corporation's Southern States Region and as chief executive officer of North Fulton Medical Center Inc. in Roswell, Georgia. The indictment alleges that from approximately 2000 through 2013, Holland engaged in a scheme to defraud the United States, and the Georgia and South Carolina Medicaid Programs, by causing the payment of bribes and kickbacks in return for the referral of patients to North Fulton Medical Center Inc. and other Tenet hospitals in the Southern States Region, including Atlanta Medical Center Inc., Spalding Regional Medical Center Inc. and Hilton Head Hospital. From approximately 2007

through 2013, Tenet maintained and operated an affiliated billing center located in Boca Raton, Florida, that assisted in processing, for payment, Medicaid billings for these hospitals. Holland took affirmative steps to conceal the scheme including by circumventing internal accounting controls and falsifying Tenet's books, records and reports. These kickbacks and bribes helped Tenet bill the Georgia and South Carolina Medicaid Programs over \$400 million, and Tenet obtained more than \$149 million in Medicaid and Medicare funds based on the resulting patient referrals, the indictment alleges.

No Funds : Trump threatens UC Berkeley over protests against Breitbart editor

(Agencies) US President Donald Trump threatened Thursday to withdraw federal funds from UC Berkeley after violent overnight protests against a planned appearance by a controversial editor of conservative news website Breitbart.

Hundreds of students and other protesters chanting "shut him down" smashed windows at the University of California campus, set wooden pallets on fire and threw fireworks and rocks as police in full riot gear responded with tear gas.

The university was placed on lockdown as the sold-out appearance by Milo Yiannopoulos, a conservative



firebrand, was canceled Wednesday evening. If UC Berkeley does not allow free speech and practices violence on innocent people with a different point of view - NO FEDERAL FUNDS?" Trump wrote on Twitter Thursday. Trump's top political adviser Stephen Bannon is the former chairman of Breitbart

News. UC Berkeley is one of the top public universities in the United States. Its operating costs are funded by money from the state of California and tuition fees, as well as grants and government and private contracts. About half of research at Berkeley is funded by the federal government, according to

the university website. Berkeley however has been struggling in the past years with budget shortfalls and spending deficits. Yiannopoulos, who is the Breitbart technology editor, is known for his provocative social media posts and was banned from Twitter in July for fueling abuse directed at "Ghostbusters" actress Leslie Jones. The British journalist is a vocal supporter of Donald Trump -- nicknaming the US president "Daddy" during his election campaign -- and has become one of the faces of America's "alt-right" movement. Similar protests at the University of California at Davis last month also forced the cancellation of speeches by Yiannopoulos and former pharmaceutical executive

Martin Shkreli. The events at Davis and Berkeley were organized by conservative student groups. A similar invitation to speak at UCLA was rescinded and Berkeley was to be the last stop of his tour. Officials at the three University of California campuses stressed that they did not invite Yiannopoulos or endorse his ideas but were committed to free speech. More than 100 UC Berkeley faculty members had signed two letters sent last month to the school's chancellor, urging him to cancel the event. "Although we object strenuously to Yiannopoulos's views - he advocates white supremacy, transphobia and misogyny - it is rather his harmful conduct to which we call attention in asking for the cancellation of this event," read one of the letters. They cited as one example an incident in December at the University of Milwaukee where Yiannopoulos -- a gay crusader against "political correctness" -- openly mocked a transgender student, displaying her name and photo on screen

Asia Pacific nations are tilting closer toward China as Trump declares 'America First'

(Agencies) There are strong signs that countries in Asia and the Pacific region are turning away from the United States and tilting toward China as the Trump administration emphasizes "America First."

Perhaps the most alarming signals are coming from Australia, a country that has deep cultural and historical ties to the United States but which depends on exports of raw materials to China. Donald Trump is deeply unpopular in Australia, which like the United States is an immigrant nation.

Last week, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said he was open to the idea of China taking the place of the United States in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. The Obama administration had led the effort to build the TPP, and had designed the trading bloc with the U.S. at its center. But President Donald

Trump effectively killed the TPP immediately after taking office.

China is Australia's largest market for exports of merchandise goods, according to the Australian government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

"Trump's policies are taking a whole bunch of countries that were already worried about America's commitment to lead and America's commitment to its alliances" and worrying them worse, said Ian Bremmer, president and founder of global political risk consultancy Eurasia Group.

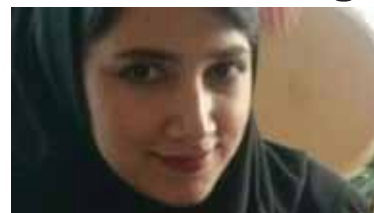
"China also wants to be seen now as promoting globalization, promoting free trade, particularly for countries in Asia that don't want to count on the U.S.," Bremmer said.

Now that Trump has officially withdrawn the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, "cer-

tainly there is the potential for China to join the TPP," Turnbull said in a Financial Times report.

The 11 other countries that were set to become part of the Trans-Pacific trade and investment agreement were Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. Turnbull added that he was speaking to other leaders from the region about a TPP that excludes the United States. Among them was Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, he said. Japan remains the strongest ally the United States has in Asia, but Trump has also created alarm there by criticizing Japan for supposedly unfair trade practices. Abe spoke by phone with Trump on Saturday, and they agreed to hold a summit in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 10., the Nikkei reported over the weekend.

Iranian researcher blocked from entering US sues Trump



(Agencies) An Iranian scientist heading to Boston to take a job at a Harvard Medical School lab has sued President Donald Trump after she was denied entry into the US. Samira Asgari says in her lawsuit filed on Wednesday in US District Court that she was denied entry to the US even though she had a valid

visa and federal judges had issued a restraining order against the president's ban on visitors from seven Muslim-majority nations, including Iran. Asgari had most recently been living in Switzerland. Last weekend, Asgari flew from Switzerland to Germany, but was blocked by US and airline officials as she tried to board a plane to Boston. In addition to Trump, the suit names Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection officials as defendants.



UNITED IN FAITH

SITTING on their father's shoulders and smiling at one another, this photo shows a Jewish and Muslim child united in their protest against Donald Trump. It was taken by Nuccio DiNuzzo, a photographer at the *Chicago Tribune*, during the third day of anti-Trump protests at the city's O'Hare International Airport.

The photo was posted online and on Twitter, where it has gone viral.

The parents carrying their children on their shoulders, Rabbi Jordan Bendat-Appell, from Deerfield, in Illinois, and Fatih Yildirim, who lives in the Chicago suburb of Schaumburg, had only just met one another.

The rabbi said, "My son, Adin, wanted to move closer to the front of the crowd so he could see people better when they passed by. He was very excited to be there! He asked to go on my shoulders and we found ourselves next to Fatih and his family."

Daily Mail

DONALD Trump slammed Malcolm Turnbull over a proposed asylum seeker deal and accused the Australian Prime Minister of looking to ship off the 'next Boston bombers' to the United States during their first official telephone conversation.

On Thursday afternoon, the newly-elected president took to Twitter to slam the Obama administration for agreeing to take on the refugees in the first place.

"Do you believe it? The Obama Administration agreed to take thousands of illegal immigrants from Australia. Why? I will study this dumb deal!" he wrote.

Senior US officials told the *Washington Post* that Donald Trump abruptly hung up on Turnbull after just 25 minutes—when the pair were meant to speak for an hour.

But an indignant Turnbull returned serve, telling 2GB's Ben Fordham: "As far as the call is concerned, I'm very disappointed, the report the president hung up is not correct, the call ended courteously."

Donald hung up on Oz Premier after 25 mins

A fuming President Trump reportedly told Turnbull that the conversation was 'the worst call by far' he had taken that day, after 'boasting' about pleasant exchanges with Russian President Vladimir Putin and three other world leaders.

President Trump reportedly ranted about the deal the Obama administration struck with Canberra to take 1,250 genuine refugees from Nauru and Manus Island, telling Turnbull: "I don't want these people".

It was the 'worst deal ever', he told the prime minister, complaining he was 'going to get killed' politically for following through on the resettlement

Trump slams Turnbull's as worst call ever



Sources claimed President Trump (extreme left) accused Australian PM of trying to ship next Boston bombers to the US during the conversation over the proposed asylum seeker deal.

agreement.

Sky News sources claim President Trump was 'yelling' at Turnbull at points during the heated conversation, which took place on Saturday afternoon Washington time.

Trump indicated he was sceptical about what America got out of honouring the deal.

After Turnbull apparently suggested they move on and talk

about foreign affairs, including the conflict in Syria, President Trump ended the conversation.

"During call with Australian PM on refugees, Trump pulled phone away from ear and says he wants off call, which ends abruptly per source," CNN reporter Jim Acosta tweeted.

Under the agreement reached with the Obama administration, Australian would take a number

of South American refugees, currently in a processing center in Costa Rica, in return.

These refugees are predominantly Christian, according to reports. In response to revelations of the hostile phone conversation, Turnbull remained tight-lipped on Thursday and said that he wasn't going to comment.



New York Police Dept cops wearing head scarves.

Women don US flag scarves on World Hijab Day

New Yorkers showed their solidarity with Muslim women on Thursday by donning stars and stripes headscarves at rally on World Hijab Day—just days after President Trump's controversial travel ban.

Dozens of women gathered on the steps of City Hall on Wednesday on the fifth year of the annual event. It was created by New York resident, Nazma Khan, who hoped it would help foster religious tolerance and understanding by inviting both non-Muslims and Muslims to experience the hijab for one day.

On Wednesday, women all over America and the world experienced the realities of wearing a hijab.

New York officials have endorsed the event in the face of a soaring number of hate crimes in recent months.

Despite travel ban, Arab leaders line up to talk to Trump

Many Muslims in the U.S. and abroad are upset with the president, but leaders in the Arab world are giving him a pass in hopes he'll help stop extremism in the region.

(Insider Bureau) Many in the Muslim world are furious at President Donald Trump—but not some of its most important leaders. Even as Trump draws global scorn for halting immigration from seven Muslim countries, key Arab leaders in the Middle East whose countries weren't included in the ban are mostly staying quiet. The reason: they see Trump as a crucial ally against Iran and the Islamic extremists who threaten their own regimes, according to diplomats and experts.

But some foreign policy insiders with Middle East contacts warn that pro-Trump Arab governments are playing a dangerous game, focusing on how he'll end their longtime frustrations with U.S. policy un-

der President Barack Obama without worrying about the blowback Trump might spark. "There's a big blind spot," said Brian Katulis, a fellow at the Center for American Progress who visits the Middle East regularly. "I do think there's more than a little wishful thinking, and willful blindness, on Trump's anti-Muslim bigotry." Jordan's King Abdullah proceeded with a trip to Washington, arriving Monday for a meeting with Vice President Mike Pence at the White House.

Abdullah raised the issue of Trump's new travel bans, according to an official statement from his government, which said Abdullah "emphasized that Muslims are the number one victims" of Islamic terrorists, who he called religious "out-

laws" who "do not represent any faith or nationality." But even that did not represent a condemnation of Trump's action. And several analysts said they don't expect Abdullah, one of Washington's most reliable Arab allies, "to go farther for now." The visit followed Trump's phone calls Sunday with two of the most important Arab monarchs, King Salman of Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi's crown prince, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. An official Saudi account of the call made no mention of Trump's executive orders on immigration and refugees. The state news agency of the United Arab Emirates, of which Abu Dhabi is the capital, said only that Mohamed told Trump that "extremism and terrorism had no religion

or identity," according to an English-language report from the country. The White House made no mention of the issue in its own readouts of the calls. Analysts say they also don't expect much complaint from Egypt's president and military dictator, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, with whom Trump has struck up a relationship. Arab rulers, who may find Trump's rhetoric and actions distasteful in private, are betting for now that their strategic interests lie in warm relations with the new president. "They don't want to say anything that would maybe move him in the wrong direction," said Dennis Ross, a senior Middle East policy official under three presidents. Their view, Ross added, is: "Maybe he'll see the light."



President Trump's First Defeat

The immigration order creates an international mess and a political embarrassment.

(Insider Bureau) It's working out very nicely," President Donald Trump said on Saturday afternoon as he signed his latest batch of executive actions. "You see it in the airports."

It was the usual confident swagger from a man accustomed to getting his way. But by then, a revolt against the president's immigration order was already brewing, led by refugee rights groups, the American Civil Liberties Union, Democrats and liberals on social media, who had woken up to reports suggesting it was not working out very nicely at all. By 7:30 in the evening, protests at major airports across the United States had swollen, a federal judge was hearing a legal challenge, and cable news networks—with one notable exception—were covering the stunning events live. Passions ran so high that New Yorkers, many joked, were actually volunteering to go to JFK Airport to show solidarity with those detained by bewildered immigration officials. Was this what Trump

had in mind? His executive order temporarily barring citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States had been in effect for only about 24 hours, and it was already facing severe blowback. The hastily crafted order, which sent shock waves of confusion across the U.S. government and was temporarily and partially blocked by U.S. District Court Judge Ann Donnelly, caught thousands of Muslim travelers unawares, separating family members from one another and stranding many in legal limbo. Now, what was meant as a bold assertion of presidential prerogative and a down payment on Trump's promise to "eradicate

radical Islamic terrorism from the face of the Earth" has dealt the president his first political defeat and energized his opponents after a week of demoralizing developments. And it has sharpened divisions between those Americans willing to take extreme measures to prevent the possibility of future attacks—and those who view such steps as abhorrent and misguided. On the left, the outrage exploded immediately. Civil liberties groups, Democratic governors and members of Congress denounced Trump's executive order as an unconscionable attack on American values. Washington Gov. Jay Inslee called it "cruelty"; Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said

there were "tears running down the cheeks of the Statue of Liberty"; even Hillary Clinton, last seen enduring Trump's inauguration, emerged from mourning to tweet, "I stand with the people gathered across the country tonight defending our values & our Constitution. This is not who we are."

Silicon Valley titans, who had gone all in for Clinton before clamming up after Trump's victory, rallied to the immigrants' cause. Apple, Facebook and Google, who employ thousands of foreign software engineers, spoke out about its impact on their business; Elon Musk condemned it in moral terms; Airbnb offered free housing to those



caught up in the maelstrom. Chris Sacca, an early investor in Twitter, matched his followers and donated \$150,000 to the ACLU. Even the NBA got into the act: The Milwaukee Bucks made a point of starting center Thon Maker, a Sudanese immigrant, and the league said it had raised concerns about the executive order with State Department officials. Republicans have been largely silent, though Sens. Susan Collins, Ben Sasse and Jeff Flake, as well as Reps. Charlie Dent of Pennsylvania and Justin Amash of Michigan, criticized the president's move.



(Insider Bureau) Barack Obama and his aides expected to take on President Donald Trump at some point, but they didn't think it would happen this quickly. Now they're trying to find the right balance on issues that

How Obama will take on Trump

The former president is keeping tabs on his successor in the White House and selectively weighing in.

demand a response, and how to use Obama to deliver the selective pushback. Obama and his team are monitoring what's happening at the White House, and not ruling out the possibility that Obama will challenge Trump more forcefully in the coming months, according to people who've been in contact with the former president. It depends on Trump. It also depends, the people close to the former president said Monday, on whether speaking out would just set him up to have no

effect and be dismissed, and result in empowering Trump more, which is a very real worry for them. From his vacation spot in the Caribbean, Obama has been keeping up with news from Washington and the protests around the country. Friends and former aides have been emailing and talking to him. His staff at his post-presidential office, still unpacking its boxes, told him about the reporters who kept asking, even in Trump's first week as president, whether enough had

happened already to meet his threshold to speak up. He decided he finally had to say something about the immigration executive order that's sparked outrage across the country. But he decided he couldn't say it himself—not yet, at least. The result was an extraordinary statement Monday from an Obama spokesperson that "President Obama is heartened by the level of engagement taking place in communities around the country."

Look what eye can do!

Teenager becomes an internet sensation by filming himself popping his eyes out

(Insider Bureau) A teenager from Pakistan has become an internet sensation after he filmed himself popping his eye balls out. Ahmed Khan, 14, can pop his eyes out beyond eye sockets by over 10 mm.

Khan, who studies at a local school in Lahore, discovered his unique ability to pop his eyes last year. Last year, I was doing something and I touched my eye and the eyeball popped out,' said the 14-year-old. 'I thought I had damaged my eye or something but realised it did not cause any harm to my eye. I tried popping the other eye out and I was

successful. This seemed fun and after trying a couple of times I got used to it.'

The teen's eye popping videos have become an instant hit on social media sites in Pakistan and he has even been interviewed on a TV show as well. Although, he is very popular in his school thanks to his unique talent, many kids are scared of Khan. 'Many younger kids in school run away when they see me. They are scared of my eye popping,' he said. Even the girls in school get scared. They think that my eyes will fall out into my

hands or something.'

Khan is now 'eyeing' a place in the record books. 'Once I had mastered the art of popping eyeballs at will, I was told by my friends about Guinness Book of World Records. That day it became my aim to break the record,' he said. The record for popping eyeballs to the maximum currently belongs to Kim Goodman from the US who can pop her eyes out of her eye sockets by 12mm.

Khan said: 'My eye popping is way better than the American woman who owns the record and I can break her



record anytime.' Khan's ophthalmologist initially suggested he stopped the bizarre habit but, after looking at his expertise proptosis, encouraged him to go after the Guinness Record. The teenager said: 'I have never visited an

ophthalmologist for my vision. God has given me this talent so I am sure he would take care of my eyes too. 'Only when I do the eye stunts for long, my eyes become a little watery but otherwise I have no problems in popping my eyes out.'

Starving child who was left for dead by his parents

Hope was left for dead by his family because they thought he was a witch Toddler was found emaciated and riddled with worms by a charity worker

(Agencies) A starving child who was left for dead by his parents who thought he was a witch has been pictured full of joy as he sets off for his first day at school.

Photographs of the little boy known as Hope broke the world's hearts last year after a charity worker found him emaciated and riddled with worms after being abandoned.

Having made a miraculous recovery, the now healthy-looking youngster set off to

embark on his education in a strapping red outfit. The then two-year-old Nigerian boy was found in a shocking state last year.

Hope was abandoned by his family because they thought he was a witch and was found in the streets by Anja Ringgren Loven, a Danish woman living in Africa, in January 2016.

Almost a year on to the day, she posted amazing before and after photographs of her holding a water bottle up to the boy's mouth.

In an emotional Facebook post, she wrote: 'On the 30th of January 2016 I went on a rescue mission with David Emmanuel Umem, Nsidibe Orok and our Nigerian team. 'A rescue mission that



went viral, and today it's exactly one year ago the world came to know a young little boy called Hope

'This week Hope will start school.' Back in January, Ms Loven found the boy after he spent eight months fending for himself and living off scraps.

She bent down and gently began feeding him and giving him water from a bottle. She then wrapped up the disorientated toddler in a blanket and took him to the nearest hospital for treatment.

When Hope reached the hospital, he was given medication to remove the worms from his stomach and daily blood transfusions to incorporate more red blood cells into his body, Ms Loven said.

And two days after the aid worker asked for the community's help with Hope's costly medical bills, she received more than \$1million in donations from around the world. Just eight weeks later, Hope was unrecognisable having gained weight and pictured smiling and

playing with other children.

Ms Loven is the founder of African Children's Aid Education and Development Foundation, which she created three years ago to help children who have been labelled witches and therefore neglected or even killed by the members of their community.

'Thousands of children are being accused of being witches and we've both seen torture of children, dead children and frightened children,' she wrote on Facebook, accompanying images of her feeding the young boy and appealing for donations to help pay for his medical bills in January.

'With all the money, we can, besides giving Hope the very best treatment, now also build a doctor clinic on the new land and save many more children out of torture.' she said two months after his rescue. Ms Loven runs a children's centre where the youngsters she saves live and receives medical care, food and schooling.

She and her husband, David



Emmanuel Umem, began building their own orphanage in late January last year. They regularly share posts of their progress on social media and have garnered a huge following.





Why does India HATE the help ?

When 180 million people live in poverty, why is India's PM waging a war against NGOs claiming to help those in need?

the country. If present popularity is anything to go by, it is looking increasingly likely that he will be re-elected in 2019.

Although in the years since his election there have been flashes of the 'Hindu supremacism' and the rising tide of sectarian hatred promised by swathes of the western media, no single incident has been so sufficiently alarming as to deter a leader like Prime Minister Theresa May from visiting India cap-in-hand during the first round of Britain's trade talks post-Brexit.

However, in Modi's dealing with NGOs it would appear that we catch a glimpse of the leader who, it was argued by the

Guardian, would struggle to find a balance in his character between political pragmatism and 'the extremist ideology with which he has been associated since he was a young man'. Why hate the help?

Despite all the good NGOs do in quite varied fields ranging from direct disaster relief (seen during the 2015 Chennai floods) to instances of children born with HIV denied an education - the BJP's hatred for NGOs can be loosely broken down into a number of quite obvious reasons.

Firstly, the dissent from well-oiled self-funded PR machines with a human or environmental cause is believed to be curtailing

India's staggering economic growth.

Indeed the leaked intelligence report in 2015 claimed that groups like Greenpeace were damaging the country's economy by campaigning against key development projects.

This in turn has led to the government pursuing bureaucratic solutions to solve human problems with the use of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act withdrawing licenses so the NGOs cannot receive overseas donations, effectively strangling them.

As we've seen recently, the NGOs cannot appeal the withdrawal, nor is there a means to seek an explanation.

Secondly, there are over two million NGOs in India, and many of them don't really do what they say on the tin. Corruption is rife. The large sums of money being thrown around, the lack of transparency and accountability as to where this money is being used has led to a great deal of mistrust. So for every highly-efficient, globally-known NGO helping those in need, there are a number of NGOs whose operations are less transparent, and whose aims fall around the collection and spending of others people's money. But even so, why hate the help? It's still not obvious why a leader elected to look after the poorest, most vulnerable people would choose to sever this lifeline.

(Agencies) In his first two years in office we have seen much of Prime Minister Modi the statesman, charming (and enthusiastically hugging) the various world and industry leaders to arrive on India's shores.

Internally he boasts a staggering 69% approval rating and his hastily arranged demonetisation measures seem

to have actually boosted his popularity, despite the massive upheaval they've caused.

Added to his so-called 'surgical strike' against alleged Pakistani-backed militants on the de facto India-Pakistan border, Modi has made for himself a fully portable and powerful election hammer to help party members pound out the BJP ethos in poll-bound states across

UP elections : Sidelined Varun Gandhi, MM Joshi Back as BJP's Star Campaigners

(Agencies) The BJP on Thursday included Sultanpur MP Varun Gandhi and BJP veteran Murli Manohar Joshi in the party's list of star campaigners for the third and fourth phases of polling in Uttar Pradesh.

Gandhi, a two-time young MP, has been out of favour with the party leadership, but his influence in seats going to poll in subsequent phases forced the party to bring him back for campaigning.

Hardline leader Vinay Katiyar, too, is back as star campaigner but senior leader LK Advani remains missing.

The saffron party ignored both Gandhi and Joshi in its list of campaigners for the first two phases in



the politically crucial state. While Joshi has been marginalised in the party, other backward leaders have received prominence Katiyar under the present leadership. Joshi and Katiyar were prominent faces of the movement for the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya,

an issue which figured in the party's poll manifesto released in Lucknow.

The BJP has tried to give a Hindutva overtone to its campaign, also promising to redress the problems of Hindu families who have migrated out of certain districts in western UP. "We have included certain names from the area, which will go to poll in third and fourth phases. Leaders from western

UP who were in the first list were dropped," a BJP general secretary said. Uttar Pradesh will see seven-phased elections between February 11 and March 8. The third phase will be held on February 19 and the fourth on February 27.



WINZONE

REALTY INC.

Baldev Singh

146-20 34 av. Flushing NY 11354

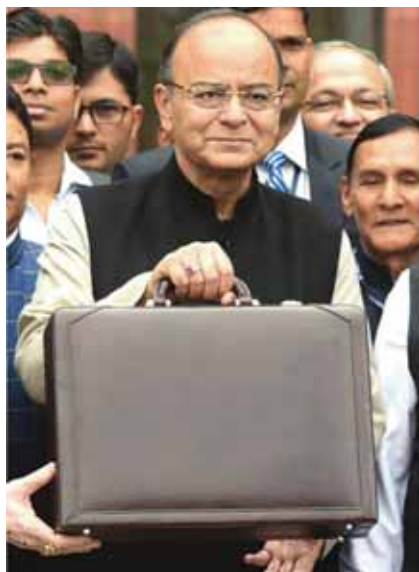
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Associate Broker/Notary Public

Arun Jaitley Says Budget 2017 meant to help the vulnerable not the affluent



(Agencies) Finance minister Arun Jaitley said on Wednesday the philosophy behind his budget is to spend more on identified success stories and carrying on with the government's campaign against black money, hours after unveiling measures to assure the country that the impact of demonetisation would wear off soon.

Jaitley told Hindustan Times the drive to scrap high-value banknotes laid the groundwork for the lowering of interest rates and propelled the lending capacity of banks. He also said the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was taking steps to ensure incentives for those who entered the tax net. Here are excerpts from the interview with the finance minister:

Q) Electoral bond and streamlining of political funding is one of the big announcements in this budget. How do you foresee this measure helping in cleaning up the present system?

When I was the law minister, I conceived a scheme where people donated to a political party in cheque; there is 100 % rebate to donor and tax exemption to parties. Pranab babu (Pranab Mukherjee) improved it, allowing people to pay it to a trust and then to party, but it has not worked perfectly. All donors that we spoke to said they hate to pay in cash but the identity should be concealed. We have to create a new system. So we have

created a new scheme. Encapsulating the sentiments of donors and the government's determination to clean up the funding process, the electoral bond scheme will help conceal the identity, at the same time the donor pays by cheque and parties get the payment in white in a previously operated account so that election commission can keep a track. Like the Obama campaign, rather than taking donations from a handful, let a million people pay digitally.

Q) Do you think the political parties are prepared for this?

Parties would love it. A large part of spending by political parties nowadays is through cheques. They have to maintain an office, pay salaries, advertisements, hiring aircraft and choppers; all these involve white money. However, for this scheme to truly succeed, it will also have to involve mass digital collections.

Q) Do you think the relief on personal taxation may have fallen short of people's expectations?

Tax net has to be expanded, not shrunk. The vulnerable have to be helped, not so much the affluent. All the measures we are taking, we have to make sure that we provide a great incentive for the people to enter the tax net. If the people declaring in the first bracket realise that by paying nominal tax and half-a-page of filing and no scrutiny in the first year can create capital, it's a great incentive. Also,

coupled with the pressure from the government to come clean, especially after demonetization, this is a great opportunity.

The larger philosophy of the tax scheme is the following: the Goods and Services Tax (GST) will make cash generation difficult. The Rs 3 lakh limit on payment by cash we have put along with PAN card limits on unaccounted expenditure de-incentivises the use of cash. Large deposits during demonetisation had removed the veil of anonymity on cash holders, so for the tax payer, it is better to enter the tax net. Simplification of tax filings and a nominal tax advantage to the first bracket will also go to the Rs 5 lakh and Rs 10 lakh category.

The peculiarity of this budget is that after demonetization – and it has affected the economy marginally -- nobody pays more and everyone gets tax advantage, except those with incomes in the range of Rs 50 lakh- RS 1 crore range.

You have set an ambitious target for personal income tax collections, but same is somewhat conservative for corporate taxes. Why?

I have brought down the tax rate for companies with Rs 50 crore turnover. In fact, 96% of the companies fall in this category. I am also incentivising firms to become companies and pay less. What this means is some revenue will be foregone in the immediate context, but there will be more transparency of accounting and regulatory filings with the Registrar of Companies.

Q) You are forgoing about Rs 20,000 crore in direct taxes. How do you plan to make up for this?

My direct tax collection has grown at 17% consistently in last two years because of the government's efforts to bring more people under the tax net and better revenue collection. This year, my projection is 12% growth. I will cover up on

that count.

Q) The budget is silent on gains from demonetisation. Can you tell us how has it benefitted the economy?

The banks' lending capacity went up -- that is because of demonetisation. The lower interest rates are due to it.

Q) But demonetisation has adversely impacted the informal credit system, how do you address that challenge?

We have refurbished credit with rural cooperatives.... Entry of payment banks will revolutionise credit systems.

Except increasing the tax exemption limits of provisioning for Non-Performing Assets (NPA), the subject did not get as much attention it deserves. What do you have to say to that?

Raising the exemption level will benefit the banks only marginally. It gives some relief in their balance sheet. The recapitalisation of banks is going as planned. We have made rules tougher for those who flee countries by defaulting. This will ensure more compliance. Listing and trading of security receipts issued by a securitisation company or a reconstruction company will be permitted in Sebi registered stock exchanges. This will enlarge capital flow into the securitisation industry and will particularly be helpful to deal with bank NPA.

Q) How much of a difference did Donald Trump's protectionist policies and the state assembly elections bring to the budget?

Not too many. Except one or two tax reforms, which we can revisit during the course of time, nothing really.

Q) What is in there for the voters in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh and Punjab?

Farmers and traders are beneficiary of this budget. There are no regressive taxes, rural credit has been reinforced. They will benefit from the overall

economic growth.

Q) There was a lot of focus on the Universal Basic Income, but no mention in the budget. Where are you on this?

Our country suffers from the lack of mature political debate. Politics has to mature to realise that direct transfer to a focused beneficiary is a better alternative to scattered and untargeted subsidies. Rich are getting those subsidies that they don't deserve... we could actually channelise it to the needy. In the Economic Survey, we have floated a very good idea and hope the political parties rise above politics for the larger good of the poor.

Q) What is the benefit of listing some of these Public Sector Enterprises (PSE) listed in stock exchange? How does the government stand to gain from it?

Firstly, the PSEs gain. Their compliance level goes up. Mandatorily, 26% has to be held by public, so that money comes to the government. So this is in a way strategic disinvestment.

Q) What is the larger philosophy of the budget?

First of all, spend more on identified success stories. Like rural roads, Bima Yojana, infrastructure projects, irrigation projects, rural electrification, highways, rural and social sectors. Secondly, carry on with campaign against black money and bring more people into the tax net.

Q) Would you count MNREGA on that list?

Under the present circumstances, yes. But you have not really increased the budget allocation. It is almost flat. If you look at last year's revised estimates, it is Rs 47,499 crore. You have only increased it by 550 crore.

I have not been dogmatic about it. I have increased the allocation in the previous financial year and I will increase it, if need be.

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KingFISHING for more money!

Did Vijay Mallya 'hobnob' with UPA Government bureaucrats over bank loans for ailing airline?

(Agencies) A top bureaucrat under the UPA Government is alleged to have helped tycoon Vijay Mallya to secure bank loans to save his ailing Kingfisher Airlines.

The allegations were unearthed in series of emails written by the fugitive businessman and accessed exclusively by India Today TV.

Amitabh Verma, a joint banking secretary, is alleged to have 'mediated' between Mallya, the Congress-led government, and various banks to push for a potential bailout package for Mallya's failing Kingfisher Airline. In February 2009, the flamboyant founder of what is now a failed airliner wrote to his then CFO Ravi Nedungadi, insisting the government had assured full support to Kingfisher.

A meeting with the then banking secretary and the chiefs of the SBI and PNB

would be held the same month, he wrote.

'I am pleased to inform you that following my presentation, the finance minister has approved, in principle, the comprehensive financial restructuring package requested,' read Mallya's email dated February 18, 2009.

'He has advised the chief economic advisor, in the presence of Mr Pawar and myself, that (the) government will support Kingfisher and he has convened a meeting with the secretary banking and the chairman of SBI and PNB on February 25 and 26 in Delhi,' the email added. Another note to Nedungadi, accessed by India Today TV, Mallya offered to speak directly with the finance minister regarding his company's request to the SBI for finances.

'Urgently advise if you

want me to speak to the finance minister regarding the detailed list of banks who have given us short-term loans.

'Alternatively, I could speak to him about our application to SBI for comprehensive refinance,' he wrote.

In his third email, the billionaire bragged about spending time with Amitabh Verma.

He also claimed all public sector banks had been ordered to approve a financial package for his Kingfisher Airlines.

'I spent the evening with Amitabh Verma. He says that he can get all PSU banks to approve our package in seven days,' read his note to A Raghunathan, the CFO at the time.

'It has been done before! I need an urgent note,' Mallya asked. In another note, Mallya claimed Amitabh Verma had advised then Oriental Bank of Commerce executive director Rathnakar Hegde to lend Rs 200 crore to his company.

'At the Kingfisher Calendar launch yesterday, Amitabh Verma (Joint Secretary, Banking) brought Rat(h)nakar Hegde (Executive Director, OBC Bank) to me and said that he has told OBC to give Kingfisher Rs 200 cr. Amitabh repeated (in Ratnakar's presence) that we should talk to him and put in an application for Rs 200 cr which would get approved,' the email read.

'Between both of you, please put in the application urgently.'

In a letter in March 2013, Mallya sought then finance minister P Chidambaram's intervention in securing a loan from the State Bank of India.

The bank had already rejected the UB Group's request, he said. 'Mr Shyamal Acharya, Dy MD, SBI, clearly stated that SBI would not cooperate in any way with the UB Group.

He refused the issue of an NOC to United Spirits Limited. Further, he stated he was not interested in

any meeting.

I seek your urgent and kind intervention in facilitating a meeting with SBI,' read Mallya's letter to Chidambaram, dated March 21, 2013. A day later, Mallya emailed the UB Group's president, informing him that the SBI had finally approved fresh infusion of funds into his embattled company. After India Today TV aired the story about Mallya's emails, the BJP accused the Congress of helping Mallya escape the noose.



H-1B Visas : Create an ecosystem where entrepreneurs need not look to the west



(Agencies) The H-1B visa programme is facing the political guillotine once again. The visa programme, designed to let US firms import highly-skilled workers to temporarily fill in workforce gaps, had been under sustained attack from Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. In

keeping with Mr Trump's campaign promises, it is no surprise that an executive order to restrict H-1B visas is in the offing. The US president is not alone. Four separate anti-H visa bills have been introduced in the US Congress.

The H visa is highly

imperfect. A large number of them are used to bring in low-end software programmers just to save on labour costs which was not the original intent. The visa also gives far too much authority to the US employer who has veto over the worker's ability to apply to

become a full-time US resident. As the administrative path between the temporary worker's visa and the green card is unclear, 1.5 million, mostly Indian, workers live in an immigration limbo today.

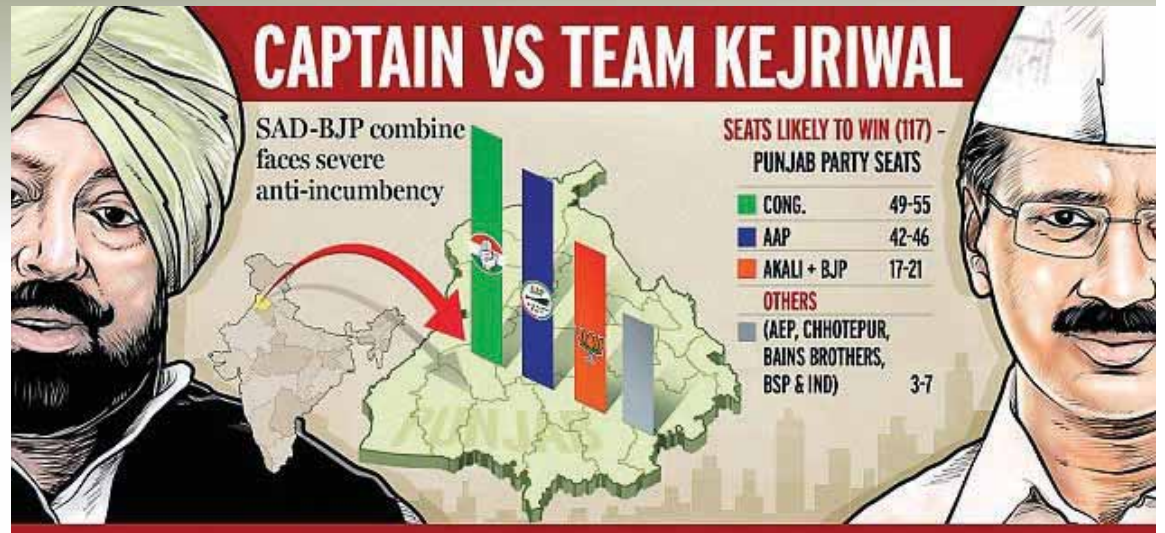
The H visas for tech workers have separated into two levels. One set are used by mainly Indian outsourcing firms to carry out lower-end programming jobs. Another set is for better-paid project work for big US tech firms. Mr Trump's victory is being read by US politicians as evidence of electoral anger over the first variety of H visas, which is what both Mr Trump and the US Congress are

targeting. The creamy layer of H visas will survive because of the lobbying power of Silicon Valley. There is probably little India can do about this legislative shift.

The question New Delhi should ask is what can it do to prevent this H visa roller-coaster in future. Many countries have negotiated trade deals with the US, which incorporate a fixed H visa quota. Unfortunately, this will almost certainly be beyond the protectionist mindset of India's commerce ministry. New Delhi should be working with Washington to create a new variety of temporary work visa that reduces the scope for abuse and offers a clear path towards legal residency — if only as

a favour to the Indian workers involved. The Indian infotech firms should support this as there is evidence that body-shopping is a dying business model. In the meantime, the government should consider how to entice more highly-skilled Indians to give up on their American dream and return home. Surveys indicate many of these migrants are in two minds. But this requires India to create a more convivial business environment. Indian-Americans are among the most entrepreneurial communities in the world, but need an ecosystem to flourish. Otherwise, waiting out the Trump administration is still a better option for them.

Bhindranwale trinkets 'selling well' as Punjab's political parties flirt with pro-Khalistan groups



now - controlled by the Badals. Khalistani objects, slogans and the 2003 co-option of the dead militant figure both by moderates like the SAD and radicals aside, supporters of a separate Sikh homeland lost popular support long back in Punjab. Since the mid-1990s, Khalistan has never been a rallying point in state elections.

But mainstream political parties of Punjab have routinely been accused of dabbling with separatists.

The approach to the 2017 elections is no different.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, whose Aam Aadmi Party is debuting in Punjab's Assembly elections, is facing the same accusations of courting pro-Khalistan elements among Sikhs living abroad.

In past elections, the Badals and Capt Amarinder Singh have hurled similar allegations and counter-allegations at each other. At present, there are mainly two Khalistan advocacy groups in the state. One is the Dal Khalsa that pledges no allegiance to the Indian Constitution. The other is

Simranjit Singh Mann's Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar), which is struggling in electoral politics for over years now. Unlike SAD (Amritsar), the Dal Khalsa does not participate in state or national polls. 'We boycott elections under Indian dispensation,' said Kanwarpal Singh, the group's spokesman. 'We are a votary of an independent, sovereign Punjab. We want Sikhs to be given the right of self-determination,' he said, insisting that his group has no truck, covert or overt, with any political party.

(Agencies) As the Punjab polls near, India's mainstream political parties are again courting those connected to the state's militant past.

On the streets of the Sikh heartland, small retail stores have openly started selling T-shirts with the face of slain militant leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale printed on their front.

Also available at stalls are calendars bearing pictures of Sikh extremists killed in security operations of the 1980s and 1990s.

According to the sellers, Bhindranwale souvenirs are a hit with customers.

'There is a rising demand for posters, T-shirts and photos of kharkus (extremists). That is why we sell them,' said a shopkeeper in Amritsar, who requested not to be named.

Banned in the 1980s, memorabilia of Punjab's militancy first resurfaced in the state almost a decade-and-a-half ago. In 2003, a year after Shiromani Akali Dal leader Parkash Singh Badal lost power to Capt Amarinder Singh, Bhindranwale was declared a martyr by the Akal Takht - the highest seat of the Sikh temporal authority in Amritsar.

The head of the Akal Takht is an appointee of the SGPC, which was then - and is even

10 FACTORS THAT DOMINATE PUNJAB ELECTORAL BATTLE

AN INDIA TODAY ANALYSIS OF THE GROUND SITUATION IN PUNJAB AS IT GOES TO POLLS REVEALS THE MASSIVE INCUMBENCY FACTOR AND VOTERS' DISAPPOINTMENT OVER REGULAR DESECRATION OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS, DRUG ABUSE, LAW AND ORDER AND CORRUPTION. HOWEVER, WILL IT BENEFIT NEW ENTRANT AAP OR WILL THE DIVISION OF VOTES BETWEEN KEJRIWAL AND AMARINDER LEAD TO ANOTHER TERM FOR THE AKALI-BJP GOVT? A WIN IN PUNJAB WILL GIVE AAP A MASSIVE SHOT IN THE ARM FOR ITS NATIONAL AMBITIONS.

- 1. AAP SURGE IN MALWA REGION**
Malwa is the biggest region in Punjab with 99 seats in the 117-seat assembly. Voters in Malwa are hugely impressed with Arvind Kejriwal and AAP, which is expected to do well in this region. The big question though is how well. Will it be a Delhi-style clean sweep or will the gains be split with the Congress? Bathinda and Patiala regions of the Badals and Amarinder Singh. Voters are upset with the Akalis and AAP is likely to do well in Akali areas. But it will be important to see whether the Congress is able to hold on to its fort.
- 2. LIMITED AAP INFLUENCE**
Outside Malwa, AAP doesn't enjoy the same support. A tour around Amritsar, Ferozpur and Tarn Taran in Majha region indicated most voters would go for Congress. The 'Yard' is strong in Doaba region too (Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala).
- 3. DABBING WITH RADICALS**
Radicals on both sides of the ideological divide - extreme left and extreme right - are supporting Kejriwal. Pro-Khalistan elements feel Akalis have gone soft on their original panthaw agenda and they want to back the AAP to teach Akalis a lesson. To bolster votes, Kejriwal is taking support of hardliners.
- 4. KEJRIWAL THE MASTER MAGICIAN**
One can argue Kejriwal has not been able to live up to many of his promises. AAP has lost a lot of its initial appeal, but for the have-nots of Punjab, Kejriwal is a messiah. Kejriwal talks about how he's so small a man to make miracles happen. Voters look upon him with high hopes. Poor are happy he reduced power and water tariffs.
- 5. CAPTAIN TO THE RESCUE**
Despite charges of being aloof and acting like a king, Amarinder Singh enjoys goodwill among voters. He's the only thing standing between AAP sweep and a Congress comeback. If Congress manages to pull off a win, it will be in great part due to him. He may not be an eloquent speaker as Sidhu or Bhupinder Mann, but his stand on Sikh issues over the years has earned him a lot of goodwill.
- 6. BADALSON A STICKY WICKET**
Sukhbir Badal does have a few projects to his credit. The tourist plaza at Golden Temple is a good one. However, charges of corruption, drug running and poor law and order make it a slippery slope for Badals. Most voters opine he is a well-meaning person but they are upset with the people he is surrounded with. Badals make no effort to hide their wealth, much of it built under their reign. The ostentatious display of wealth at a time voters are struggling to make ends meet, is infuriating voters.
- 7. SIDHU A SPENT FORCE**
Cricketer-turned-politician Navtej Sidhu seems to have overplayed his hand in Punjab. Sidhu enjoys goodwill around Amritsar, despite charges by his opponents that he spends more time on TV than on performing his duties as a leader. Sidhu is an orator par excellence. He may be able to swing a few seats in the state but he's far from the revolutionary force that he thinks he is.
- 8. BJP RESIGNED TO FATE**
BJP is a marginal force in Punjab. Party leaders have read the writing on the wall and are trying hard to keep a low profile so as not to make this election a prestige issue. BJP believes the real test is UP, and Punjab is essentially a referendum on the performance of the Akal govt.
- 9. DRUGS ARE A REAL PROBLEM**
Actual addiction figures may be lower than what Badal opponents claim, but the drug menace is doing more damage to the Badals than any other issue.
- 10. FUTURE OF INDIAN POLITICS**
Punjab is a relatively small state in the national context. The assembly election in UP has captured greater mind space. However, if AAP wins Punjab, the result can potentially alter the course of Indian politics with the party transforming into a major force in national politics. Delhi is at least a half state. In the Capital, Kejriwal's friends are best. However, in Punjab, all levers of governance will be in the hands of the winner. This would give AAP a chance to prove its real mettle.



The children of the kiln

Boys and girls work their fingers to the bone toiling for pennies to make bricks in Nepal

(News Agencies) Bleak photographs have revealed Nepal's children of the kiln - the boys and girls tasked with working their fingers to the bone to produce the country's bricks.

As Nepalese cities continue to grow and the nation struggles to recover from two earthquakes in 2015, the demand for bricks is higher than ever and kiln owners are capitalising on cheap labour to line their pockets.

Children as young as eight are being subjected to back-breaking, 14-hour days and the children are not even paid for their toil, with their parents picking up their measly pay cheques. Photographer Jan Moeller Hansen documented the conditions of the brick kilns in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal between 2013 and 2016 while he lived and worked in the area.

Jan estimates between 150,000 and 175,000 people are employed in brick kilns across Nepal, while 200 reside in Kathmandu Valley.

The photographer said: 'The workers

are poor and often need to borrow money with really high interest rates.

'This ties them into a system of loans and debt with the brick kiln owners and forces them to work in the kilns for years. No monthly salaries are paid.' Often the workers are enumerated at the end of the season, which means they have to stay on until the end of the season.

'A labourer earns a few dollars for a 12 to 14 hour working day. Sometimes the entire family is paid just one sum after the season.

'The children do not know what they earn since the father will get the payment for the work of the entire family.'

Workers spend the dry season between November and April working in the brick kilns, after the monsoon season and religious festivals of Dashawn and Tihar they return to live at the kilns for another lengthy season. According to Jan, the kiln workers are typically from the ethnic groups living in the surrounding hilly districts and

plains of Nepal - workers range from 8 to 50-years-old.

Moeller said: 'Some of the children, who have been assigned work in the brick kilns through middlemen, have also learnt to lie about their age.

'They will tell you that they are above 16 years of age, but it's often a lie.

'I find it disturbing to see young women and children living and working under such conditions.

'Why can't the authorities ensure that the brick industry starts to treat the workers in a fair and respectable manner?' 'I also saw the mistreatment of donkeys - they also work hard and are not allowed to recover and are poorly fed,' Jan said.

While the photographer understands the necessity of Nepal's brick kilns, he hopes that his work will encourage more people to call for safer work conditions.

Although some kilns have been provided with more modern and less pollutive technologies, enforcement of

regulations is sparse and the workers have little to no opportunity to voice their grievances.



Anti Terrorism Squad arrest Indian 'spies' passing info on the movement of troops in Kashmir to Pakistan

(News Agencies) Arrests made by the Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) of UP police last week have revealed how 'spies' allegedly working at a coaching centre in the Capital passed on sensitive military information on the strength, deployment and movement of troops in Kashmir to Pakistan.

Police had raided a prominent engineering coaching centre in Punjabi Bagh and arrested three people on the charges of spying and having links with Pakistani spy agency Inter Service Intelligence (ISI).

Police said that the accused ran illegal telephone exchanges from inside the institute to conduct espionage. Police said eight more suspects were rounded up for ISI links before the arrests.

Gulshan Kumar Sain, who ran the telephone exchange, was working as the technical head at the institute. The other two accused were identified as Shyam Babu and Sivendra Mishra, both from Lucknow. Police said they swooped

down on the racket after army officials based in J&K alerted them about suspicious calls.

'They claimed about receiving suspicious calls from 'senior defense officers' asking of strength, deployments and movement of troops in particular places,' said Asim Arun, IG and ATS chief, Uttar Pradesh.

The ATS verified the call details and found they originated from Punjabi Bagh. During interrogation, Sain told cops that he had been operating six telephone exchanges at different locations in Delhi for the last one year. ATS recovered 78 sim cards, six sim boxes, mobile phones and laptops during the raid. Arun, who led the raid, said the accused used a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to route calls so they could not be traced.

The ATS has contacted the telecom ministry to understand how the racket did call 'spoofing' and SIM box-aided call transfers.

The callers based in Pakistan and

Bangladesh made calls via the internet on the parallel exchanges through this technology.

These exchanges were also being used by ISI to call Army officers to extract information.

'The accused have definite links with ISI as per our preliminary investigation,' Arun said.

Besides ISI, Sain also has connections in Canada, Nepal, Afganistan, Kuwait and other gulf countries and he used to contact handlers in these countries through telephone exchanges, said officials. Police said he spent five years in Afghanistan and worked for a US company engaged in supplying materials to customers through contractors. He was carrying out 'undesirable activities' in Afghanistan too, the cops said. On Monday, the ATS has

raided the house of Sain in Mehrauli and seized a computer, CPU and hard disk.

'During analysis of Punjabi Bagh



server, we got specific inputs about fake telephone exchange centers being run in other cities as well,' Arun said. The ATS is now trying to figure out how many calls they have made through these six telephone exchanges and have any alleged links with Uri or Pathankot terror attack.

Indian Budget 2017: Analysis Of Intent And Implementation Reveals A Yawning Gap

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley presented fourth budget of NDA regime and middle class had lot of expectations amid shadow of demonetisation. This budget was advanced by a month and there were apprehensions that government may come out with populist schemes which may influence the upcoming state elections.

Economic survey was presented a day before budget proposals came out which provided an overarching view of the current economic scenario. There is no doubt that government has fared good in terms of bringing transparency and reducing corruption but a good intent needs to be backed by implementation also. Policies are effective only when they are implemented otherwise they would merely mean a written document without going into any direction.

Economic survey brings out some of the deficiencies which needs to be addressed on priority. Budget proposals are meant to be more than change in income tax rates and we will see whether any step has been taken by the finance minister to address the signals coming out of survey. At a time when government should have mopped up the investment to boost the growth and create more jobs, it was noted that capital expenditure has been decreased in the current fiscal. Share of

capital expenditure in the overall government expenditure declined from 14.13% in FY 2015-16 to 13.89% in FY 2016-17 (Source- Expenditure details in 2017 budget). Economic survey admits the fact that private investment has fall significantly and public investment is insufficient to arrest the fall in overall investment (para 4.35).

For a perspective it may be noted that real loan growth has become negative for both MSME and Corporates (para 4.39 of economic survey) which means investors are reluctant in borrowing in the money and this statistics corroborates the downfall in investment. It is good that FDI is increasing but despite of foreign investment coming in, the overall investment is going down. FM has announced to abolish Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) to further ease the FDI policy.

Perhaps finance minister has read the warning signals coming out of survey and he has increased the allocation for infra sector by ~80% as compared to previous year. However implementation of key initiatives needs to be monitored closely and it can be demonstrated by way of an example relating to road construction for which the achievement is much below the target. We continuously talk about improving the infrastructure and the necessity can

be understood from the fact that in India logistics cost is \$7 per km for road transport while it is \$2.5 in China, \$3 in Sri Lanka and \$3.9 in Bangladesh. This concentration of bad loan is an issue which needs to be addressed on priority otherwise the problem will aggravate further. Poor performance of banks is already affecting the investment mobilization and recovery of advances needs to be accelerated.

Budget proposal include allocation of Rs. 10,000 crores towards recapitalization of banks which is app. 40% of the previous year and this amount is insufficient. There is one positive announcement relating to Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) and the government has announced Listing and trading of security receipts issued by a securitisation company or a reconstruction company (100% FDI already permitted in this sector).

However in case of mounting NPAs also though there is intent of the government to tackle this issue and it has passed legislations like "Insolvency And Bankruptcy Code, 2016" to expedite the recovery but again it will be the implementation of such law to ensure the effectiveness. FM

announced to bring new legislation which will allow agencies to confiscate domestic assets of economic offenders, who flee the country. A sector wise analysis shows that "Make in India" which is dream project of PM Modi has taken a hit and industrial growth has come down in the current fiscal (it may be temporary due to short term economic disruptions). However there is a good thing that primary sector (agriculture, forestry etc.) has shown growth in the current fiscal. There are other budget proposals also like disinvestment which needs to be relooked because if the disinvestment proceeds are used by the government to meet the revenue expenditure which are unproductive then it would be like killing a goat for one good meal. As a country we are discussing to move towards securing basic income for every individual (Universal Basic Income) but DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) which is the very basis of any such scheme is not yet implemented in all areas and therefore a good intent has to be followed by implementation also. So far the finance minister has managed the economic situation very well but it's time to read the warning signals and act before it's too late.

Latest On H-1B Visas *India sends feedback to Team Trump*

Here is your 10-point guide to this big story:

1) President Donald Trump's executive order is part of a larger "immigration reform effort", his aides have said, to make it tougher for foreign workers to get H-1B visas. Within 90 days of the signing of the executive order (expected this week), the government would review all regulations that allow foreign nationals to work in the US and determine which of those regulations violate immigration laws or are not in the national interest of America.

2) Under the new rules proposed by Mr Trump, tech giants would have to show that they tried to prioritize hiring American citizens. If they hire foreign employees, it would have to be for more senior and expensive positions than is currently the norm.

3) "Our country's immigration policies should be designed and implemented to serve, first and foremost, the US national interest," Mr Trump's draft proposal reads, according to a copy reviewed by Bloomberg. "Visa programs for foreign workers ... should be administered in a manner that protects the civil rights of American workers and current lawful residents, and that prioritizes the protection of American workers - our forgotten working people - and the jobs they hold."

4) H-1B visas are intended for foreign nationals in "specialty" occupations that generally require higher education in fields and are given to professionals like scientists, engineers or computer programmers. The government awards 65,000 every year.

5) More than 60 percent of the US employees of Infosys are H-1B holders, and the company

in its annual report has cited an increase in visa costs as among factors that could hurt its profitability.

6) Spouses of those on H-1B visas would not have the right to work in the US under the new rules.

7) H-1B visas were meant to help companies hire from abroad if they couldn't recruit suitable

local talent. But the program has been misused, say critics, to hire cheaper foreign workers, depriving Americans of jobs.

8) The majority of the visas are awarded to outsourcing firms, sparking criticism by skeptics that say those firms use the visas to fill lower-level information technology jobs- depriving Americans of jobs, says the

Trump administration.

9) Critics also say the lottery system benefits outsourcing firms that flood the system with mass applications.

10) Some lawsuits by American workers have alleged that they were asked to train H-1B holders to do their jobs before being laid off themselves.

Credit Suisse Agrees to Pay \$5.28 Billion in Connection with its Sale of Residential Mortgage-Backed Securities

representations about residential mortgage-backed securities, which resulted in the loss of billions of dollars of wealth and took a painful toll on the lives of ordinary Americans. Under the terms of this settlement, Credit Suisse will pay \$2.48 billion as a fine for its conduct. And Credit Suisse has pledged \$2.8 billion in relief to struggling homeowners, borrowers, and communities affected by the bank's lending practices. These sums reflect the huge breach of public trust committed by financial institutions like Credit Suisse." "Credit Suisse claimed its mortgage backed securities were sound, but in the settlement announced today the bank concedes that it knew it was peddling investments containing loans that were likely to fail," said Principal Deputy Associate Attorney Gen-

eral Bill Baer. "That behavior is unacceptable. Today's \$5.3 billion resolution is another step towards holding financial institutions accountable for misleading investors and the American public." "Resolutions like the one announced today confirm that the financial institutions that engaged in conduct that jeopardized the nation's fiscal security will be held accountable," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Benjamin C. Mizer, head of the Justice Department's Civil Division. "This is another step in the Department's continuing effort to redress behavior that contributed to the Great Recession." "Credit Suisse's mortgage misconduct hurt people, including in Colorado," said Acting United States Attorney for the District of Colorado Bob Troyer. "Unscrupulous lenders knew they could

get away with shoddy underwriting when making mortgage loans, because they knew Credit Suisse would buy those defective mortgage loans and put them into securities. When those mortgages went into foreclosure, many people got hurt: families lost their homes, communities were blighted by empty houses, and investors who had put their trust in Credit Suisse's supposedly safe securities suffered huge losses. Our office led this investigation into Credit Suisse to protect homeowners, communities, and investors across the country, including here in Colorado. Credit Suisse is paying a hefty penalty and acknowledging its misconduct, but that is not all. Years after the Great Recession, many families still struggle to afford a home, so we also crafted an agreement to bring needed

housing relief to such families, including specifically in Colorado." Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kevin Traskos, Hetal J. Doshi, Shiwon Choe, Ian J. Kellogg, Lila M. Bateman, and J. Chris Larson of the District of Colorado investigated Credit Suisse's conduct in connection with RMBS, with the support of the Federal Housing Finance Agency's Office of the Inspector General (FHFA-OIG). "Credit Suisse knowingly put investors at risk, and the losses caused by its irresponsible behavior deeply affected not only financial institutions such as the Federal Home Loan Banks, but also taxpayers, and contributed significantly to the financial crisis," said Special Agent in Charge Catherine Huber of the Federal Housing Finance Agency-Office of Inspector General's (FHFA-OIG) Midwest Region.

The Politicization of Everything Is no part of American life safe from politics in the Age of Trump?

All politics is local," was famously Tip O'Neill's favorite saying. Today, in the Age of Trump, all is politics.

Tired of the election and our latest First 100 Days already? Too bad. Good luck trying to disengage. Thanks to social media, and to the nature of our new president and his administration, politics is suddenly with us always, in every aspect of our lives, including wherever we may look for diversion. I'm not just talking about trying to evade your angry, Donald Trump-loving/hating relatives and friends. Starting the day after the election, I would estimate that at least 90 percent of the conversations I have had with people have been primarily about Trump. Perfect strangers, whom I've talked to on matters having nothing at all to do with politics, brought up how upset or shocked they are about the election. Receptionists and secretaries, sales clerks and repair people all have invoked the new president, unbidden.

It's only gotten worse since Trump took office. It seems nearly every big company has asserted a position on his immigration executive order—Airbnb, Apple, Nike, Lyft, Starbucks, Uber, to name just a few—as have colleges and universities. Even local cafés and bookstores are taking stands with storefront signs and sandwich boards. After-dinner cordials are spoiled by debates over the constitutionality of Trump's latest move. Peaceful brunches devolve into speculations on what our new president will do next. (That is, when Sunday brunch doesn't give way to actual protests; as one clever sign-holder outside the Trump Hotel in Washington noted over the weekend, "Protest is the new brunch.") Macbeth may murder sleep, but The Donald kills conversation.

Trust me, I understand that it is Trump himself, and his actions so far in office, that are responsible for the pervasive political confusion, fear and outrage many Americans are now experiencing. But I have never seen anything like this before, and I don't know if anyone else has in our history.

Surely, the 1860 presidential

race, after which half the country seceded, must have been the object of some continuing consternation. Maybe the 1932 race as well, at the nadir of the Great Depression, which was followed by a very serious attempt on the life of the president-elect, or the down-to-the-wire run in 1960. Maybe the triumph of Thomas Jefferson and his Republican-Democrats in the bruising election of 1800, a time when political dissidents were being sentenced to jail for bad-mouthing the president, and pamphleteers from both sides were spreading their own versions of fake news.

Yet I don't know that any of those races intruded into the quotidian pursuit of happiness the way that the 2016 race and the first days of the Trump administration have, if only because there did not exist the sort of universal, ubiquitous, hyper-politicized communications that social media now provides. This feels like how one imagines life to be in North Korea, or maybe Benito Mussolini's Italy, or some other national cult of personality. Trump's claim that his campaign was responsible for lower NFL ratings this fall may actually be more than another of his tall tales. Politics is now everywhere, all the time.

"We need the principled press to hold power to account, to call them on the carpet for every offense," Meryl Streep said at the Golden Globes awards ceremony earlier this month, turning yet another Hollywood acceptance speech into a (pretty good) civics lesson. "That's why our founders enshrined the press and its freedoms in our constitution."

The Screen Actors' Guild awards this past Sunday featured speech after speech in reaction to the Trump administration's sudden ban on refugees from selected Muslim-majority countries. Many of these were general, good-natured and even funny pleas that we continue to "love each other" or "keep telling stories that show what unites us is stronger than the forces that divide us." But a more rooted, and thoughtful, protest came

from Julia Louis-Dreyfus, who talked of how her father—a Jewish French businessman who fled religious persecution in Nazi-occupied France, and took refuge in the United States. "Because I love this country, I am horrified by its blemishes," Louis-Dreyfus said. "And this immigrant ban is a blemish, and it is un-American." Hollywood is traditional liberal territory, of course, but it is rare for stars' admonishments to be so frequent, and so somber.

It's not just the movies. Trump trolling has broken out in all sorts of unexpected areas. The day after his swearing-in, with Trump already on a rampage disputing the size of his inaugural crowd, the Jumbotron for the Dallas Stars—a hockey team, in Dallas, Texas—flashed the message, "TONIGHT'S ATTENDANCE 1.5 MILLION," a joking nod to Trump's specious claim that as many people had attended the inauguration.

The next day, it was the turn of ... the dictionary. Kellyanne Conway, the perkier presidential adviser since Pierre Salinger, had described the White House press secretary's inauguration crowd claims as "alternative facts." So the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, in its online presence, decided to tweet the definition of the word "fact"—"a piece of information presented as having an objective reality," followed by an infobit titled "Conway: 'Alternative facts': Lookups for 'fact' spiked after Kellyanne Conway described false statements as 'alternative facts.'" Is there any form of media that is not taking on Trump? Reference books, now? What's next, The Baseball Encyclopedia?

Speaking of which, arguments over the new president have even insinuated themselves into America's favorite pastime, on the brilliant and generally hilarious New York Yankees blog, "IT IS HIGH! IT IS FAR! IT IS ... caught." There, in blog posts and comment sections, Yankees fans are turning on each other, rather than uniting to bewail the shortcomings of the George Steinbrenner boychiks and general manager Brian

Cashman. "If Yankee-free Benghazi Night is all we can expect from a Donald Trump presidency, then I'm with her," one post this summer concluded. Is nothing sacred? As much as the blog tries to put a smiley face on this—a more recent headline read, "Yankee Doomsday Clock edges closer to midnight, but let's forget armageddon and ponder the lineup"—even the Evil Empire is rife with division.

What is going on?

To be certain, there is the gravely important matter of what Trump and his confederates are actually doing, and what that means for us all. So far, the new president seems to be trying to roll back almost the entire history of social progress in this country over the past 80 years, and maybe longer. And while it would be nice to switch the conversation from politics, I honestly don't know if we can just now, in the face of this threat. It's understandable that many Americans are taking his actions personally—they feel the consequences pervading their lives. When Trump's most radical, far-right adviser, Steve Bannon, can effectively order the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, as we saw over the weekend, to detain not only refugees but even legal residents of the United States, that's not just politics as usual, but something that we as a free people have to respond to. As someone with a pre-existing condition who depends on "Obamacare" for affordable health insurance, I cannot simply file away Trump's pledge to trash the Affordable Care Act. Nor can I ignore House Speaker Paul Ryan's assault on Medicare, with other entitlements certain to follow. I have been self-employed most of his life and usually pay out double in payroll taxes, so the idea of letting the Ayn Rand-loving ideologue Ryan hand my money over to his Wall Street friends is, well, aggravating. Trump and congressional Republicans have also floated a series of proposals that will accelerate climate change and besmirch much of our natural environment. I can't put that aside when I think about my nieces and nephews and

godchildren, let alone the fate of the human race.

But sure, I would occasionally like some relief from this cold reality—a good movie, a simple trip to the grocery store. After all, if even the parts of American life that unite us are politicized—even baseball and brunch—how do we hold the country together? What do we share when our most innocent pastimes are reduced to partisanship?

I fear that Trump is not about to let us keep hold of these blissful diversions. One of the reasons we are so preoccupied with the 45th president—beyond his grotesque violations of civil liberties and determination to accelerate the ruination of the planet's climate, of course—is the fact that he will not go away. Whether as a real estate developer or a television personality, the whole idea of Trump was never to let your eyes turn away. Attention must be paid. Sure, that has probably helped him, at least with his supporters, in the early days of his administration, when hopes and expectations are at their highest, and the country is most favorably inclined toward its new chief executive. But it's the nature of human beings to eventually ignore what is always there, no matter how much they love it or hate it.

"It is time for me to disappear for awhile," Franklin Roosevelt liked to tell his advisers, even when things were going well—and FDR was the most enduringly popular president in our history. What Roosevelt meant was that Americans did not want their president in their face, all the time. After some extended push to secure legislation, FDR would make sure to absent himself from the headlines and the airwaves as much as possible, often leaving Washington altogether, and generally keeping a low profile for a period of weeks or even months. He understood that a great captain wants to be seen only when it is most important, to preserve his aura of leadership for when it is needed most.

If Trump really wants to continue to command our attention, he will need to learn to step back. Even reality shows take hiatuses.

In 2017, UP's big riddle - where is Mayawati ?

The fact that Mayawati has not allowed a second generation of Dalit leaders to emerge in her own party may come back to haunt her, for they will seek opportunities elsewhere or become political entrepreneurs themselves.

Yet, given the stakes, the sense of urgency in the BSP campaign is somewhat missing.

Can one be a mass leader without being in touch with masses at all?

In that answer lies the future of Mayawati's fortunes.

It is perhaps a somewhat unfair question, since there is no doubt that Mayawati is one of India's most remarkable politicians who has risen from the ground. There is also no doubt that she has, slowly and systematically, helped build the BSP organisation - brick by brick, aiding her mentor

Kanshi Ram. On cycles in towns in west UP, in rural areas which were not connected by roads, sleeping nights in uncomfortable, even unsafe settings, Mayawati's past work among the masses - and the most deprived and oppressed of them - cannot be questioned. From 1984, ever since BSP was formed, Mayawati has been a part of what was once a transformative social movement. For close to three decades, she has been in electoral politics. The mass credentials of such a leader must be respected.

But it is also true that this avatar of Mayawati is now the past.

Today's Mayawati prefers Delhi and Lucknow, and barely visits districts when she is in opposition. Today's Mayawati does not believe in street agitations or social movements, happy at

best to take a formalistic position in Parliament if an issue concerning her constituency crops up.

But most intriguingly for a politician, today's Mayawati does not talk to too many people. She keeps in touch with a very limited set, brought to her through select intermediaries. Her communication is confined to those within her party organisation - and this makes her dependent on a very limited information pool. This also makes her prone to poor judgment. For obvious reasons, the only group that can gain access to her are businessmen willing to contribute to the party's funds.

Mayawati also seems to believe that political communication is overrated. The BSP has deeply legitimate

grievances about how the media ignores them; it is also correct in pointing to the skewed nature of ownership, representation and coverage of channels and the flaws in opinion polls. But there is a way to correct this - by relentlessly engaging with the media and feeding it news and its narrative. This is missing. This means that on core issues, the floating constituency has no clue what she thinks. Even her core voter - who did not consume media when BSP started out - is now an avid consumer of the media and misses seeing its party and leader in action. One avenue of mass contact is severely constrained.

And that is why UP's voters - many of them overwhelmingly young - do not quite know Mayawati. They have not heard her speeches in rallies which are few and far between; she is not a presence in their daily lives through television appearances; she is not a familiar, intimate presence as they move around town or the state except through the parks and statues she has built. At a time when elections are turning presidential, and the voter wants to know leaders and see and understand every facet of their lives, this invisibility and this lack of contact with the larger public sphere is a big handicap for BSP. First preference of only the base This also perhaps explains why Mayawati is the first preference only for her core voters of Jatavs - and not for any other social constituency in the state. In travels across west and east UP, even those who were willing to consider Mayawati, saw

her as their 'back up option'.

This is most clear in the case of Muslims. The BSP is trying to carve out a coalition of Dalits and Muslims. But while this may be exciting for those interested in subaltern politics, it is important to remember that this coalition is not being built on a common political platform; it is not based on a social movement or any ideological groundwork. Mayawati has rarely spoken on issues that matter to minorities. Except some engagement with self proclaimed community representatives, through her close aide Naseemuddin Siddiqui, she has not even spent time in Muslim quarters of UP's cities and villages in the run up to this election. Instead, the only way in which she hopes to build this coalition is by distributing tickets to 100 Muslim candidates. Representation is important - and perhaps the most crucial signifier of a party's commitment to that group. And for Muslims, BSP is an option today because of these tickets. But this still pales in comparison to the SP, which is their first choice - because Akhilesh is seen to speak for them, perceived to be committed to their security (despite Muzaffarnagar), and as the real 'secular' challenger to BJP. Mayawati, they remember, has been with the BJP in the past. The Muslim outreach gives us a clue to Mayawati's style. For her, politics is now distilled to arithmetic - and that is it. Have your base vote, give a ticket to a candidate from another caste or religion, expect him to bring the votes of his community, expect your loyalists to vote for the party symbol, and there you have an electoral winner. Politics, in this imagination, requires little else.

Karan Affairs: Yes, It Felt Like A Hostage Video. I Admit It

those who don't... sorry about that! I read everything and I love it! Call me a masochist, but I thrive even on the criticism.

So yes, I like the limelight, I like being in the news and I have learned to accept it, even if it's not quite on the way I have hoped for. Of course, I say this reminding myself to be careful what I wish for. I will not be this delighted the next time I have a film releasing and someone has (they so often do) a problem with it. Because no matter what I say or convince myself of, there is the kind of limelight that we can all do without. And when you're getting all the attention for a

situation that's brought you to your knees, you wonder why you ever sought it out.

I've been criticized for going on the record and people have called my statement a hostage video. Yes, I've read all that. Yes, it made me cringe. Yes, I looked like I had a gun to my head, and yes, you couldn't see it, but it felt like it was there.

I hated having to sit there and declare my "nationalism" and what should constitute it. But it also got me thinking... I know what circumstances led me to do that, I understand, and it's not like today, I can apologize for making it, because that might put me into

another kind of limelight which I do not want. Would I do it again? Probably not. I hope not. You find yourself feeling coerced and compromised in your morality, your ethics, your principles. Brought to my knees with a hostage video. And when a fellow filmmaker gets humiliated, you wonder if you have set a precedent that he is paying the price for? You hope you're wrong.

And then you realise what you should have always known: the trouble with being in the limelight all the time is it can blind you, even briefly, so you forget the darkness around it.

Pak's Action Against Hafiz Saeed To Placate Trump - And China

Mir confirms an earlier story in which Foreign Secretary Chaudhry is said to have told the security establishment that none other than the Chinese had repeatedly said that it was becoming problematic for them to defend terrorists such as Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar. Remember that the Chinese vetoed a UNSC move to indict Azhar in December, after blocking it for several months, causing an uproar in several world capitals. As for the Chinese, aiming to become World Number One - they admittedly realize it will take them a long time to close the gap with the US - the reason they want to

stay out of the limelight, along with their client state Pakistan, is because they don't want any criticism of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in which they have invested at least \$42 billion. The CPEC will cross through the eastern part of Balochistan - already the Baloch are asking what they will get out of it. The Pakistani establishment wont hesitate to put down the hint of a simmer in the Baloch heartland with a heavy hand - they've done it before when former president Pervez Musharraf ordered the killing of Baloch leader Akbar Bugti. In an article in China's Global Times, Mei Xinyu talked of preventing

risk to China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) by Islamic extremists. "As a country pursuing a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, China has no obligations to get them out of the social upheavals. What China can do is to create a favorable environment for their peaceful development through equal trade after they walk out of turbulence. When promoting OBOR, China should fully consider risk returns, and try to maximize returns while minimizing risk," she said. China's motivation behind OBOR is clear - trade and the extraction of natural resources which feeds and develops the home country.

Minimising the risk of Islamic extremism in Pakistan would mean pressuring the Pakistani establishment to shut down terrorist masterminds like Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar. So is Pakistan turning over a new leaf? Certainly, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif deserves a pat on his back for using any lever that he can get hold of, including that of international disapproval, to claw back some of the power that should rightly belong to the civilian government, but has been hijacked by his security establishment. Question is, how long will this last? Will the JuD chief simply shut down his alleged charity organisation and take a

new name? Will Pakistan's establishment simply take a call after a few months that the US still needs it too much to stabilise Afghanistan and return to its old ways of running with the hare and hunting with the hound? Will Trump allow the Pakistanis to have the upper hand by cutting down its troops from Afghanistan and winding down? Or will he add Pakistan to the list of Muslim-majority countries banned from entering the US? For Prime Minister Modi, the Hafiz Saeed arrest is a major boost. It underlines his determination not to pussy-foot with a country that allows anti-India terrorists to live inside its borders.

For Europe, There's a New Threat in Town: The U.S.



LONDON — The European Union is accustomed to crises. But it is probably safe to say that none of the 28 leaders who are gathering in Malta on Friday expected the crisis that has overtaken the agenda: the United States of America.

Like much of the world, the European Union is struggling to decipher a President Trump who seems every day to be picking a new fight with a new nation, whether friend or foe. Hopes among European leaders that Mr. Trump's bombastic tone as a candidate would somehow smooth into a more temperate one as commander in chief are dissipating, replaced by a mounting sense of anxiety and puzzlement over how to proceed.

If many foreign leaders expected a Trump administration to push to renegotiate trade deals, or take a tough line on immigration, few anticipated that he would become an equal opportunity offender. He has insulted or humiliated Mexico, Britain, Germany and Iraq; engaged in a war of words with China and Iran; and turned a routine phone call with the prime minister of Australia, a staunch ally, into a minor diplomatic crisis.

With the possible exception of NATO, where he has softened his tone, Mr. Trump has expressed disdain for other multilateral institutions such as the European Union. His praise has been reserved for populists and strongmen, like Nigel Farage, the former leader of the U.K. Independence Party, President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines and, of course, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

The Trump White House Mr. Trump is convinced that the United States has been played for a patsy by the rest of the world and is vowing to set things straight. "We're taken advantage of by every nation in the world virtually," he said on Thursday at a prayer breakfast. "It's not going to happen

anymore."

Against this forbidding backdrop, some European leaders are urging their counterparts to recognize that Mr. Trump may represent a truly dire challenge, one that threatens to upend not only the 70-year European project of integration and security, but just about everything they stand for, including liberal democracy itself.

A European official, Donald Tusk, created a stir this week when he wrote a letter to 27 leaders of the bloc's 28 member states suggesting that the Trump administration presented a threat on a par with a newly assertive China, an aggressive Russia and "wars, terror and anarchy in the Middle East and Africa."

Intentionally, he left out Britain, because it has voted to leave the bloc and its prime minister, Theresa May, has rushed with what some Europeans consider unseemly rapidity to the side of Mr. Trump, who has derided the European Union and praised Britain's withdrawal, or "Brexit," saying, "I don't think it matters much for the United States."

In his letter, Mr. Tusk, a former Polish prime minister who is the president of the European Council, made up of the national leaders, wrote of "worrying declarations" from the Trump team, adding: "Particularly the change in Washington puts the European Union in a difficult situation, with the new administration seeming to put into question the last 70 years of American foreign policy."

Stefano Stefanini, a former Italian ambassador working in Brussels, said that Mr. Tusk "is prone to exaggeration" and that he had a specific Polish fear of Mr. Trump's apparent coziness with Mr. Putin. But Mr. Tusk "has some justification," Mr. Stefanini said, because he is also reacting to a complacent Brussels establishment "that he believes is shrugging off Brexit, Trump and

right-wing populism and believes it's business as usual."

Others say Mr. Tusk is adapting realistically to a series of new dangers posed by the new administration in Washington. Mr. Trump's open protectionism, his contempt for the European Union and his ambivalence toward NATO are serious and damaging, which Mr. Tusk understands, said Mark Leonard, the director of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

"Trump is the first American president since the E.U. was created not to be in favor of deeper European integration," Mr. Leonard said. "Not only that, but he's against it and sees the destruction of the European Union as in America's interest."

Worse, he said: "Europeans see Trump as the biggest threat to global order and the European ideal of how the world should be organized. The U.S. has been a crucial part of the ballast meant to be upholding the global order in the face of these other challenges Tusk mentions, from Russia and China to Islamic radicalism."

"But rather than acting as a check on these forces, Trump seems to be amplifying them, and that's pretty terrifying," Mr. Leonard continued. "It's like you suddenly discover that the medicine you've been taking is making you sicker than the illness itself."

For his part, Mr. Trump described his confrontational diplomatic style as a necessity. "The world is in trouble, but we're going to straighten it out, O.K.?" he said at the prayer breakfast on Thursday. "That's what I do — I fix things." He added: "Believe me, when you hear about the tough phone calls I'm having, don't worry about it. Just don't worry about it."

There have been other moments when Europeans judged American policies as harmful, including the Iraq war and the assaults on multilateralism early in

the first term of President George W. Bush. "But Trump's attacks are of a different scale and come when there's a lot of indigenous turmoil anyway," Mr. Leonard said. "He seems to be linking up with some of the scariest and darkest forces within European societies," which all want the European Union to fail, he said.

Mr. Trump's views about Europe and his reluctance to commit to summit meetings with the European Union or even with NATO are deeply troubling for Europeans, said Leslie Vinjamuri, a professor of international relations at London's School of Oriental and African Studies.

"America's strategy towards Europe has always been highly consequential, but up until now that strategy has been aimed at bolstering Europe," she said. The United States has provided "that overarching protection and alliance that underpins the whole thing and makes it work," she said. "But dealing with Russia and China is suddenly a whole different calculus if you don't have America behind you."

Then there is Germany and the euro. Traditionally, Europeans view Germany as the bulwark of the European Union, its largest, richest and most influential country, but uncomfortable with open leadership. Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, up for re-election this autumn, is viewed as practical, pragmatic and devoted to the European project, and Germans see the euro as a political sacrifice they made of the revered deutsche mark to please the French.

So they deeply resent Mr. Trump's attacks on Ms. Merkel for her refugee policy and his statements that the European Union itself is a "vehicle" for German self-interest. Ms. Merkel was angry over comments by Peter Navarro, the director of Mr. Trump's new National Trade Council, that Germany was manipulating a "grossly

undervalued" euro to gain trade advantages over other Europeans and the United States.

While Germany depends heavily on exports, annoying some of its neighbors, the value of the euro is the same for all that use it, and Ms. Merkel made clear that its value was up to the European Central Bank, not Berlin. But a protectionist America that opposes free trade is certainly unhelpful to Germany.

Added to that are the comments by Ted Malloch, who has been advertising himself as Mr. Trump's top choice to succeed Anthony L. Gardner as ambassador to the European Union. Mr. Malloch, a strong supporter of Britain leaving the bloc, has publicly said that Mr. Trump "doesn't like an organization that is supranational, that is unelected, where the bureaucrats run amok, and is not frankly a proper democracy." Mr. Malloch has also referred to Jean-Claude Juncker, the European Commission president, as "a very adequate mayor of some city in Luxembourg," predicted that the euro would collapse and compared the bloc to the Soviet Union. "I had in a previous career a diplomatic post where I helped bring down the Soviet Union," he said on British television. "So maybe there's another union that needs a little taming." Mr. Malloch may not get nominated, and if he does, the bloc may not accept his posting, Mr. Gardner said. Mr. Trump is "getting advice that is a caricature of the E.U. as a dysfunctional entity, not delivering and wholly inaccurate, despite all the challenges," Mr. Gardner said, citing joint European-American efforts in counterterrorism, trade, sanctions, security, digital privacy and policing. "Even Mrs. May has said Britain sees a cohesive E.U. in British interests. She doesn't want to see a disintegrating E.U. on its doorstep and nor do we. Hopefully that will be heard by others in the administration."

Trump's Immigration Ban: What Happens Next

The order has already been challenged on the grounds of religious discrimination.

Donald Trump's executive order restricting immigration from certain predominantly Muslim countries set off a political chain reaction that will rumble through Washington for weeks, if not months. Three days after it was signed, the order resulted in the firing of acting U.S. Attorney General Sally Yates, who refused to defend it. This, in turn, prompted Senate Democrats to boycott or delay confirmation hearings scheduled for several of Trump's cabinet nominees, including his pick for attorney general, Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama. The controversy over the order is also likely to spill into the battle over Trump's Supreme Court nominee, Neil Gorsuch.

The legality of Trump's action will first be tested in U.S. district courts, where challenges are mounting by the day. At issue is whether the order discriminates against Muslims based on their religion, or if it's simply a form of "extreme vetting" of refugees, as Trump claims. The federal court cases raise questions about bedrock constitutional provisions such as "due process" and "equal protection," as well as a part of the First Amendment known as the establishment clause, which prohibits laws favoring one religion over another.

In a 1982 ruling involving regulation of charitable solicitations by religious groups, the Supreme Court explained that the "clearest command" of the establishment clause "is that one religious denomination cannot be officially preferred over another." Trump's order appears to run afoul of that by establishing preferential treatment for refugees identified with "a minority religion"—Christianity—in their home country.

As protests grew in the wake of his signing the executive order, Trump issued a statement on Jan. 29 saying, "This is not about religion. This is about terror and keeping our country safe." Yet in an interview, Trump said Christian refugees would be given priority to enter the U.S. Specifically, the Jan. 27 order bans entry for 90 days of nationals from seven predominantly Muslim countries: Syria, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen. It also bans resettlement of Syrian refugees



indefinitely and suspends all other refugee resettlement for 120 days. In the frantic period that followed its signing, as refugees were detained at airports and immigration lawyers and protesters gathered in baggage-claim areas, four federal judges—in Brooklyn, Boston, Seattle, and Alexandria, Va.—issued rulings blocking aspects of the order. Those rulings were provisional and didn't delve into constitutional issues. Instead, they sought to prevent deportations or other actions that would harm individuals. Lawyers for those affected will likely return to court in the coming weeks to flesh out their arguments. Additional suits have since been filed that challenge the order's constitutionality, including one on Jan. 30 by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and another on the same day by the state of Washington. Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia have also joined lawsuits challenging the order.

The Trump administration will send attorneys from the U.S. Department of Justice to defend the order in each of these cases. After firing Yates as acting attorney general, Trump replaced her with Dana Boente, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, who vowed to fall in line behind the White House.

The American Civil Liberties Union, in challenging the order, described it as a "Muslim ban wrapped in paper-thin national security rationale." Dan Siciliano, a law professor at Stanford, says it was "clearly a nationality ban

and a de facto religion ban."

Trump's tweets and declarations could become evidence in court of what he intends to accomplish with the order. In December 2015, responding to the San Bernardino shootings that killed 14 people, Trump called for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States," a position he tweaked a few months later by suggesting that immigration be suspended from "any nation that has been compromised by terrorism." Trump's argument that the order wasn't about religion may have been undermined by former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who told Fox News on Jan. 28 that Trump wanted a "Muslim ban" and asked him to assemble a commission to figure out how to do it legally. Giuliani said the commission recommended the order focus not on religion but on "areas

of the world that create danger for us?...?Perfectly legal, perfectly sensible." Theodore Ruger, dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, says Trump's comments that the order doesn't target Muslims may be immaterial. "It's possible to challenge government action as discriminatory to a particular religion even if there's no mention of that religion," says Ruger. Justice Department lawyers defending the executive order can argue that federal law gives the president broad authority to exclude noncitizens "who would be detrimental to the interests of the United States." "No judge can look at the order and analyze it as a Muslim ban because the vast majority of Muslims around the world are not affected," says Jonathan Turley, a law professor at George Washington University. Eugene Volokh, a professor at UCLA School of

Law, says that judges could interpret the order as targeting people from countries where "jihadist sentiments" are common, which could give Trump legal cover. Ironically, Democrats, in fighting the order, may echo concerns voiced repeatedly by Republicans under the Obama administration that the executive branch exerts too much power. Republican-led states frequently sued the federal government over President Obama's executive orders on pollution regulation, overtime pay, and immigration policy. In 2014, Texas led an attack on Obama's immigration reforms, which would have sheltered more than 4 million undocumented immigrants from deportation and provided them with work permits that could have led to federal benefits such as Medicaid and Social Security. The federal judge presiding over the case said he doubted Obama had the authority to unilaterally alter immigration policy and blocked the programs until he could decide if they were legal. A deadlocked Supreme Court refused to lift the injunction last summer, effectively ending the case. Typically Congress sets long-term immigration policy and could reject Trump's immigration ban. That's unlikely with a Republican majority in both houses. Some GOP senators, however, including John McCain of Arizona, Bob Corker of Tennessee, and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, have criticized the order for being hastily implemented and for sending the wrong message to allied countries.



Trump's Harsh Talk With Malcolm Turnbull of Australia Strains Another Alliance

In less than two weeks in office, Mr. Trump's actions have strained alliances and alienated potential partners of the United States, and his phone call with Mr. Turnbull seemed to be one more example, this time with a country that has fought on America's side since World War I. His administration's confrontational stance on Iran has undermined liberal voices in that country; his restrictions on immigration from some predominantly Muslim countries have been widely criticized by allies; and his rejection of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal threatens to push countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, closer to China.

Like many countries in the region, Australia depends on the United States for its security but looks to China for its economic well-being, and it does not want

to choose definitively between the two as they wage a global contest for power.

Experts said the American and Australian militaries were sufficiently intertwined — the Royal Australian Air Force has flown in Syria, and Australian soldiers have helped train the Iraqi Army — that the countries' security arrangements would endure. But the trust and confidence underlying the longstanding alliance will be harmed by Mr. Trump's apparent lack of respect, and his remarks will be very costly in the public domain, they said.

The phone call on Saturday became contentious after Mr. Turnbull pressed Mr. Trump to honor a deal in which the United States had agreed to take in up to 1,250 refugees being held by Australia at offshore detention centers.

Under the terms of the deal,

hurriedly worked out by Mr. Turnbull and former President Barack Obama in New York last year, Australia would also accept Central American refugees staying in a Costa Rican detention facility. Australia has been harshly criticized for its offshore detention policy, and the issue is politically delicate at home. Many of the refugees it holds, on the Pacific island-nation of Nauru and on the island of Manus in Papua New Guinea, are from Iran and Iraq. Both countries are among the seven whose citizens are barred from entering the United States for at least 90 days under the executive order Mr. Trump signed on Friday.

In his conversation with Mr. Turnbull the next day, Mr. Trump said the deal with Australia was going to hurt him politically, according to a senior official in the Trump administration.



BEIJING — President Trump's combative phone call with Australia's prime minister over a refugee agreement has set off a political storm in that country, one that threatens to weaken support for a seven-decade alliance with the United States just as many Australians say they want closer ties with China.

Enthusiasm for the alliance in Australia, one of America's closest partners, which hosts American spy facilities and rotations of American Marines, had already been under pressure from China, with which Australia conducts the

most trade. Reports that Mr. Trump had scolded Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on Saturday, before abruptly ending the call, are likely to further undermine confidence in the United States, Australian analysts said.

"Trump is needlessly damaging the deep trust that binds one of America's closest alliances," said Professor Rory Medcalf, head of the National Security College at the Australian National University in Canberra. "China and those wishing to weaken the strongest alliance in the Pacific will see opportunity in this moment."

Trump Pushes Dark View of Islam to Center of U.S. Policy-Making

WASHINGTON — It was at a campaign rally in August that President Trump most fully unveiled the dark vision of an America under siege by "radical Islam" that is now radically reshaping the policies of the United States. On a stage lined with American flags in Youngstown, Ohio, Mr. Trump, who months before had called for a "total and complete shutdown" of Muslim immigration, argued that the United States faced a threat on par with the greatest evils of the 20th century. The Islamic State was brutalizing the Middle East, and Muslim immigrants in the West were killing innocents at nightclubs, offices and churches, he said. Extreme measures were needed. "The hateful ideology of radical Islam," he told supporters, must not be "allowed to reside or spread within our own communities." Mr. Trump was echoing a strain of anti-Islamic theorizing familiar to anyone who has been immersed in security and counterterrorism debates over the last 20 years. He has embraced a deeply suspicious view of Islam that several of his aides have promoted, notably retired Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn, now his national security



adviser, and Stephen K. Bannon, the president's top strategist. This worldview borrows from the "clash of civilizations" thesis of the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, and combines straightforward warnings about extremist violence with broad-brush critiques of Islam. It sometimes conflates terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State with largely nonviolent groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots and, at times, with the 1.7 billion Muslims around the world. In its more extreme forms, this view promotes conspiracies about government infiltration and the danger that Shariah, the legal code of Islam, may take over in the United States. Those espousing such views present Islam as an inherently hostile ideology whose adherents are enemies of Christianity and Judaism and seek to con-

quer nonbelievers either by violence or through a sort of stealthy brainwashing. The executive order on immigration that Mr. Trump signed on Friday might be viewed as the first major victory for this geopolitical school. And a second action, which would designate the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist political movement in the Middle East, as a terrorist organization, is now under discussion at the White House, administration officials say. Beyond the restrictions the order imposed on refugees and visitors from seven predominantly Muslim countries, it declared that the United States should keep out those with "hostile attitudes toward it and its founding principles" and "those who would place violent ideologies over American law," clearly a reference to Shariah. Rejected by

most serious scholars of religion and shunned by Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, this dark view of Islam has nonetheless flourished on the fringes of the American right since before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. With Mr. Trump's election, it has now moved to the center of American decision-making on security and law, alarming many Muslims. Mr. Trump has insisted that the executive order is not a "Muslim ban," and his supporters say it is a sensible precaution to safeguard Americans. Asked about the seeming antipathy to Islam that appeared to inform the order, the White House pointed to Mr. Trump's comments in the August speech and on another occasion that signaled support for reform-minded Muslims. His administration, Mr. Trump said in August, "will be a friend to all

moderate Muslim reformers in the Middle East, and will amplify their voice." James Jay Carafano, a security expert at the Heritage Foundation who advised the Trump transition at the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department, said the executive order was simply "trying to get ahead of the threat." As pressure increases on the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, he said, "tens of thousands of foreign fighters" will flee. Some could try to reach America, perhaps posing as refugees, he said, so stronger vetting of those entering the country is crucial. But critics see the order as a clumsy show of toughness against foreign Muslims to impress Mr. Trump's base, one shaped by advisers with distorted ideas about Islam. "They're tapping into the climate of fear and suspicion since 9/11," said Asma Afsaruddin, a professor of Islamic studies at Indiana University and chairwoman of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy. "It's a master narrative that pits the Muslim world against the West," appealing to Trump supporters who know nothing of Muslims or Islam beyond news reports of terrorist attacks, she said.

What the next India-China war might look like

Planners on both sides believe that the next India-China conflict will be “limited in scope and short in duration, rather than a protracted, large-scale, force-on-force campaign”, because of the nuclear overhang and the prospect of a third party intervention if it prolongs. This has a bearing on the kind of war they prepare for.

India’s military might was on view during its Republic Day parade on January 26. Much of the focus of its armed forces is on China even though they are more regularly engaged in dealing with Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir. China looms large in the minds of India’s planners – owing to its large military budget, its modernisation plans and the aggressive posturing in the South China Sea – but there is not enough public discussion as to what a future India-China war might look like.

This gap has been impressively addressed in a paper by Iskander Rehman for the Naval War College Review titled ‘A Himalayan Challenge: India’s Conventional Deterrent and the Role of Special Operations Forces along the Sino-Indian Border’. Rehman, senior fellow at Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy at Salve Regina University, draws on extensive source material and interviews with figures in Indian intelligence, military and special forces to capture how Indian and Chinese strategists think about a border war, the way they are organising their resources and the constraints they face. The paper essentially tries to assess if “India’s operational concepts are sufficiently tailored to...the evolving Chinese challenge”.

To begin with, Rehman outlines four factors that will shape India-China conflict. First, the territorial defence postures of both countries. India maintains its large body of troops relatively close to the border while China stations a limited number in its interior in Tibet. Second is the climate and the difficult terrain. “Areas along the Indian side are not amenable to mechanised warfare, except certain parts of Ladakh and Sikkim.” The high elevation of Tibet gives China some “commanding advantages” for

surveillance, artillery operations and acclimatisation of troops to high altitudes. High altitude and extreme cold affect “almost every element of military equipment”; they complicate air campaigns and battle plans. Third, is the infrastructure disparity between the two sides. The People’s Liberation Army has rapid access to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) thanks to the terrain and highways and high-speed railway networks it has built whereas Indian troops “often have to trek several hours, if not days, to attain certain areas.” Fourth, there are very different command structures on both sides – India has several regional army and air force commands, China has one unified western theatre

command. following “with a certain degree of trepidation”, the rapid development of China’s airborne assault capabilities via the PLAAF’s 15th Airborne Corps, numbering over 35,000 troops and headquartered at Xiaogan, from where it is expected “to reach any part of China within ten hours.”

Responding to this, India is building on its advantage in conventional troops numbers augmenting its force structure with new battalions of scouts, adding air, missile and surveillance assets, raising a new Mountain Strike Corps and improving its road and rail infrastructure in the border regions. Beyond these material indicators Rehman argues that the most significant change “has

that notwithstanding this India’s approach to conventional deterrence has certain limitations. “While Indian planners have moved toward adopting a more-offensive form of area denial, they continue to rely, for the most part, on conventional forces that could be overcome or circumvented in the event of a fast-moving, localised, and limited border confrontation launched from higher elevations.” This leads to several problems. India is reliant on dispersed, poorly equipped paramilitary forces like the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) as “its first line of defence in many of the forward areas most vulnerable to Chinese aggression.” The nature of the topography is such that

be pored over by planners (and adversaries).

Some aspects of Rehman’s diagnosis need immediate attention though. Road and rail projects in border areas continue to be delayed. “As of May 2016, only twenty-one of sixty-one border road projects designated strategic had been completed.” Twenty eight strategic railway lines were sanctioned in 2010, “six years later none have been finalized.” Chronic shortfalls in essential equipment continue, including parachutes, night vision devices, high-altitude clothing and even aluminium, belt-attachable water bottles. SOFs have expanded too rapidly “in size and in ad hoc manner, without the benefit of careful, deliberate planning” – and in numerous cases battalions have had to operate with inferior equipment sourced from infantry. There is not enough training capacity to cope with expanded forces. Attrition levels are high; most special forces units have an officer shortfall of 25-30%.

“Perhaps the greatest set of challenges lies in the organizational domain”, writes Rehman. Like other analysts, he calls for restructuring around a Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) to harmonise the large number of SOFs, address inter-service rivalry and bring about greater strategic and doctrinal clarity.

Rehman’s paper is a remarkable piece of scholarship that serves India’s defence establishment well. One cannot help but wonder reading it why such an important work on India-China conflict happens to be the product of a western institution rather than an Indian one. There are certainly some outstanding international relations scholars in India, who happen to be productive in spite of the prohibitive climate they operate in. It is worth considering the conditions needed for producing valuable academic work. A paper like Rehman’s has a gestation period (requiring institutional support for scholars to pursue time-taking endeavours), it needs financial support, to create congenial conditions for research and to travel for fieldwork and interviews, and it needs access to establishment figures. Indian scholars based in India can rarely count on these; they are more likely to be underpaid and undervalued by the establishment.



command.

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In the event of a conflict with India, conventional forces will be rushed in from the interior and these will be accompanied by air, electronic and cyber operations. The PLA’s air force (PLAAF) and artillery will conduct “standoff strikes” to disrupt and delay the arrival of Indian forces coming from the lowlands.” PLA’s Special Operations Forces (SOFs) will be deployed to attack vital targets “to create favourable conditions for main force units.” Rehman writes that India has been

occurred in the intellectual domain as Indian defence planners have adopted much more vigorous, tactically offensive approach to territorial defence.” Raising a Strike Corps was a way of moving away from deterrence by denial to deterrence by punishment; to a form of “offensive defence”, a “cross-border riposte strategy”. As an army colonel told Rehman “once the Chinese seize a position, it may be very difficult to dislodge them. Rather than expend much blood and treasure attempting to storm impregnable positions, we should pursue a strategy of horizontal escalation and capture territory elsewhere.” In line with this, Ladakh and northern Sikkim are good locations for a mechanised riposte where India’s forces would “sweep down from...mountain plains to conduct pincer movements behind Chinese formations, with the hope of breaking troop concentration.” India’s air and missile power would aid these mechanised incursions into Tibet, as part of a wider theatre strategy.

Rehman argues, however,

conventional troops, which are substantially stationed in lower altitudes, are “relatively static” – moving them from lowlands is challenging, and while they wind up mountain roads and valleys during conflict they are vulnerable to artillery, missile or air strikes.

These weaknesses can be addressed, in Rehman’s view, by a greater complementarity between conventional forces and Special Operations Forces that can “play a critical role behind enemy lines, conducting sabotage, reconnaissance, and direct-action operations.” SOF’s can be used to strike airbases, reconnaissance assets and disrupt build-up of PLA forces. SOFs are also useful to counter “gray zone aggression” described by Michael Mazarr as “sequences of gradual steps to secure strategic leverage”, which would include Pakistan’s covert action and China’s use of infrastructural development to cement territorial claims. In view of their utility, Rehman’s surveys in some detail India’s SOFs, their composition, mandates, operational challenges and deficiencies, which will no doubt

**weekend
CIRCUIT**

MAPPING CULTURES, A SHOW OF PAINTINGS AND SILK-SCREEN PRINTS AT TRIVENI GALLERY, TRIVENI KALA SANGAM; UNTIL FEBRUARY 5



NAVRASA DUENDE PRESENTS LIVE MUSIC CONCERT BY PANDIT JASRAJ ON HIS 87TH BIRTHDAY; JANUARY 28 AT NEHRU STADIUM, LODI ROAD; 6:30 PM

MUMBAI DABBAWALA LUNCH AT NTC, PARK PLAZA GURUGRAM TILL JANUARY 31; 12.30 PM TO 3 PM



COCKTAILS

of spirits

The watering holes in the city are brimming with offers. Choose your deal

by **Karishma Kuenzang**

DEAL for those who are always on the lookout for a new concoction of their favourite poison, the second edition of the Cocktail Week is in the Capital from February 4 to February 11 and it promises to be one week of cocktail competitions, workshops and exciting new mixes at discounted prices.

A part of the worldwide celebration of the cocktail culture and nightlife, the event is spread across more than 30 different restaurants and bars in Delhi-NCR. "India has a very basic alcohol culture and people consume very basic drinks. The Cocktail Week, which is open to all patrons, gives people an opportunity to explore exotic or signature cocktails at the participating bars and restaurants. Each venue will serve three-four cocktails for about ₹300-400 each," says Archit Singhal, founder of Delhi Cocktail Week.

The week will also see over 20 cocktail-related events. The bartending competition on February 7 at Q'la will have around 100 bartenders fight it out. "We will also have a movie night, wine tasting, a global pop up in collaboration with an NGO, a food pairing session as well as a pajama themed party. Throughout the week, we'll also have a bunch of expat bartenders making and serving drinks," says Archit.

THE festivities will also include a session on food photography. "Most bars don't have great pictures of their drinks, which is why this session will be really important," he adds.

Evgenya Prazdnik, a Russian mixologist and bartender who has completed six years in India and 12 years in the industry, will be one of the judges for the bartending competitions taking place during the Cocktail Week. She has hosted a master class and judged competitions in the maiden edition of the event last year and is back to give cocktail enthusiasts a taste of Russian flavours. She is preparing five cocktails for the week, using advanced techniques as well as ingredi-



ROMANCING WITH TEQUILA

Give your palate the complete Mexican experience at the Tacos & Tequila Festival at 7 Degrees Brauhaus and its Sombrero Sunday Brunch. While the former will feature a wide range of tequila (price of premium tequila brands starting at ₹249) and tacos followed by some dancing,

the brunch will include the signature spicy salsa and live grill with a Mexican twist.

WHERE: 7 Degrees Brauhaus, Rivaayat, Shop No. 310, 311, South Point Mall

WHEN: Tacos & Tequila Festival - January 27 and 28
Sombrero Sunday Brunch - January 29



VODKA TALES FROM ALL OVER

This one is for those who love their vodka. One of the top vodka bars in Delhi with 56 brands of vodkas from across the globe, Aura in The Claridges, in association with QualeMagni, recently launched Ukrainian brand Khortyt'sa, the third highest selling vodka in the world. The brand is most popular for its Khortyt'sa Ice, which comes in a bottle that changes colours when it's chilled. The vodka is the perfect blend of aromatic mint, lime and menthol varieties of ethanol. Khortyt'sa Ice has a subtle floral flavour. So, if you like vodka, then head to Aura and give it a shot.

WHERE: Aura, The Claridges, 12, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Road



DRINK THEM ALL

The Piano Man Jazz Club and Dirty Apron together have tempting offers on their alcohol menu. Patrons can win 10 free drinks by participating their cocktail challenge, in which the first one to try the over 30 unique cocktails on the menu in the month of February gets 10 free cocktails over the period of the next month.

WHERE: Dirty Apron and The Piano Man Jazz Club, Safdarjung Enclave market
WHEN: Dirty Apron - 12 pm to 8 pm; The Piano Man Jazz Club - 7 pm to 8 pm

ents brought from Moscow One of her drinks, called the Tovarish, is a twisted iconic Russian drink, with local touch. Comprising vodka on rye bread, coffee liqueur and smoked condensed milk syrup, the drink is well-stirred and served with grilled rye mini-toast.

"I will also be giving one of the drinks an Oriental concept and use butterfly pea tea infused gin, elderflower, riesling and bubbles, to make a pH active, colour changing tipsy tea."

Evgenya will also be conducting a master class wherein she will talk about how various ingredients can be replaced by something similar in case the bar runs out of stock as well as the real cost of drinks, which she opines will help budding bartenders. Apart from Q'la, Delhi Cocktail Week will rage across restaurants like PCO, ATM, Ek Bar, Hungry Monkey and Social among others.

— For info on other places, visit www.delhicocktailweek.com

WARMING UP YOUR WINTERS

Cocktails & Dreams, Speakeasy, in Gurugram, this Sunday has a cocktail workshop. The two-hour workshop will see award-winning mixologist, consultant and co-owner of the venue, Yangdup Lama, teach patrons how to shake, stir, muddle and make seasonal cocktails, including a mix of warm cocktails, using a wide range of ingredients. Priced at ₹1,500, the workshop includes four cocktails, a coaster set and two vegetarian and two non-vegetarian starters. Preregistration is mandatory!

WHERE: Cocktails & Dreams, Speakeasy, Sector 15, Part II, Gurugram
WHEN: January 29; 5pm to 7pm



Can eating Litchis Kill?

Here's what you should know to avoid getting sick

(News Agencies) Litchis are safe. But you're in trouble if you eat unripened litchis (the small, green ones) on an empty stomach.

Unripe litchi fruit contains the toxins hypoglycin A and methylenecyclopropyl-glycine (MCPG) that may cause vomiting if had excessively. It may cause fever and seizures serious enough to need hospitalisation in severely malnourished children.

Eating unripe lychees on an empty stomach has been linked with outbreaks of high fever

followed by seizures and death in young children from poor socio-economic backgrounds in rural Muzaffarpur in Bihar and other litchi-growing regions in India during the harvest season in May and June. In 2014, fever and convulsions killed 122 and hospitalised 390 children within three weeks (between May 26 and July 17) in Muzaffarpur. All the sick children had eaten litchis and gone to bed without eating an evening meal and developed high fever, seizures and convulsions followed by coma before daybreak.

On admission to hospital, close to two in three (62%) had low blood glucose levels of less than 70 mg/dL, and traces of the toxins hypoglycin A and methylenecyclopropyl-glycine (MCPG) found in unripened litchis in urine specimens.

Hypoglycin A is a naturally-occurring amino acid found in the unripened litchi that causes severe vomiting (Jamaican vomiting sickness), while MCPG is a poisonous compound found in litchi seeds that cause a sudden drop in blood sugar, vomiting, altered mental status



with lethargy, unconsciousness, coma and death.

Giving children sugar to normalize their rapidly plummeting blood glucose levels

helps them recover from illness, recommends a study in The Lancet Global Health.

The take away? Eat ripened lychees but avoid the fruit when you're fasting.

Ways to use your favourite facial oil



(News Agencies)New Delh: Girls who were once hesitant and apprehensive about applying oil to their face, have not just included the product to their skincare regime but feel its worth a try. To keep a nice balance of

moisture and get flawless skin naturally, facial oils work wonders, but you need to know how. Neetu Prasher, Head of Training, Avon India, throws light on not just many qualities your little bottle of face oil comes packed

with, but five ways to use this product in your day-to-day life and look resplendent in no time.

* Brightening primer: Winter can make your skin look dull and lustreless, hence a primer is a must. It's imperative to choose the right base for an instant glow. A facial oil can be your new primer this season. Pump two-three drops of this product rich in vitamins A, C and E to your face as a primer and help your makeup stay in place all day.

* Massage mask: For more supple and radiant skin, it's best to massage your skin twice a month. Homemade face mask mixtures or facial sheet masks,

adding face oils only multiplies the effect. Add two drops to the mixture for a smoother, hydrated and firm skin. You can also smear the oil prior to using a sheet mask.

* Treatment: To help reduce fine lines and wrinkles or to even skin tone and reduce hyper-pigmentation, add a drop or two of your face oil to your moisturising regime. After cleansing and toning, nicely moisturise your skin and see magical results in a few days.

* Foundation or BB Cream: Add two drops of face oil to your foundation or BB cream for a smoother coverage. Oil helps

restore skin and mixed with foundation, the antioxidants make the complexion brighter.

* Booster: Our skin absorbs all the essential nutrients when we are asleep is not a myth. Hence, teaming two-three drops of face oil with a night cream can twofold the results. Apply the mixture evenly on your face, dab a little under your eyes and see how well it works on those unwanted facial lines and wrinkles.

Adding a facial oil to your regular regimen of cleanser, toner, day cream and night cream enhances the results and boosts nourishment for your skin.

Why smoking synthetic weed may not be safe



(News Agencies)New York: Smoking synthetic marijuana sold under names such as "K2" and "Spice", may not be a safe substitute to natural marijuana, but may lead to dangerous side-effects, including seizures, psychosis, dependence and death, researchers have warned.

The synthetic cannabinoids (SCBs) are man-made mind-altering chemicals that are either sprayed on dried, shredded plant material so they can be smoked (herbal incense) or sold as liquids to be vaporised and inhaled in e-cigarettes and other devices (liquid incense) and thus cause adverse health effects.

"The public sees anything with the marijuana label as potentially safe, but these synthetic compounds are not marijuana... you never know what they are and

they are not safe," said Paul L. Prather, a pharmacologist at the University of Arkansas.

The primary psychoactive compound in marijuana, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), activates two receptors CB1 — found in high abundance in the brain and central nervous system — and CB2, found primarily in the immune system.

In the study, published in the journal Trends in Pharmacological Sciences, the team found that although they activate the CB1 and CB2 receptors, the SCB compounds and other cannabinoids are otherwise chemically distinct from marijuana and often from each other.

As a result, they may be activating other cellular receptors in addition to CB1 and that these receptors could be responsible for some of the adverse health effects seen in the users.

The SCB compounds are more potent than delta-9-THC, as "these are highly efficacious drugs. They tend to activate the CB1 receptor to a greater degree than we can ever get to with THC from marijuana," added William E. Fantegrossi, a behavioural pharmacologist at the University of Arkansas.

Another risk is that these are often sold as safe alternatives to marijuana that, because of their chemical structures, will not be discovered through standard drug screenings. Thus, users who purchase these drugs over the internet or elsewhere simply do not know what they are getting. "Not only does the amount of the active pharmacological agent change with different batches of drugs, made by different labs, but the active compound itself can change," Fantegrossi said.

Raees Vs Kaabil : Narendra Jha the Common Factor

(News Agencies)Bollywood's favourite character actor these days seems to be a popular face from small screen, Narendra Jha, who drew wide appreciation from both critics and audience for his role as Dr Hilal Meer in Vishal Bhardwaj's Haider (2014), which was based on Shakespeare's King Hamlet. Last Wednesday, on January 25, Jha added another feather to his cap when he became the common factor, or actor, in both the big budget releases. While he played an underworld don Musa Bhai in Shah Rukh Khan-starrer Raees, Hrithik Roshan's Kaabil presented him as a suave cop Chaubey.

If he is restrained, thoughtful in Kaabil who wouldn't let you know what's going inside his head, his Raees role is more about dominating the screen as a mastermind criminal. And it is a tedious task when your co-actor is someone like Shah Rukh Khan, but he passes with flying colours. However, Jha hasn't seen Raees yet. "As of now, I have seen Kaabil because I was in Nashik where the nearest theatre was playing Kaabil. Raees is on my to-watch list today." He shares how he became a part of Haider. "I did so many films like Fun2shh and Bose The Forgotten Hero before Haider and so many other films in

Telugu. Actually, I had met Vishal Bhardwaj during the International Film Festival of India, and there he told me about the concept. Later, I got a call from casting director Mukesh Chhabra and then I came on board. But it wasn't like I was new to cinema. It wasn't a big role, but it was very impactful." "Afterwards, I worked in Humari Adhuri Kahani, Force 2, Ghayal Once Again and Mohenjo Daro," Jha said. "You may consider me a latecomer to films, but I have always given the foremost importance to acting, be it the television or films. I never differentiate between different media," he adds. His journey



from a small town Koilakh in Bihar's Madhubani to Mumbai places. "I belong to a place where the tradition of theatre is very old. You won't believe the place had a well functioning dramatic society in 1923. My father and brother were active participants in village theatre."

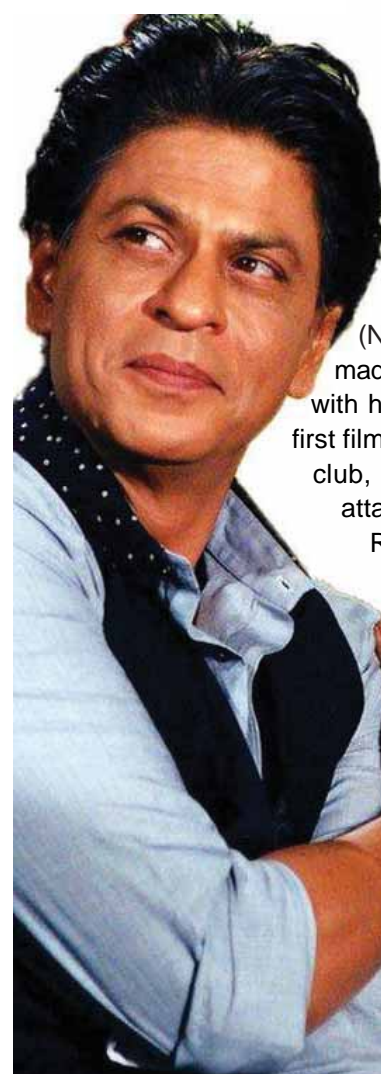
He adds, "Like most of the others in Bihar, my father also wanted me to go for IAS. I was doing my post-graduation in History from JNU in Delhi when I thought of getting trained in acting. On my father's encouragement, I enrolled into a diploma course at Shri Ram Centre."

I take everything as it comes :Sunney Leone

(News Agencies)Sunny Leone, who is basking in the appreciation coming her way for her special song Laila main laila in Shah Rukh's latest release Raees, says she is under no pressure to pick her next project. She understands that not every project can be as big as Raees. "I take everything as it comes. Not every moment is what it is at this very current time. I wish it could be. So, I wish and pray that every project be as big as this one, but obviously it is not mostly the case," Sunny told media. So has the process of picking projects changed for her? "I pick them always (on basis of) what I have always felt, except now I have a

whole team of people advising me... So many things go into choosing a film now." Sunny took the reality TV route with a stint in one of the previous seasons of Bigg Boss to come into spotlight in India. She has featured in films like Jism 2, Ek Paheli Leela, Kuch Kuch Locha Hai and One Night Stand. Not every project of her was applauded. And Sunny says she takes criticism with a pinch of salt. "There is nothing that you can do. When it (a film) is released, people see it. Then they like it or they don't like it... I have seen times when media didn't say nice things about it (the project), but people loved it, or the media loves it, but people didn't. It is a

hit and miss every single time," she said. Sunny, whose real name is Karenjit Kaur Vohra, made a transition into Bollywood after making a name for herself as an adult film actress abroad. She says that it is interesting to see critics "who have nothing nice to say". Talking about the right code to crack in Bollywood, she said: "You never know what the right formula is."



Shah Rukh Khan's Raees is 2017's First to cross Rs 100 Crore mark, SRK's Seventh

(News Agencies)Shah Rukh Khan has made a smashing entry into the new year with his recent film Raees becoming the first film of 2017 to enter the Rs 100-crore-club, thereby becoming his seventh to attain the feat.

Raees, that also stars Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Mahira Khan, collected Rs. 6 crore on Monday and Rs 5.25 crore on Tuesday in the domestic market, bringing its total earning to over Rs 103 crore, as reported by Box Office India. The film has not only set the domestic markets ringing but also continues its march in the international markets.

Raees, hit theatres on January 25, along with Hrithik Roshan-Yami Gautam-starrer Kaabil.

The figures for seventh day Kaabil collections are yet to be out but the film has earned Rs 54 crore over the extended weekend. The latest reports also inform that the film has smashed the box office record in Singapore by collecting a whopping USD 226,000 which is touted to be the highest ever weekend for any Bollywood film in this market. The film certainly impacts one with SRK's powerful performance along with an intense entertaining storyline which is backed by the hard hitting dialogues and the captivating music of the film. On a related note, Shah Rukh's other films to have crossed the Rs 100-crore mark are Chennai Express, Happy New Year, Dilwale, Jab Tak Hai Jaan, Ra. One and Don 2.



The Dial Of The Sun King

In the Bolly-games of Khandom, Raees could be Shahrukh's next big chance. What if it fails to come good?

stature. Last year, Dear -Zindagi (Rs 68 crore) and Fan (Rs 85 crore) failed to make it to the coveted Rs 100-crore club. And two, the -phenomenal success of Salman Khan's Sultan and Aamir Khan's Dangal means King Khan is expected to match up and deliver a Rs 300-crore blockbuster. Tellingly enough, for SRK, 'Rs 300 crore' is a peak that -remains -unconquered. And now, he has to aim for it against the current, with another A-lister from B-town, Hrithik Roshan, poised to split the votes with his home production Kaabil, releasing the same day. That's why Bollywood is keeping its fingers crossed, waiting with bated breath for the outcome of the film where it matters the most: the cash counters. Expectations are always spectacularly high from a new SRK film anyway. But never in recent years has any movie of his generated as much interest about its fate as Raees. The film comes with favourable pre-release -reports, but what if it falls short of the mark? "It's extremely important for a big star to deliver hit movies consistently. In Shahrukh's case, this has not been the case in -recent times," noted film trade analyst Komal Nahta tells -Outlook. "He has to deliver a film that becomes a hit big enough to keep everybody associated with it happy—even the distributors and exhibitors, not merely the producers." Nahta says 's box-office showing is all the more important because both Salman and Aamir have had two films each that earned over Rs 300 crore in the past couple of years. "Dangal is, in fact, getting closer to the Rs 400-crore mark now." Shahrukh's trajectory has followed a different tangent of late. Dear Zindagi and Fan were both touted as experimental projects, devoid of the trademark SRK tropes, but their modest haul den-tered his reputation. And it became tough to rationalise against the runaway hits of the other two Khans. Dangal, released around Christmas, continues to have a roaring run, inching its way to the Rs 400-crore mark in the domestic circuit to emerge as the -highest-ever grosser in the history of tinsel town.

(News Agencies) "Apna time shuru," says the Raees poster, in a street-savvy, oracular tone. But the real arbiter these days is the weekend box-office collections, and it's a destiny being written as you read this. So the question is open for the time-being: will this much-awaited gangsta flick renew his lease on the throne, or will it mark the beginning of the end of his -prolonged reign at the top? Ever since he hit a purple patch early in his career—with Darr (1993), Baazigar (1993) and, above all, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995)—there has been no looking back for the 51-year-old Shahrukh Khan. But as Raees, directed by the National Award-winning filmmaker Rahul Dholakia, hits the screen worldwide this week, there's a real tinge of nervousness. And with good reason. There are two sensitive points on the graph on which comparisons will be made. One, SRK's -recent films have not done business befitting his

The Khanate Without End

A journey extraordinaire. Twenty-five years on, Shahrukh Khan stays at the top effortlessly, retaining an insatiable hunger for excellence in his craft.

(News Agencies) The best tributes to a superstar are perhaps those that were never heard much. Paradoxically for a kind of human figure that looms everywhere for millions of people—in remembered scenes, on billboards, in an abstracted sort of public consciousness—these may be spoken in intimate spaces, to friends or family, perhaps even to themselves. No one will know, for instance, what endearments to SRK may have been uttered by the wife and daughter of Farid Khan Sherani, the man who lost his life in the melee at Baroda railway station. He had taken his family, fans of Shahrukh Khan, to see the star as he passed by on August Kranti Express in a promotional rail yatra. Whatever they were, those words would have joined innumerable others, offered in joy and rapture, to an actor who's now touching an incredible quarter-century at the top. An unusual tribute to Shahrukh was once offered by a middle-aged German lady outside a film festival in Europe. "We love him", she said, because "we have had enough" of the standard male prototype—the tall, macho man, strong and silent, the medieval gallant. In Shahrukh, on the contrary, they saw a kind of neurosis and vulnerability. It is he who perhaps needs to be protected. Scan his films over the last 25 years, and it rings true. SRK's is a persona composed of more complex notes than that of the average, monochrome Bollywood hero—quite outside the question of whether his filmography has entirely harnessed it. He has enough strings to his bow to attract an arthouse director, or a wide-eyed NRI kid...or a sedate European. In their time, Raj Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan had that crossover appeal—but they got their Russia and Egypt, one suspects, by just being the arch representatives of Hindi cinema. (And Rajnikanth got his Japanese legions by approximating to the dark, flamboyant comic-hero.) SRK,



on the other hand, seems to have a kind of cosmopolitan tinge that could genuinely speak to everyone.

Mostly, it was delivered to us with that deliberate over-the-topness. But the quiet moments have a way of creating their own space too. In Swades, as a NASA scientist returning to his village, Shahrukh's character, seated in a crowded train, buys water from a boy on a platform. The boy, running with the train to sell water for 25 paise per glass, triggers a transformation in the scientist. Intense, but understated. One of those moments that turned the 2004 film from "commercial" to "critically acclaimed". It was perhaps bettered with some of those wordless glances in Chak De (2007), but otherwise it remained a minor stream in the

SRK school of acting.

Swades came after Kal Ho Na Ho, Main Hoon Na and Veer Zara—the known 'Raj--Rahul' territory for SRK. Without over-analysing his choices—because the freedom to make them rests with the one making them—he did seem to step out of his comfort zone every now and then, only to go back, and then dart out again, a cautious guerilla. Paheli, then the swash-and-burn of Don, then the remarkably controlled Chak De.... "I think it's better to go wrong doing the new than go right in doing the done. I really believe that," Shahrukh tells Outlook (see interview). "Many times I'm blamed for doing the same. I don't get that but I accept it. And I don't do different for the sake of doing different. I do it because it's

important, it feels good and it's high time. It does work out eventually." With the VFX-heavy superhero flick Ra.One, for example, he did take a leap of faith factoring in the losses—"because if I don't, who will?" In these 25 years, he has bought a bungalow on Bandstand, Bandra, set up Red Chillies Entertainment, hosted TV shows, bought a cricket team in the Indian Premier League, has a following of 23 million on Twitter, has two honorary doctorates, has been named a Chubbs Fellow at Yale University, and has had three children with Gauri Khan, his companion for three decades. Flops and controversies have stalked him on this journey but the dimpled star's aura hasn't ebbed.

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