



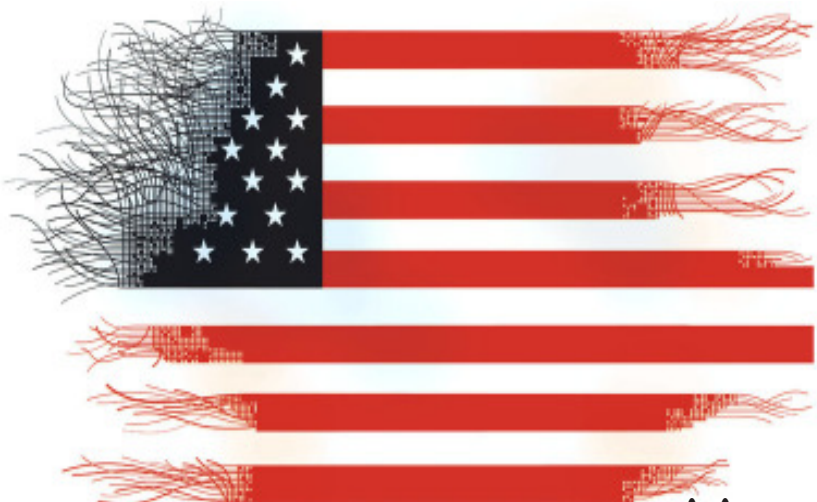
INSIDER

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The Collapse of American Identity



(Special Report) After the British writer G. K. Chesterton visited the United States for the first time, he remarked that America was "a nation with the soul of a church."

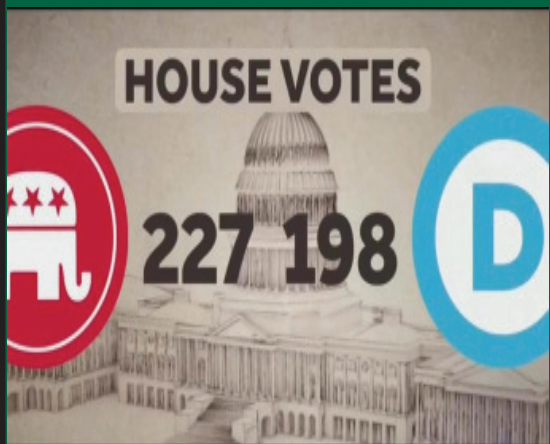
Mr. Chesterton wasn't referring to the nation's religiosity but to its formation around a set of core political beliefs enshrined in founding "sacred texts," like the Declaration of Independence. He noted that the United States, unlike European countries, did not rely on ethnic kinship, cultural character or a "national type" for a shared identity. The profoundness of the American experiment, he argued, was that it aspired to create "a home out of vagabonds and a nation out of exiles" (Contd on page 23)

PC at Met Gala



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Bill To Repeal Obamacare Passed



Washington (News Agencies) In a major victory for President Donald Trump, the House has voted to dismantle the pillars of the Affordable Care Act and make sweeping changes to the nation's health care system.

The Republicans in the House finally did what they said they wanted to come to Washington to do. They voted Thursday to repeal Obamacare, but by the slimmest of margins. Speaker Paul Ryan needed 216 votes and he turned out 217.

Now the legislation goes to the Senate, where the legislation will be cut, trimmed, sanded and polished to be sent back to the House for a concurring vote, which it might not get. Still, if Thursday's work was not quite the end, or even the beginning of the end,

(Contd on page 22)

US Citizenship Of Indian-American Ismail Ali Khan Revoked



(By a staff reporter) Georgia- A 29-year-old Indian American was stripped of his US citizenship after being sentenced for more than five years in jail for conspiring to illegally distribute male enhancement pills imported from China. Ismail Ali Khan was also convicted and

He also may face deportation to India

sentenced for falsely stating that he was not a criminal on his application to become a naturalised US citizen, federal prosecutors said .

US Prosecutors said Khan, a resident of Decatur in Georgia, and others illegally imported pills from China containing an active ingredient in Viagra and distributed them throughout the US. He was part of a criminal export ring that hatched an elaborate scheme to import to the US, male enhance-

ment pills with names such as "Maxman," "Happy Passengers" from China.

The ring's plot included mislabelling scores of drugs to evade detection by the Food and Drug Administration and US Customs and Border Protection.

The drugs were labelled as beauty products, pottery, coffee, and tea, federal prosecutors said.

Khan's sentence would be followed by three years of supervised release, according to the report.

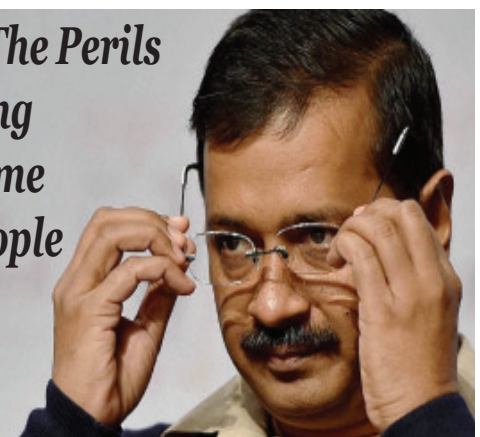
"This defendant endangered the health of countless individuals by illegally importing and distributing drugs that can be obtained in the US only with a prescription written by a licensed, medical professional," (Contd on page 23)

The Growing Rahul Gandhi Problem Of The Congress



STORY ON page 22

AAP And The Perils Of Speaking In The Name Of The People



STORY ON page 21



Certificate of recognition presented to Organizations by Commissioner Agarwal

During Immigrant Heritage Week, City recognizes IRAP's pro-bono legal work and Yemeni American Merchants Association organizing and advocacy



(By a staff reporter) New York —Recently coinciding with the 14th annual Immigrant Heritage Week, Commissioner Nisha Agarwal of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs presented certificates of recognition to the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) and the Yemeni American Merchants Association. Joined by Senior Advisor Sarah Sayeed of the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, the ceremony took place in the Governor's Room at City Hall. Commissioner Agarwal spoke about the critical and immediate pro-bono legal assistance IRAP offered to people affected by the travel ban at John F. Kennedy Airport. In acceptance of the certificate, Becca Heller, Director and co-Founder of IRAP, thanked the Mayor's Office for their recognition of IRAP and the work of local community-based organizations in New York City. Commissioner Agarwal also praised the Yemeni American Mer-

chants Association successful effort to organize the mass Yemeni bodega strike in the days after the travel ban. On behalf of the

Yemeni American Merchants Association, Dr. Debbie Almontaser thanked Mayor de Blasio for recognizing their work and spoke about

how important the strike was in the history of Yemeni Americans in New York City, organizing as one community to use their economic and

civic power to affect change. Also representing the Yemeni American Merchants Association, Zaid Naji thanked the Mayor for his support of the

Yemeni community and recognized how important it was that the Yemeni American community was fully and collectively engaged in the strike.

Chennai-Based Journalist Sent to Jail

(By a staff reporter)- New Delhi- Chennai-based 64 year old senior journalist Prakash Swamy's arrest in India has not only shocked the community, but many have started asking questions as to "Who are the real people behind MG Holdings", a company that was mentioned in Indian Supreme Court records as the "Interested buyer of " Sahara India's US Hotels.

Was it Swami all alone who started the company in US and took it's own Power of Attorney and told the Indian Court that he is just a representative or is "MG Holdings part of a bigger plan to front some big and influential people from US and India, who were trying to cash Sahara's problems.

A Google and New

York's Department of State search didn't return any credible contact point for MG Capital Holdings LLC.

Swamy was last week sent to Tihar jail in New Delhi for a month by the Indian Supreme Court on the charge of contempt in the Sahara case. Swamy, who has reported for many Indian American Newspapers (Including South Asian Insider) worked as a correspondent at the United Nations for 10 years, invited the wrath of the apex court as he failed to stand by his words in a sworn affidavit as the power of attorney holder of MG Capital Holdings LLC, New York, which had intended to purchase Sahara's Hotel Plaza New York.

A bench headed by Jus-

tice Dipak Misra was firm on sending him to jail, saying allowing him to walk free would send a "wrong message". "You should have realized the gravity of the case," the bench, also comprising Justices Ranjan Gogoi and A K Sikri, said.

Swamy tried hard to prove his innocence and reportedly even offered to deposit Rs 10 lakh with the apex court. However, the bench declined his plea and said perhaps it was the greed which prompted him to become the power of attorney holder for a foreign company. Swamy, who has also worked for a prominent national daily of South India, said he simply got himself into the case as he was told that he would be a part of a larger deal.

"So it was greed. Temptation sometimes leads to confinement," the bench observed while reminding him that he could be sent to jail for six months also for contempt of court. Some of the lawyers appearing in the Sahara matter also reportedly tried to persuade the bench to be lenient towards Swamy. The bench then asked him to submit Rs 10 crore as costs.

While the veteran scribe expressed his helplessness in arranging such a large amount, there was no word of support from the company for which he was holding the power of attorney.

Swamy also pleaded for "clemency" but the bench said "when you filed affidavit in the court you should have undertaken due dili-



gence. You should have also borne in mind the consequences". At the outset, the bench said there was no chance of giving any opportunity to Swamy as he was in contempt of court for failure to deposit the amount.

H1-B visa fallout: Infosys to hire 10,000 American workers, open four tech centers

The IT service firms rely heavily on the H1-B visa program, which President Trump has ordered federal agencies to review.

(Agencies) India-based IT services firm Infosys Ltd said late on Monday that it plans to hire 10,000 American workers in the next two years and open four technology centers in the United States, starting with a center this August in Indiana, the home state of Vice-President Mike Pence.

The move comes at a time when Infosys and some of its Indian peers such as Tata Consultancy Services and Wipro have become political targets in the United States for allegedly displacing jobs of American workers by flying in foreign workers on temporary visas to service

their clients in the country.

The IT service firms rely heavily on the H1-B visa program, which President Trump has ordered federal agencies to review.

In a telephone interview with Reuters from Indiana, Infosys CEO Vishal Sikka said his company plans to hire American workers in

fields such as artificial intelligence. He said the firm has already hired 2,000 American workers as part of a previous effort started in 2014. "When you think about it from a US point of view, obviously creating more American jobs and opportunities is a good thing," Sikka said.





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The national in the municipal

Democracy has its paradoxes and ironies, built as a system of differences. Its institutions are supposed to allow for dissent and for diversity. However, electoral democracy can, at times, set up the basis for tyrannical rule. A majoritarian democracy can become a megalomania of numbers. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) today is a party that believes in a majoritarian democracy in search of absolute control. It is not a question of passing a few laws, it is a plan for a deeper cultural control. We can sense it while having a look at the electoral map, the saffronisation of India com-

ing across as a visual epidemic. As the electoral dots multiply, one colour dominates the electoral universe. This saffronisation is literally a project for total cultural control.

A party in search of such totalities does not look kindly at alternatives or at competing realities. The earlier picture we had of democracy, in the Congress era, was a more affable one. As we moved from the national to the regional or local levels, the control of national parties would weaken and dissent built around local issues would create a smattering of oppositional entities. Such parties, with their tiny

pockets of representation, were seen as adding to the pluralism of democracy. They were seen as necessary at the local level because they focussed on specific issues. They usually aligned themselves with larger forces at the national level while amplifying the voices of ethnicity, locality and language. Democracy did not see them as parochial creations but as a part of the politics of scale. As we moved from the macro to the micro, diversity was supposed to multiply. Such local diversity was seen as a healthy sign, a way of accommodating variation and plurality at a local level. Two examples of this would testify to this. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), which was a local party, could be almost secessionist in Parliament in terms of language and still be listened to with tolerance. Laldenga, once seen as an insurgent, was equally at home as Chief Minister of Mizoram in the

1980s. Such was the tolerance the Indian polity displayed.

A totalising party such as the BJP has no such affable theory of diversity. In fact, it sees difference as a sign of absence, of a failure to infiltrate an area. Difference is immediately identified as disturbance, sedition, dissent and a challenge to the party's plan for an absolute majority. Opposition in any form is threatening. When BJP president Amit Shah looks at a map of India and sees differently coloured dots, I think he sees red, literally, wondering why these regions are not saffron. There is a second dynamic here that we must understand. Small parties often tend to have large egos, and larger aspirations. The emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was a perfect example. After winning a resounding victory in Delhi, it visualised new and victorious constituencies in States like Goa and Punjab, apart from imagin-

ing itself as an alternative to the BJP across the 'Hindi Belt'. Smallness always allows for hubris and the AAP, on the basis of its Delhi victories, was already branding itself as a national party.

For a while, the AAP did warm the imagination of middle-class India. It offered not only a more 'grass-roots-oriented' theory of politics but also a different style, emphasising a range of experiments in governance. Its attempts to reform school admissions and its efforts to raise the question of environmental pollution met with an almost euphoric response. It suddenly appeared like a model for a future India. In its own tiny, Lilliputian way, the AAP had become a threat for the BJP; the possibility of an epic David vs. Goliath battle was real.

Rise and fall of AAP

The BJP has had a second plan for dominance, beyond countering the effervescence of parties like the AAP. It sees any resur-

gence of civil society as a threat. In fact, one of its first tactics was to suppress the variety of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) blossoming across India. It has also systematically attacked university space in the country, all part of its efforts to align the Constitution with the world view of the party. Arvind Kejriwal, in his initial years, combined the imagination of a civil society leader and the allure of a small party's head. The AAP's rise might have been a local event but it always managed to make national news. Given the lassitude of the Congress, the AAP was like a new guerrilla party which could easily outpoint a behemoth like the BJP. The very idea of such a David vs. Goliath battle was manna for the media. The BJP saw the Delhi municipal election as a continuation, an add-on to the Uttar Pradesh election. A defeat would have reopened the Pandora's box of scepticism.

(Contd on page 20)

By beheading soldiers, Pakistan has abandoned the dialogue option

The ostensible Rawalpindi game plan is to exacerbate unrest in Kashmir towards realising its delusional Mukti Bahini moment in the Valley. Or at least push things to where they were in early 1990s

When a soldier is beheaded or his body mutilated, the concomitant public outrage forecloses the option of dialogue. Not that talks were about to open between India and Pakistan. It's just that the signal from across the border is that Islamabad, nay Rawalpindi, is mighty pleased with the way things are flaring up on our side of Kashmir.

The anatomy of the latest conflagration on the Line of Control is no different from what has happened in the past: Pakistani troops fired on two Indian forward posts on the LoC while their Border Action Team (BAT) that was a mix of terrorists and army regulars assaulted our patrol between the posts. Bodies of two Indian soldiers killed in action were mutilated by attackers from across the border.

Our troops are capable of and will avenge the assault. But the dastardly adventure lends a peep into the mind of Pakistan's army brass euphemistically called the Rawalpindi based General Headquarters. They're the one who control Islamabad's India policy.

It was no coincidence, therefore, that a day before the May 1 mutilation episode, Pakistan's chief of army staff (COAS) Qamar Javed Bajwa reaffirmed support for what he called the "political struggle of the Kashmiris' right to self-determination."

The General's statement during a visit to the LoC was an unmistakable message to elements in the Valley that the Pakistan army was one with them in their fight against India's se-

curity forces. The brutal, headline-seeking treatment of our soldiers seemed to deliver on that resolve—besides triggering in mainland India a clamour for tougher military action against protesting Kashmiri youth with inbuilt risks of accidental, unintended or provoked excesses.

That indeed is the external dimension of the internal security crisis in the Valley. The ostensible Pakistani gameplan is to exacerbate the ongoing unrest in Kashmir towards realising its delusional Mukti Bahini moment in the Valley. Or at least push things to where they were in the late 1980s or early 1990s.

That was the time when Islamabad would lecture New Delhi on building the right climate for bilateral engagement. "Propitious climate for talks" was

actually the phrase it hurled at then Indian foreign secretary J N Dixit at the failed FS-level discussions in the first week of 1994. India needs to counter-strategise. For now, the Narendra Modi regime isn't inclined to open talks—internally or bilaterally—until terror remains the instrument of state policy of Rawalpindi-Islamabad. The same was unequivocally conveyed to Jammu and Kashmir CM Mehbooba Mufti and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan who saw a role for himself in the multi-lateral approach he advocated on Kashmir.

Television clips of schoolchildren including girls taking to streets against troops had lately prompted saner civil society voices to advocate dialogue to cool things down. Among them

was former External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha who led a Track-2 initiative in the restive State.

It's that element of sanity the Pakistani atrocity on the LoC has sought to kill by mauling dead soldiers. The beheading of Indian soldiers is another shot in the arm for hawks and a fatal blow for peaceniks. Waging peace looks an impossible idea in our increasingly jingoistic milieu.

The 'appropriate' response our army has promised to avenge Pakistan's "un-soldierly act" might come sooner than later. Given that the talks between Directors General of Military Operation (DGMO) of the two sides haven't yielded much, the retributive strike will be par for the course.

(Contd on page 20)



Being pragmatic with Pyongyang Lokpal and the law

Rhetoric and political signalling is an accepted element of crisis management provided the messages are clearly understood by those for whom these are intended. If not, it becomes a source of misunderstanding and a recipe for unintended miscalculation and potential disaster. Nowhere is this more evident than in recent exchanges between the U.S. and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) where events threaten to spin out of control.

Trump's mixed signals

In an interview to Reuters last week, U.S. President Donald Trump, while describing it as his "biggest challenge", cautioned: "There is a chance that we could end up having a major major conflict with North Korea. Absolutely." Earlier in April, amid reports that North Korea might be planning another nuclear test to coincide with the 105th birth anniversary of long-time leader Kim Il Sung, Mr. Trump had announced that "an armada, very powerful" was headed towards the Korean peninsula. After a week it emerged that the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier was actually on its way to Western Australia, on account of a lack of clarity in communications. This now stands corrected. Meanwhile, a nuclear submarine, USS Michigan, has surfaced in Korean waters.

In turn, the DPRK threatened a "super mighty pre-emptive strike". After undertaking a live firing exercise off its east coast, it followed up with another test-firing of a ballistic missile on April 29 which fizzled, causing loss of face.

During the campaign, Mr. Trump had said that he would be willing to talk to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, making it clear that Barack Obama's policy focussing on tighter sanctions was a failure. After assuming office, he adopted a harder line, declaring that he would do "whatever is necessary" to prevent North Korea from developing a nuclear-capable missile that can reach the U.S.

In the Reuters interview, however, he reflected unusual empathy when asked about Kim Jong-un: "He is 27 years old [in 2011 when he took over]. His father dies, took over a regime. So say what you want but that is not easy, especially at that age."

In an interview to NPR last week, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that while the North Korean leader may be ruthless, "he is not crazy". He held out prospects of engaging in direct talks but was unwilling to engage in "negotiations about negotiations". The U.S. has not held bilateral talks with North Korea since the Bill Clinton presidency. So clearly, there is no dearth of signalling but the question is, what is the 33-year-old Kim Jong-un expected to make of it?

Need for policy consistency

Regime acceptance and regime survival have been key priorities for Pyongyang since the collapse of the Soviet Union. A positive move in 1992 was the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula and a suspension of Team Spirit, the joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises, leading to the Basic Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation. When joint exercises were resumed in 1993, North Korea announced its decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The ensuing crisis led to talks and a year later, an Agreed Framework was concluded under which North Korea suspended its decision to withdraw from the NPT, agreed to freeze its nuclear activities, and in return, the U.S. pledged to build two light water nuclear power reactors. Food aid and humanitarian assistance provided by the Clinton administration from 1995 till 2000 was close to \$750 million.

The Bush administration declared North Korea part of the 'axis of evil' in 2002, cancelled direct talks and annulled the 1994 agreement. North Korea responded by throwing out International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors and formally quit the NPT thereby provoking a fresh crisis. China and Russia initiated Six Party Talks in 2004 which led to the 2005 joint statement which expanded the scope to more than the nuclear issue. However, the talks collapsed when the U.S. imposed sanctions a few months later; North Korea responded with its first nuclear test in 2006.

Since then, North Korea has made steady progress in its nuclear and missile programmes. An underground nuclear facility has been built at Mt. Musan. Nuclear tests were conducted in 2013 and twice last year, and it is estimated that North Korea has enough fissile material for 10 to 15 nuclear devices. By 2019, North Korea will be able to develop long-range missiles that can reach the U.S. mainland. Given Mr. Trump's redline, Mr. Jong-un is convinced that nuclear capability is the ultimate security guarantee to protect his regime against U.S. intervention.

U.S. policy has oscillated between sanctions in response to nuclear and missile tests, dilution of sanctions by China, talks about closer defence ties with Japan and South Korea, citing of additional threats by North Korea and more testing, thus repeating the cycle. U.S. expectations that sanctions would lead to regime collapse were misplaced because given China's stakes, this will not happen.

(Contd on page 20)

The Centre's obvious reluctance to set up a statutory anti-corruption institution stands completely exposed after the Supreme Court made it clear that the existing Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 is workable on its own, without having to be amended as proposed by the government. The court's order that the law, notified in 2014, is good to go is an indictment of the delay in establishing the Lokpal. It is a rejection of the attempt to explain the delay on the ground that a parliamentary standing committee's report on proposed amendments is still under consideration. The government was on weak legal footing when it claimed it was awaiting the passage of these amendments, mainly of one that related to the leader of the largest party in opposition in the Lok Sabha being considered as the Leader of the Opposition for the purposes of forming the Selection Committee to choose the Lokpal. The selection panel consists of the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Justice of India or his nominee, and an eminent jurist chosen by them. The court has noted that the Act provides for the selection committee to make appointments even when it is truncated due to a vacancy. It has made it clear that the fact that some amendments have been proposed and a parliamentary panel has submitted a report would not constitute a legal bar on enforcing the existing law.

The court has rightly refused to read down the provision on the Leader of the Opposition to mean "the leader of the largest party in the opposition". At the same time, it is curious that an amendment to this effect is pending since 2014, even after it was endorsed by the parliamentary committee in its December 2015 report. Provisions relating to the selection of the Chief Information Commissioner and the Central Bureau of Investigation Director have been amended to treat the leader of the largest opposition party as the Leader of the Opposition in the absence of anyone recognised as such.

The delay in passing this simple amendment is inexplicable. Another provision relating to the declaration of assets by public servants was amended last year. A simple way of resolving the impasse was to recognise the Congress party leader in the Lok Sabha as the Leader of the Opposition. There is no law, except a direction from the chair when G.V. Mavalankar was Speaker, that says recognition is given only to a party that has won 10% of the seats in the Lower House. A 1977 Act on the salary of the Opposition Leader defines the position as the leader of the largest party in the opposition and recognised as such by the Speaker. An inescapable inference is that the country does not have an anti-corruption ombudsman not due to any legal bar, but due to the absence of political will.



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Editor in Chief : Bhupinder Kaur Thind

Editor (Political Affairs-India) : Aruna Singh

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah

Special Correspondent :

Photographers: Ruth Alvarez/Hamad

Gagandeep Singh (INDIA)

Editorial Intern: Aman Thind

Web Coordinator : Jatinder Kumar

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REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Tel/Fax : 516 342 1076

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

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In My First 100 Days, I Kept My Promise To The American People

Donald J. Trump

One hundred days ago, I took the oath of office and made a pledge: We are not merely going to transfer political power from one party to another, but instead are going to transfer that power from Washington, District of Columbia, and give it back to the people. In the past 100 days, I have kept that promise - and more.

Issue by issue, department by department, we are giving the people their country back. After decades of a shrinking middle class, open borders and the mass offshoring of American jobs and wealth, this government is working for the citizens of our country and no one else.

The same establishment media that concealed these problems - and profited from them - is obviously not going to tell this story. That is why we are taking our message directly to America.

We have opened the White House doors to listen, engage

and act. We've invited in labor leaders, factory owners, police officers, farmers, veterans and Democrats, Republicans and independents.

The change began with the termination of the Trans-Pacific Partnership - a 12-nation pact that would have shipped millions more jobs to other countries.

But leaving the TPP was only the beginning. We have also launched an investigation into foreign trading abuses and taken steps to protect the production of American steel and aluminum. After years of federal contracts going to foreign bidders, we are ensuring that government agencies enforce "Buy American" rules and give preference to American companies - and that American companies hire American workers.

Crucially, to bring back our jobs, we are going to pursue a complete renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement: We've lost nearly a

third of our manufacturing jobs in the 23 years since that terrible deal was approved.

At the center of our economic agenda, we've undertaken the most far-reaching effort in history to remove job-killing regulations. I've ordered that for every one new regulation, two old regulations must be eliminated. We've signed a record 13 Congressional Review Act resolutions to scrap job-crushing regulations, and I've signed 29 pieces of legislation in total - a mark not surpassed in the first 100 days since Harry S. Truman. Those newly enacted laws include Veterans' Choice legislation - which became law while at the same time we've increased by 42 percent the number of veterans approved to see the doctor of their choosing. And we've provided transparency by publishing all wait times at the Veterans Affairs health system online, backed up by a new Veterans Affairs Office of Accountability.



On energy, the change has been profound. We've canceled restrictions on the production of oil, natural gas and clean coal.

What we've accomplished on immigration and criminal enforcement is nothing short of historic. After decades of unending illegal immigration and mass uncontrolled entry, we've turned the tide as never before - illegal border crossings are down 73 percent. Visa processes are being reformed to substantially improve vetting and screening, and we've launched prototypes and bidding for the border wall to stop the scourge of drugs, human trafficking and illegal immigrants from coming into our country. Federal law enforcement has

begun a crackdown on sanctuary cities that harbor criminal aliens - because we know the first duty of government is to protect American citizens.

The Departments of Homeland Security, Justice and State, and the director of national intelligence, have formed an inter-agency group for the express purpose of dismantling transnational criminal cartels. The handcuffs have been removed from our prosecutors, and they're targeting the drug dealers and gang members who prey on our citizens - and they're working to eradicate the violent cartel MS-13.

(Contd on page 20)

The Supreme Court Has Got It All Wrong On Kashmir

Yashwant Sinha

I do not know what prompted the Bar Association of J&K to approach the Supreme Court for a ban on the use of pellet guns in Kashmir. I am not even privy to the arguments it put forth for imposing such a ban. But if the plea of the Association came as a surprise, the observations of the court have left me completely baffled.

The security forces in Kashmir, in order to tackle stone-pelting mobs, generally use pellet guns. The justification for their use is that injuries caused by pellet guns are generally not fatal and thus enables them to disperse the crowd and control the situation at a cost that is cheaper in terms of human lives compared to the use of more lethal weapons. It is another matter that pellet guns can cause unintended injury to any part of the body and when the pellets hit the eye, they can cause injury leading to blindness.

Nearly a hundred people were blinded in Kashmir during last year's upheaval because of the use of pellet guns. The anger in the Valley at their use is therefore both understandable and justified. The people feel that they

have been specially subjected to this discriminatory treatment as nowhere else in the country have pellet guns been used to quell or disperse crowds.

I am against the use of pellet guns in Kashmir. The government feels concerned too, hence the search for its replacement. But whether pellet guns should be used or not in a given situation is for the government and the law and order authorities to decide, not the Supreme Court. Perhaps, it should not have entertained the petition in the first place.

The advice of the court to the Bar Association is even more astounding. It has told the Bar Association (as if it was within its power) to tell the youth not to throw stones and assured the Association that if stone-pelting stops, the court would order the government not to use pellet guns for two weeks obviously on an experimental basis. Why on earth would the security forces resort to the use of pellet guns if stone-pelting stops? They do not need a Supreme Court order for this! The other observations of the court are equally baffling. It has said that both sides should "take two steps back" and "address the core issues". This is a very con-

structive approach no doubt. But at the same time, the court has also told the Kashmiris "if you keep throwing stones, and close schools and colleges, how will talks happen? Talks must be within the framework of the Constitution. "Could the official spokesperson of the government have done any better? The court in other words, is laying rigid conditions for the talks to take place and they are: -- a) that stone-pelting must stop; b) that schools and colleges must reopen; c) that talks must be held within the framework of the Constitution; and d) that the Bar Association must assume the responsibility for ensuring all this. The court told the Association "this is (going to create) history. You can play a role and you will be remembered for times to come."

Any one who has even a nodding acquaintance with the problems in Kashmir would hardly be able to suppress a laugh at the observations of the court. First, it is not within the power of the Bar Association of J&K to ensure that these conditions are met. If it had such clout, it would have ensured that stones were not thrown in the first place. The same applies to the opening of

schools and colleges. And as far as the Constitution is concerned, which Constitution is the Supreme Court talking about? A Constitution which has been amended 101 times? If during the talks it is agreed that the Constitution should be amended further to accommodate the understanding reached, would it still be within the framework of the Constitution? There is nothing which is not amendable in the Constitution except the basic features as defined by the Supreme Court itself, until some other bench rules otherwise. Perhaps encouraged by the attitude of the Court, the Attorney General of India asserted "the government would come to the negotiating table only if legally recognized stakeholders participate in the dialogue and not with the separatist elements who rake up the issue of Accession or Azadi in Kashmir." While I am amazed at the naivete of the learned judges of the highest court of the land, the statement of the Attorney General effectively betrays the lofty promises made in the Agenda for Alliance of the PDP-BJP government in J&K. This is also a clear departure from the Vajpayee line on Kashmir so lovingly referred to in

the Agenda.

Some weeks ago, the court had tied itself in knots in the Ayodhya case. While hearing a petition filed by Subramaniam Swamy, the court told him to hold a dialogue with all concerned to arrive at an amicable settlement of this vexed issue. The Hon'ble Chief Justice even offered to act as a mediator in the case. It was only in the next hearing that the court realized that Swamy was not a party to the dispute and withdrew its advice to him to hold a dialogue with all concerned. The reluctance of some parties to the dispute persuaded the Hon'ble Chief Justice to withdraw his offer of mediation. The Ayodhya case has once again been consigned to the judicial cold storage. The short point is that the courts, including the highest, should restrain themselves from delving into matters which are entirely political. Political issues are best left to the politicians and to the political process. Jammu and Kashmir is a political problem crying out for a political solution. It has legal overtones, no doubt, but those concerns would be taken care of by the political dialogue as and when it starts.

How We Are Letting Heart of India Slip Away

Mani Shankar Aiyar

The Maoists/Naxals are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their insurgency in the forests of Dandakaranya. They have combatting them a "three-lakh strong paramilitary force, the largest in the world," says security expert, M.P. Nathanael (emphasis added) in the Indian Express.

Besides having at their disposal multi-million dollar Heron drones whose sights can penetrate heavy forest foliage, the force is equipped with AK-47s, Under-Barrel Grenade Launchers, LMCs, INSAS rifles, AKM assault rifles, wireless sets, binoculars, bullet-proof jackets, AK magazines and ammunition. How do I know? Because this is the equipment the Naxals made off with after their attack on our security forces at Bhejji on March 11. This time round - the attack at Burkapal in Sukma district on April 24 that took 26 jawans' lives - it has been reported that again "there has been a huge loss of weapons". So, it is principally from the Government of India's Home Ministry, via the CRPF, that the Naxals get the wherewithal

to fight their war. Nandini Sundar, author of *The Burning Forest*, has summed it up pungently in the sub-title of her book: "India's War in Bastar".

For half a century, we have been losing this war against our own citizens. And that is because the one thing lacking in our armoury has been the people's support. Take the present incident. The under-construction road that the CRPF detail was guarding runs through thick forest. Up to 400 heavily-armed Maoists were able to silently gather in the vicinity of the road-works - and bide their time. No one - not one villager - tipped off the CRPF about the looming threat. And why? Because, as DP Upadhyay, Deputy Inspector General, Dantewada, confesses, "Villagers stopped coming to the camp", adding, "unless they were desperate." Clearly, the Maoists, celebrating their Golden Anniversary, had not rendered the villagers "desperate". And that is how an estimated 400 well-armed Naxals were able to get to the site unnoticed, "barely a kilometre away from the 74th

battalion camp."

The CRPF calls this "intelligence failure". It is, but it would be more accurate to treat this as a failure of intelligence - a failure of ordinary good common sense to recognize that the Naxals got into the forest, in the first place, because the State absented itself. The only face of the State the tribals saw was that of the intimidating forest guard, the corrupt forest contractor, the bullying thanedar, and the bribetaking patwari. As Sayanathan Ghosh, in a Letter to the Editor of *The Indian Express* has succinctly put it, tribal hamlets have "schools but no teachers, tube-wells but no water, roads but no means of transport. There is no accountability to such endeavours. Only an inclusive, compassionate administration can douse these insurgencies". How utterly-butterly correct!

None of this is breaking news. A decade ago, the Planning Commission set up the Debu Bandyopadhyay expert committee that, in excruciatingly painful detail, set out the sad tale of the trials and tribulations of

India's tribal communities. It stressed that the solution lay in sincere implementation of The Provisions of The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 [PESA]. Simultaneously, the Home Ministry asked for an additional grant of 600 crores to induct and equip a massive surge in security forces in the Bastar area. That demand was immediately accepted, but the Bandyopadhyay report was kept in limbo. A few years later, another expert committee, this time under my chairmanship, on leveraging Panchayat Raj Institutions for the more effective delivery of public goods and services, was set up by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj at the directions of the Prime Minister. The expert committee, inter alia, took up the threads from the Bandyopadhyay report, but suffered the same fate as the earlier report. Despite much hypocritical repetition of tired cliches about the need to win the "hearts and minds" of the tribal communities, the ground reality remains that, in the eyes of both the central and state governments, it is only harsh police

and paramilitary action, laced with a leavening of State-imposed "development", that finds any resonance with them. So, a blind belief that the Naxals can be wiped out if the security forces are adequately strengthened, rather than some sentimental nonsense about PESA and fully-empowered tribal panchayats, dominates the discourse. In consequence, the Maoists are celebrating half a century of taking on the Indian state and ruling the roost in 106 districts in 13 states of the country.

The symbol of this approach is that the Home Minister's principal security adviser, K Vijay Kumar (of sandal-wood smuggler, Veerappan fame) and an additional DG have been ordered by Rajnath Singh to spend the next two months in south Bastar, while the Ministers for Panchayati Raj and Tribal Affairs rot away in obscurity in New Delhi, counting for nothing. The Naxals realize that this way they will be celebrating their centenary in another 50 years' time.

(Contd on page 21)

Kejriwal Must Apologise To Volunteers, Lose Ego

"Friends, when one gets such a victory, arrogance can creep in. And if one gets arrogant, everything is lost. If we turn arrogant we will never complete our mission." - Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, 14th Feb 2015.

Kejriwal's words have proved prophetic as an arrogant AAP lost Punjab, Goa and finally, Delhi. I was hoping that after the MCD results; there would be some serious introspection and course correction. The first two days have given a mixed response.

Instead of gracefully accepting the verdict of the voters, as has been the tradition of Indian democracy - we saw AAP leaders show their typical traits of arrogance and anger while vent-

ing and spewing venom at EVMs and the BJP. I was distraught - will they ever learn? Instead of focusing on the bad works by BJP in MCD for 10 years, the arrogance of the party made them convert the election campaign as a referendum on Kejriwal vs Modi and AAP lost miserably. AAP just does not seem to understand that Delhi and India are angry with the party. They seem to have lost touch with the ground.

But then Kejriwal tweeted congratulating the winners and some semblance of sanity returned.

More hopes were raised as Sanjay Singh and Durgesh Pathak resigned from top Punjab posts taking responsibility of the failures. Ashish Talwar and Dilip Pandey have done the same for Delhi debacle. All of them (except Talwar) though continue to be part of AAP's highest decision-making body - the Political Affairs Committee (PAC). But, rather than finding faults, let me wholeheartedly welcome the fact that at least someone is showing accountability.

In a political party or government, sanskar or culture always flows from the top. If there is

genuine churning and introspection, then there is no need to insulate the top leadership from accountability.

Arvind Kejriwal should quit as either the convenor of AAP or the Chief Minister of Delhi. The party is seeing its lowest support in its short history. Actually, AAP is looked upon today as a party of non-serious politicians at best and an anti-national vote-bank political party at worst. Should Kejriwal not take the onus?

The voters of Delhi have spoken and given their verdict as AAP's vote share plummeted from 54% in 2015 to 26% now. So, he has failed as the Chief Minister too.

My view is that Kejriwal should not hold two positions and give up the post of the Convenor of AAP. He can appoint someone with integrity and ability like an Atishi or Prithvi Reddy or both together.

They should take up two major roles - one would be to create strong organisation and leadership in states where the party has a good presence. Eventually, there is a need to go down to booth level to create a robust

organisation with internal elections. The party at the state level should only contest local elections for the next few years. This will strengthen the grass root base, and only after getting good results in Municipal and Zilla Parishad elections should the party venture to fight state-level elections.

The second role is more important and that should be to create systems and processes to ensure that the agenda of the party is not compromised again. There is a need for a volunteer-driven and transparent, accountable party that has internal democracy and collective leadership at the top. The leadership should be pan-India (leadership and decision-making should not be Delhi centric). Create an independent internal Lokpal (preferably bring back Admiral Ramdas, who served the party with such grace and distinction), make donations and accounts transparent, bring back the donation list on the website, make the party RTI - compliant, decentralise decision-making and create grievance redressal mechanisms. Volunteers should

once again become the primary unit of the party.

Kejriwal should continue as the Chief Minister of Delhi and take up key portfolios in the Delhi government. For the next three years, AAP Delhi should focus on good governance in Delhi. Instead of blaming others and ranting, the party should concentrate on doing some silent, serious and genuine governance. Maybe, maybe people may change their mind about AAP.

Leave the PM-ship ambition for now.

Kejriwal should call a major party meeting and apologise to its volunteers and to the nation. Personally I would be really happy, if the present leadership can put aside their egos and old wounds for the nation. The top leadership of AAP should interact with Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav and genuinely request them to join the party and give them some serious responsibility. AAP has not won a single election after they have been removed. As for Swaraj India, victory in elections is far, far away.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat may have called for a nationwide ban on cow slaughter only now, but the rot had set in much earlier

(Agencies) The powerful RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has called for a nationwide ban on cow slaughter, describing this as a 'sacred duty', and adding that in states where the RSS has dedicated swayamsewaks in power, strong laws are already in place.

In 1954, when Congress MP



BJP must not invoke Gandhi to seek death for those who kill a cow

Seth Govind Das moved a resolution in the Lok Sabha for a total ban on cow slaughter, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru reacted with acerbic firmness — as he did against all forms of religious fundamentalism — declaring 'I would rather resign than accept this nonsensical demand'. He warded off similar demands from the President of India Rajendra Prasad, dubbing banning cow slaughter 'unimportant and reactionary'. We have such travelled a very long way as a nation since then.

However it must be admitted that the rot had set in much earlier. Congress chief minister Sampurnanand of Uttar Pradesh in 1955 introduced a law to ban cow slaughter in open defiance of Nehru's explicit wishes. Nehru described it as a 'wrong step',

but the law was possible because cow slaughter prohibition was included under the Directive Principles of an otherwise progressive Constitution. Nehru and Ambedkar had themselves reluctantly compromised by allowing this, only ensuring that the language of Section 48 did not justify the proposed ban on the grounds of respecting majoritarian Hindu sentiment but instead the alleged imperatives of scientific animal husbandry. Socialist Jayaprakash Narayan in 1966 wrote to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi seeking a ban on cow slaughter, declaring 'I cannot understand why, in a Hindu majority country like India, where rightly or wrongly, there is such a strong feeling about cow-slaughter, there cannot be a legal

ban'. Indira Gandhi refused then, resisting a nation-wide agitation by many Hindu organisations. But in 1982, in line with many steps to appease Hindu religious sentiment, she wrote to 14 Chief Ministers urging that the cow-slaughter ban be enforced in letter and spirit, and not allowed to be circumvented deviously. Prime Minister Morarji Desai had earlier admitted a move to bring a national cow-slaughter ban into the legislative competence of the central government.

Today most states have passed laws that prohibit cow slaughter, except Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Lakshadweep; Assam and West Bengal permit the slaughter of cows over ages of 10 and 14 years respectively. India Spend

estimates that 99.38 percent of the country's population is covered by cow slaughter laws. Laws banning cow slaughter in nearly half of these states are roughly 50 years old, enacted during the tenure of the Congress. Election speeches are today laced with innuendos attacking the 'pink revolution' of an alleged surge of beef exports. The Haryana government has even created a uniformed police force unit for cow protection. The Gujarat legislature recently approved life imprisonment for killing cows. UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had as an MP introduced a private member's bill in Parliament seeking a nation-wide ban on cow slaughter, and his first major drive in office has been in closing numerous abattoirs, casually

imperilling the livelihoods of tens of thousands. BJP MP Subramaniam Swamy has introduced a bill seeking death penalty for those convicted for cow slaughter. It is particularly unfortunate that Swamy invoked Mahatma Gandhi while seeking capital punishment for those who kill a cow in this proposed law. There is no doubt that Gandhi was deeply devoted to the cow. Gandhi said he would 'defend its worship against the whole world', that cow worship is central to Hinduism, and even that she is superior to our biological mothers. 'Our mother, when she dies, means expenses of burial or cremation. Mother cow is as useful dead as when she is alive. We can make use of every part of her body — her flesh, her bones, her intestines, her horns and her skin.' But still he stoutly opposed a legal ban on cow slaughter. 'I have been long pledged to serve the cow but how can my religion also be the religion of the rest of the Indians? It will mean coercion against those Indians who are not Hindus. We have been shouting from the house-tops that there will be no coercion in the matter of religion.' To therefore appeal to Gandhi while advocating a nationwide ban on cow slaughter with death for those who defy the ban is disingenuous and unjust. He was very clear that to impose such a ban on non-Hindu Indians would amount to bullying by the majority which would run counter to the spirit and the promises of the freedom struggle, that India would belong equally to all regardless of their faith, caste, gender and language.

Seconds Before A Raid, Petrol Pump 'Vanished' in UP's Lucknow

(Agencies) A petrol pump "vanished" in Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow last night, just before a raid team arrived to confirm suspected petrol theft. The owners had ripped out the petrol dispensing machines and hid them.

A board claiming "Under Renovation" completed the effect, but it did not fool the Special Task Force that has come across dozens of "abandoned" pumps during their raids in the past few days.

The elite force, which tracks organized crime, soon found the machines and also clear signs that a chip that helped fool customers by giving them less fuel had been removed.

Last week, the Uttar Pradesh police uncovered the massive theft that worked on these remote-controlled chips - 1,000 of them in fact, installed in petrol pumps across the state. These facilitated the theft of petrol worth about Rs. 15 lakh a day. There are 6,000 petrol stations across the state and the math is staggering.

Nine petrol stations have been sealed and 23 people have been arrested, including four owners.

According to police officers investigating the theft, upto 100 ml had been stolen to each litre.

At the Standard Petrol Pump on the outskirts of Lucknow, the team found more evidence of chips removed in a hurry. "In our past experience on raids in seven petrol pumps, a chip is inserted into these mother boards that quickens the pulse rate for fuel dispensing using these wires...those chips seem to have been removed in a rush," said the officer.

What the chip means for the consumer is this - if one asks for a litre of petrol, a remote-controlled chip installed inside the fuel dispensing machine will ensure that about 50 - 100 ml less petrol comes out even though the readings on the machine will be perfect.

In Lucknow's Thakurganj, the manager and the staff tried to escape when they realized that a raid team was on its way. After hours of searching, three chips and remote controls were found. "...I used to switch on the remote myself each morning. When there were



checks by the oil company, the remotes were switched off," said Hari Kishen Verma, the manager. But he insisted that his petrol pump is more honest than most, since only three of 24 nozzles were controlled by the chip.

"This is an organised racket and we

have to get to the bottom of this. The procedure of inserting these chips inside the machines is complicated. We have arrested one person so far, an electrician who installed such chips inside many machines in Lucknow," Dr Chaturvedi said.

Arvind Kejriwal's 'Mission Kumar Vishwas' After Talk Of A Coup Attempt



(Agencies) New Delhi : Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal dispatched his deputy Manish Sisodia on Monday evening to placate Kumar Vishwas, a senior leader of their Aam Aadmi Party, who is upset at being accused of plotting a coup to replace Mr Kejriwal as party chief. The mission was successful. Mr Vishwas was reportedly assured that action will be

He will also be asked to prove them, failing which he could be suspended from the party, sources said. Mr Vishwas will attend the meeting. Mr Kejriwal, who had earlier in the day gagged party leaders warning them against warring publicly, drove to Mr Sisodia's residence for a two-hour meeting today before sending him to Mr Vishwas' Delhi home along with another top party leader Sanjay Singh, seen as the leader of the anti-Kumar Vishwas faction.

On Sunday, Mr Khan had sent out WhatsApp messages alleging that Kumar Vishwas has met party ministers and lawmakers in a takeover bid. He said Mr Vishwas' plan B is to quit AAP and

join the BJP, taking with him a number of the party's legislators in Delhi. More than 35 AAP legislators from Delhi and Punjab have written to Mr Kejriwal demanding action against Mr Khan. They said Mr Khan's allegations do not just malign Mr Vishwas, a founder member of the party, but also damage AAP.

Mr Khan is known to be close to Sanjay Singh and other leaders like Dilip Pandey and Brijesh Pathak, who took the fall for the party's defeat in the civic polls and have resigned. Kumar Vishwas' supporters see in Mr Khan's accusations an attempt to stall any move to assign him an important position in the party. Mr

Vishwas has so far only had charge of AAP's overseas initiatives. The allegations came after Mr Vishwas told NDTV on the weekend that deep structural changes "that could go right to the top" will be made in the Aam Aadmi Party after its humiliating defeat in the Delhi civic polls last month. He said Mr Kejriwal is surrounded by "yes men" and had on their advice, blamed electronic voting machines or EVMs for the defeat.

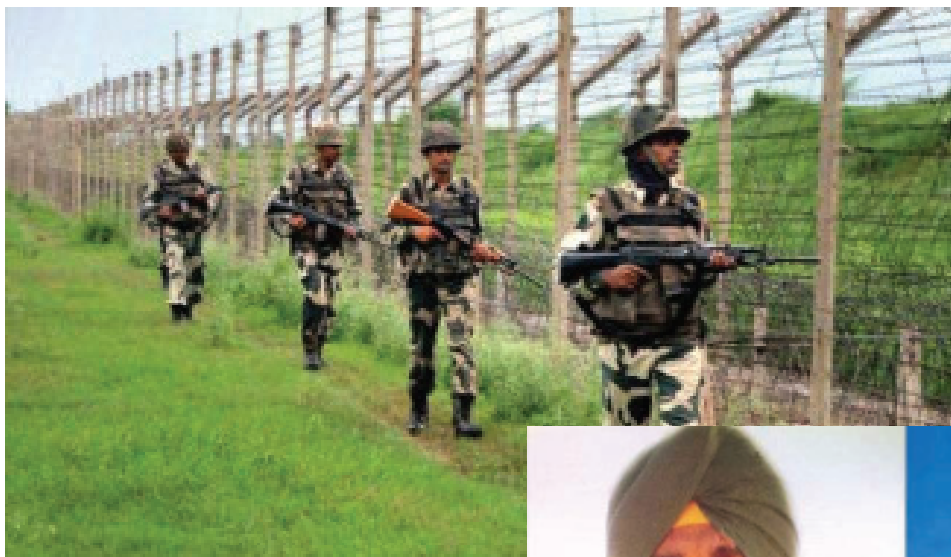
"Kumar is my younger brother. Some people are trying to drive a wedge between us. They are enemies of the party. They should refrain. No one can separate us," Mr Kejriwal had tweeted on Sunday. Mr

Vishwas, 46, has made no comments; he only retweeted Mr Kejriwal.

Mr Vishwas has periodically been accused of planning to quit AAP and join the BJP ever since he praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi a few years ago. His party has always joined him in quelling the rumours, the last in January this year.

Two years ago, Mr Kejriwal had led the Aam Aadmi Party to a sweep of the Delhi assembly elections, with the party winning 67 of 70 seats. The BJP had won the other three. Since then, two lawmakers have quit AAP and joined the BJP, which also snatched the Rajouri Garden seat last month in a by-election.

Pakistan Kills, Mutilates 2 Indian Soldiers, Army Vows Revenge



(Agencies) After India vowed revenge for the mutilation of its two soldiers killed in firing along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday, Pakistan's army put out a denial. Calling India's allegation "false", the Inter-Services Public Relation said in a statement, "Pakistan Army is a highly professional force and shall never disrespect a soldier, even Indian." Pakistan also denied violating ceasefire.

At around 8:30 am yesterday, an army jawan and a constable of the Border Security Force were on patrol

between two forward posts when Pakistan fired rockets and mortar bombs. Sources said that Pakistan's Border Action Team crossed the Line of Control, the de facto border between the two countries, and ambushed the patrol team. It did not breach the wire fence that India uses as a boundary.

The Pakistan army also kept up heavy firing at the Line of Control. When the patrol team took cover,

Head Constable Prem Sagar of the Border Security Force and Naib Subedar Paramjeet Singh of the army were left behind. They were killed and their bodies were mutilated.

"In an unsoldierly act by the Pak Army, the bodies of two of our soldiers in the patrol were mutilated. Such despicable act of

Pakistan Army will be appropriately responded," said the Indian army's Northern Command.

Union Minister Arun Jaitley described the killings as "reprehensible and inhuman" and said such acts "do not take place even during war".



The incident is set to worsen ties between the two countries, which have been deeply strained after repeated ceasefire violations by Pakistan, the terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir and the death sentence handed to Indian man Kulbhushan Jadhav, who was arrested in Pakistan last year.

Afghan national with 46 capsules of heroin in his abdomen succumbs to death



(Agencies) Afghan national Mahdiya Dawood (55) had come to Delhi on a medical visa citing health conditions. After reaching Delhi and staying in the city for two days at a relative's place, he died. While no one had a clue about the reason of his death, a report from AIIMS shocked his relatives and police authorities alike.

"When Dawood's body was taken to AIIMS, doctors scanned 46 capsules containing heroin in his abdomen, which costs around Rs 5 crore. He died due to the capsules bursting inside his body," said a senior doctor.

Incidentally, only around two weeks back, a similar incident was reported at Safdarjung hospital. In that case too, the deceased was an Afghan. Both had died due to toxicity inside their bodies due to consumption of drugs. Dr Sudhir Gupta, head of forensic unit at AIIMS, told Mail Today, "Most of the time, drug peddlers escape easily from airport security as they swallow heroin capsules. In fact, Dawood had escaped security checks at IGI Airport. His run ended when one of the capsules ruptured in his stomach, as a result of which he died of inflammation and toxicity in his body." "Had the drug not ruptured inside his stomach, it would have been difficult for us to detect the drug racket in the city," he said, adding that the capsule ruptured as it was not sealed properly. "It was only after an X-ray that doctors found the 46 capsules. Dawood must have consumed the pouches orally as no surgical marks were seen on his body. He suffered haemorrhage in his stomach," said Dr Abhishek Yadav, assistant professor at the AIIMS forensic department.

Not just red beacon: other unnecessary frills VIPs in India enjoy

Starting today, ministers, politicians and bureaucrats will be banned from using red beacons but lal battis are not the only frills ministers and VIPs in India enjoy.



(Agencies) Starting today, ministers, politicians and bureaucrats will be banned from using red beacons atop their vehicles, thanks to the government's decisions that doesn't even exempt the country's top VIPs like the President, Prime Minister and the Chief Justice of India.

But are red beacons the only privilege Indian VIPs — especially ministers and bureaucrats — enjoy? Absolutely not. While lal battis allow ministers to out-manoeuvre traffic and bring the rest of the traffic to a halt, various others frills eat into taxpayer's money.

No frisking at airports
Union ministers and ministers travelling on government work are exempt from frisking at international airports. A total of 33 categories of people are on the government's no-frisk list at present, including former presidents, deputy prime minister, the Chief Justice of India, speaker of the Lok Sabha, Union cabinet ministers, chief ministers, former prime ministers, leaders of Opposition in both Houses, Bharat Ratna awardees, ambassadors, Supreme Court judges, UPSC chairperson, chief election commissioner and the

comptroller and auditor general of India.

First class travel
Ministers are given first class plane tickets for all official travel in India and overseas. Same is the case for train travel within the country.

Lutyens Delhi residence
Despite having homes allotted by respective State governments in their home states, ministers are also allotted residences in Lutyens Delhi, for which they pay a rent of just about Rs 2,000. Their homes further come with free water, near-free electricity, security and other

such amenities. These MP bungalows are also furnished with air conditioners, refrigerators and television sets, free of cost. The maintenance and upkeep of the residences comes out of taxpayer's money.

Hotel suites
All ministers are given suites in the hotels they stay at, while they travel for official work. The justification given for the luxury is that ministers conduct everyday meetings in their rooms, but the price for their luxury comes out of the taxpayer's pocket.

Security cover

450 Indians are provided a VVIP security cover, according to a Hindu report. The list has continued to swell over the years, even as the NSG - a force trained for counter-terrorism operations - has requested to downsize the number. NSG commandos say that the job is not only demoralising but also demanding for the agency which is already a lean force.

The business tycoon couple Mukesh and Nita Ambani are possibly the only private corporate entity to be accorded government VVIP security, but they pay for their cover.

Curious case of Justice Karnan A history of controversies and mystery

The Supreme Court today ordered medical examination of Justice CS Karnan of the Calcutta High Court. Justice Karnan responded by passing an order for psychiatric examination of the seven judges of the apex court who heard case against him.

(Agencies) If Justice CS Karnan of Calcutta High Court is made to follow the Supreme Court's order, he will be appearing before a medical board for examination on May 4.

The Supreme Court directed the Kolkata government hospital to carry out the medical examination of Justice Karnan in a contempt case.

Interestingly, Justice Karnan passed a retaliatory order from Calcutta High Court directing the 'DGP of Delhi' (there is no DGP in Delhi, police is headed by commissioner here) to produce the seven judges of the Supreme Court bench that passed order against him before a medical board for psychiatric examination.

However, the order passed by Justice Karnan stands nullified by an earlier order of the Supreme Court. The apex court had directed all the authorities

in the country not to obey any order passed or direction issued by Justice Karnan since February 8, when contempt of court proceeding was initiated against him.

THE CONTEMPT CASE
It is not usual for the Supreme Court to set up a seven-judge bench for a contempt of court hearing. This is the first such instance of a seven-judge bench hearing a contempt case signaling how serious cognizance the apex court has taken of the action of Justice Karnan.

Justice Karnan is facing the contempt case after he accused 20 judges of the high judiciary including those currently serving in the Supreme Court of corruption.

Justice Karnan wrote letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking appropriate action against all the judges named by him. Till now, Justice Karnan has not produced evidence to back

his allegations.

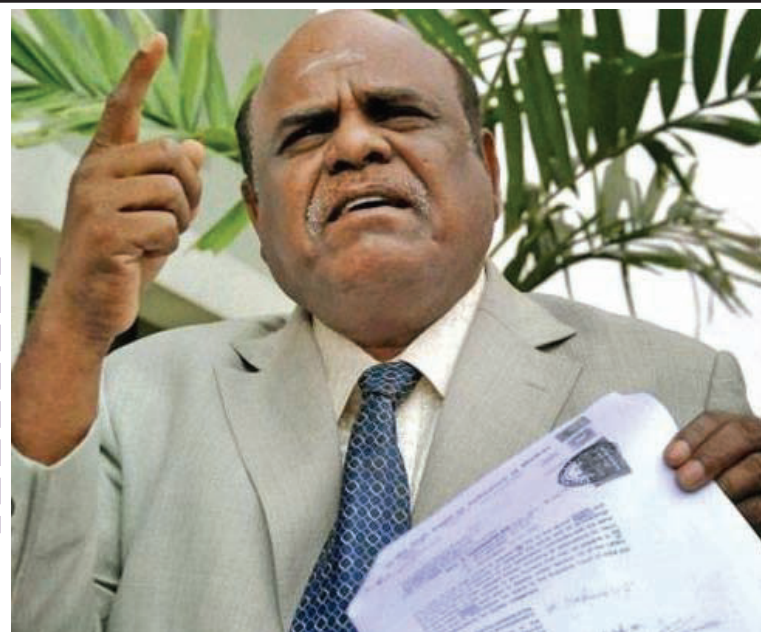
The seven judges hearing the contempt case against Justice Karnan are CJI JS Khehar, Justices Dipak Misra, J Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi, M B Lokur, P C Ghose and Kurian Joseph.

CONTROVERSIES AND JUSTICE KARNAN

Justice Karnan was transferred to Calcutta High Court after he had frequent run ins with the fellow judges at the Madras High Court.

In 2011, Justice Karnan caused a huge controversy when he called a press conference in Chennai to accuse one of his fellow judges of caste discrimination. Justice Karnan alleged that the fellow judge 'deliberately' touched him with his foot as he was a Dalit.

In 2015, Justice Karnan initiated a suo motu contempt proceeding against the then Chief Justice of Madras High Court Sanjayan Kaul.



Justice Karnan accused Justice Kaul of harassing him for being a Dalit.

Justice Karnan alleged that he was 'insignificant and dummy' portfolios in the Madras High Court by Justice Kaul. Later, the Supreme Court stayed the contempt proceedings.

In another incident, Justice Karnan had stormed into a courtroom in the Madras High Court hearing a case of judicial appointment. Justice Karnan demanded that he be allowed to hear the case.

CONFRONTATION WITH SUPREME COURT

In February last year, Justice Karnan again launched a tirade against Justice Kaul accusing him of corruption. Sensing that it was being difficult for the Madras High Court to handle Justice Karnan, the Supreme Court transferred him to the

Calcutta High Court.

Justice Karnan responded to the development by ordering stay on the apex court order of his transfer. The matter was heard by a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court, which lifted the stay on his transfer.

Justice Karnan retaliated by passing an order to register case under the SC/SC atrocities law against the two Supreme Court judges for lifting the ban. The apex court threatened to initiate a contempt case against him if he refused to follow its direction. Finally, the then Chief Justice of India TS Thakur had a closed-door meeting with Justice Karnan following which he agreed to move to the Calcutta High Court. Justice Karnan had then apologised to the Supreme Court saying his had lost his 'mental balance'.



Is China using its One Belt One Road initiative as an alibi to meddle in Kashmir dispute?

China has made huge investment in its One Belt One Road initiative, whose significant part runs across Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Therefore, China cannot afford to be a mute spectator to the Kashmir dispute.

(Agencies) Global Times, China's hardline tabloid has called for an increased Chinese role in South and Southeast Asia.

Citing Chinese mediation between Myanmar and Bangladesh over the Rohingya refugees issue in an article published today, it read that it is imperative that China protects the interests of its organisations with their increasing global footprint across the world, saying that 'Beijing cannot turn a deaf ear to such demands'.

It read that, China has made huge investments in many countries under its 'One Belt One Road' initiative and therefore it has 'vested interests' to mediate in regional conflicts including the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan'.

According to the article, the

Chinese experience over the Rohingya issue should serve as a template for the larger Chinese role in South and Southeast Asia.

MEDIA'S INSINUATIONS

Such provocations by a section of the media in China are gradually becoming a trend. Recently, an editorial suggested that China should intervene in the Kashmir issue actively after India declined illegitimate Chinese demands of clamping down on Dalai Lama's Arunachal Pradesh visit.

China claims Arunachal Pradesh is South Tibet and even went on to rename six Arunachal Pradesh cities in maps released by it.

India has made it clear that Jammu and Kashmir, including Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit-Baltistan, is an integral part of India and if there has to be a dialogue, it has to be bilateral in

nature and would focus on Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

THE PARADOX

A significant part of China's One Belt One Road initiative passes through PoK where China is making huge investment and which India has objected to because ideally it is Indian territory.

It also exposes China's double standards.

China's considers Arunachal Pradesh its territory and cannot tolerate Dalai Lama's visit to the state but on the other hand, it sends an army in the name of safeguarding a disputed territory that has been historically a part of India.

ON MYANMAR

Though some reports say that Myanmar has turned down the offer of Chinese mediation, Myanmar may finally succumb to China's pressure.

After Ganga, 'living entity' status to be given to Narmada river

Last week, Union Minister Rajnath Singh had suggested that the Madhya Pradesh government should bring a bill in the state assembly in order to give a living entity status to river Narmada



(Agencies) A month after the Uttarakhand High Court declared Ganga and Yamuna and their tributaries as "living entities having the status of a legal person", Madhya Pradesh government has decided to give similar recognition to Narmada river by passing a law in the state assembly tomorrow.

Last week, Union Minister Rajnath Singh had suggested that the Madhya Pradesh government should bring a bill in the state assembly in order to give a living entity status to river Narmada. Responding to the suggestion, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had assured that his government would introduce a bill to that effect immediately.

While giving the "legal status" of living humans to the country's two of the most sacred rivers, the court had said the Director, Namami Gange project for cleaning and rejuvenating the river, the Chief Secretary and the Advocate General of Uttarakhand would act as the "legal parents" of the holy rivers. The court also said they have been tasked to work as the human face to protect, conserve and preserve them and their tributaries.

Arms smuggling, animal skin trade racket busted at Retd. Colonel's house

Col (retd) Devindra Kumar and his son Prashant Bishnoi, a trained shooter, now face a slew of charges under wildlife protection act and gunrunning.

(Agencies) The strong arm of the law finally caught up with a retired Indian Army colonel and his national-level shooting champion son for training their guns on protected wildlife. In a joint raid operation that lasted 17 hours at the duo's residence in Meerut's Civil Lines area, the Directorate of Revenue

Intelligence (DRI) and the forest department on Sunday claimed to have smashed a cartel of poaching, wildlife hunting and arms smuggling. Col (retd) Devindra Kumar and his son Prashant Bishnoi, a trained shooter, now face a slew of charges under wildlife protection act and gunrunning. Local residents told media the

father-son duo led a lavish lifestyle with a fleet of luxury vehicles and collection of guns.

POLICE RAIDS

The raiding team recovered a large haul of animal skins, antlers, trophy heads, ivory, over 40 unlicensed guns, Rs1 crore in cash and 117 kilogram of neelgai (blue bull) meat from the

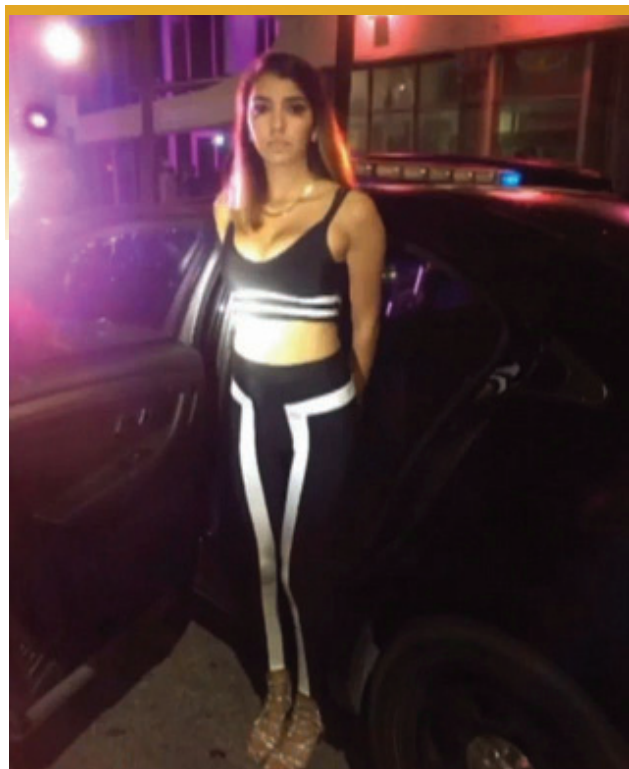
premises. "Who could have thought of such illegal activity here? There is a woman police station nearby and a DIG living barely 500 metre away," said a local resident, requesting anonymity. Apparently, they duo had also installed CCTV cameras on the street leading to their house and at the entry point. While



Devindra Kumar is believed to have told the police and raiding party that the guns belonged to his son, police sources said he was tightlipped about the recovery of animal parts on his premises.

REVELATIONS

While members of the search team shunned the media, sources in the DRI and wildlife department said the next round of investigation will establish the supply chain for the animal parts and the illegal arms found from the house.



Partygoer 'drugged men, had sex with them and stole tens of thousands of dollars

(Agencies) A Florida woman who told a judge in court on Monday that she was a prostitute allegedly seduced men after meeting them in Miami clubs and then made off with their prized possessions.

Yomna Fouad, 21, was taken into custody after she was spotted outside of Miami Beach's Rockwell nightclub by one of her accusers, according to ABC 10.

The two began to argue

and when police came to the scene, they arrested her. She is now facing larceny, grand theft and false identification charges.

Fouad has been accused by Alain Rene Galette, 31, of taking off with his clothing, cash, jewelry and a Rolex watch totaling \$32,000 in value after the two met at the valet outside of a nightclub before going back to his place to have sex in March.

Surveillance footage shows what Galette said was him and Fouad entering his building, and then Fouad leaving by herself with his belongings.

'I wake up drugged, not knowing what's going on,

and all my stuff missing,' he said.

'She was an innocent face,' Galette added. 'I was not expecting that from her.'

Galette, a music industry professional, said he did not know at the time that Fouad was a prostitute.

After Fouad allegedly stole his belongings, Galette was on the lookout for her and recognized her from the tattoos on her hands, even though she had changed her hair cut and color since their encounter.

'It's like a henna-type tattoo,' he said. 'I told the security [at the nightclub] and they held her until police arrived.'

After Fouad's arrest, it was discovered she is suspected of being linked to a similar case from May 2016.

In this instance, she allegedly acted with a friend to victimize a man they met at LIV nightclub inside the Fontainebleau hotel, according to an arrest report.

Fouad told the man her name was Rebecca 'Becca' Arias, police said.

At the end of the evening the man offered to get a hotel room for himself, Fouad and the friend. The women followed the man to the hotel room, where he placed a \$46,000 Rolex watch and \$8,000 in cash inside the hotel room safe,

the report said. The man reportedly left the room and when he came back, the women and his belongings were gone. Fouad is suspected of being connected to several other similar instances of seduction and theft throughout the east coast, stretching up to New York. At least 10 other police departments are investigating Fouad at this time.

She was ordered to be held in lieu of a \$50,000 in court on Monday.

As of Monday, Fouad remained in custody at Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center in Miami. A phone call Tuesday to the facility was not immediately returned.

Police dispatcher in Cleveland is heard SNORING on a recorded 911 call

(Agencies) A Cleveland police dispatcher heard snoring on a recorded 911 call has been suspended for six days after sleeping on the job.

Jasmin Thomas pleaded no contest to internal charges from the police department's investigation.



And one recorded dispatch tape of Thomas answering calls from people in the community is perhaps the most inflammatory.

'Cleveland 911, what is your emergency? Do you need police, fire or EMS?' Thomas is heard saying to a caller in a video released by Fox 8

Cleveland.

But mere seconds later, loud snores can be heard coming from her end of the line.

Audio recordings also show that Thomas took ten seconds to answer one call and then 40 seconds to transfer the caller to firefighters about a burning stove.

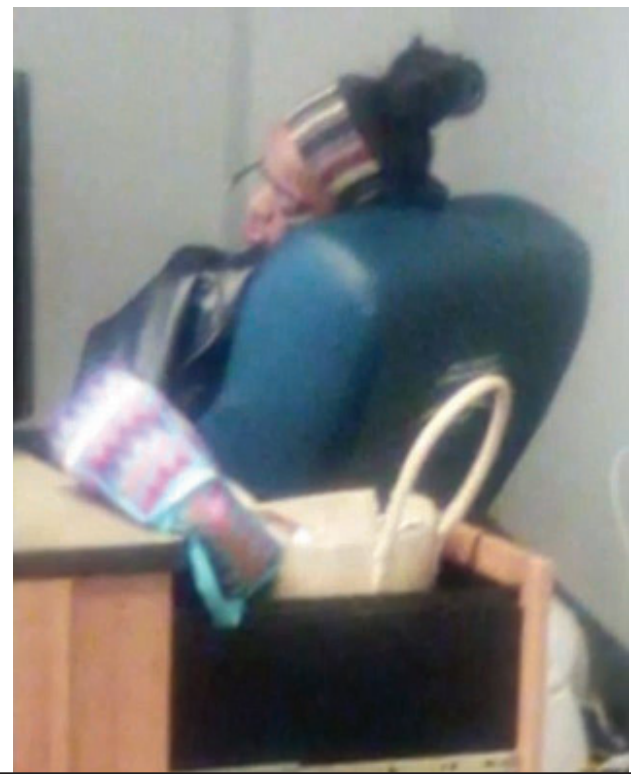
Photos of Thomas, which appear to have been taken on several different occasions, show her asleep behind her desk.

'Not excuses, but the reality is that she's a single mom,' Cleveland

Police Union President Steve Loomis told Fox 8.

'She's going to college full-time and she's working 40, 50, sometimes 60 hours a week up there.' The station has reported previously that the number of calls to Cleveland 911 have increased significantly, especially after all cell phone calls that were typically handled by county dispatchers have been directed to the main headquarters.

The Cleveland police chief declined an interview to discuss Thomas's conduct.



Indian teacher sentenced for H-1B visa fraud in US

(Agencies) HOUSTON: A 58-year-old Indian teacher in the US has been fined over USD 50,000 and ordered to serve three years of supervised release by a court for defrauding several Indians on the pretext of providing them H-1B visas and teaching jobs in America.

George Mariadas Kurusu, a H1-B visa holder and former Fort Stockton Independent

School District (FSISD) teacher, was also ordered to forfeit USD 5,987 to the government and serve three years of supervised release. He has been in federal custody since his arrest in May last year.

US District Judge Louis Guirola sentenced Kurusu to time served (approximately 11 months) and ordered him to pay USD 53,004.51 restitution for the wire fraud scheme involving

the hiring of Indian nationals to teach in the US. In January, Kurusu pleaded guilty to two counts of wire fraud; one count of fraud in foreign labor contracting; one count of tampering with a witness, victim or an informant; and, one count of making a false statement on a visa application.

By pleading guilty, Kurusu admitted that from December 2012 to May

last year, he defrauded several individuals out of more than USD 50,000 for a "visa package" provided by a company he owned which promised H1-B visas, teaching jobs, and the maintenance of those jobs and visas for his victims.

According to court records, Kurusu, established a separate business, Samaritan Educational Services (Samaritan), which he

personally obtained financial benefits in violation of his visa. Kurusu also lied on an application to renew his visa. However, he began placing advertisements in a newspaper in Hyderabad, providing services for a fee to individuals who were seeking teaching positions in the US.

Kurusu led applicants to believe that they had to go through his

business in order to both obtain a visa and a job.

He asked the victims to pay large fees on the pretext they were solely to be used to complete paperwork and none would go to him.

He paid those nominal fees, but pocketed the rest. The victims initially set up all the paperwork for the visa and to obtain a job at FSISD then provided Kurusu such information along with other personal information.

(Agencies) Ivanka Trump is developing into a serious power-player inside the White House, parlaying her first-daughter role into genuine influence over domestic and international policy.

She has emerged as President Donald Trump's 'all-around West Wing confidante,' according to The New York Times, an adviser with few limits on her clout.

No one else in government – not even Vice President Mike Pence or White House



Ivanka in charge: First daughter reviews executive orders and meets weekly with treasury chief

Chief of Staff Reince Priebus – has her direct line of communication with the president's brain.

Ivanka has a standing weekly meeting with Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin. She has the power to pick up the phone and call cabinet secretaries – recently plying United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley for humanitarian aid dollars for Syrians. She

even has plans to personally review some future executive orders before her father signs them.

When her husband, presidential adviser Jared Kushner, was beginning to function in the West Wing as a moderating influence – softening or even canceling out the rah-rah nationalist sentiments of his antipode Steve Bannon

– Ivanka was already ten steps ahead of him.

The Washington novice told the Times: 'I'm still at the early stages of learning how everything works, but I know enough now to be a much more proactive voice inside the White House.'

Ivanka has well-known policy preferences that range from moderate to liberal, including strong feelings about education

and climate change – she wants the U.S. to remain bound by the Paris Agreement – as well as immigrant deportation and refugees. She has already put her stamp on policy proposals that make childcare more affordable, and would create a paid family leave program in the federal government of the sort that Democrats have long sought to impose on

Republicans. The 35-year-old fashion entrepreneur also has free-rein to argue with the president, meeting him head-on with criticism and trying to change his mind while other aides are pondering the wisdom of speaking up. She has, too, the advantage of eye-contact familiarity, calling him 'Dad' instead of 'Mr. President.' 'I'm his daughter. I've known him my entire life. He trusts me,' Ivanka told the Times.

'I don't have a hidden agenda. I'm not looking to hit him to help myself.' But

in a seemingly endless series of 10-minute Oval Office meetings, brokered through strategic communications director Hope Hicks and others, Ivanka leverages her father-daughter ties to nudge America's slow-moving policy battleship a few degrees this way or that.

'I'll go to the mat on certain issues and I may still lose those,' she said. 'But maybe along the way I've modified a position just slightly. And that's just great.'



German woman loses legal bid to discover male escort's identity

After he got her pregnant during a three-night hotel fling seven years ago



(Agencies) A German woman who sued a hotel chain to try and discover the identity of a male escort who got her pregnant has lost her case.

The woman, who has not been named, claimed she fell pregnant during a three-night romp with a sex worker she knew only as 'Michael' at a hotel in Halle in 2010.

Nine months later she gave birth to son Joel, and had been attempting to track down 'Michael' in

order to claim a support allowance. But a court in Munich has ruled the hotel chain does not have to give up the escort's identity, saying the woman was playing 'father roulette'.

There were three other Michaels staying at the hotel on the night in question, and the court decided that it could not sanction giving out their details 'at random'.

'Nor is it certain that the Christian name is indeed the name of the man in question,' the court added,

according to the BBC.

The woman's vague descriptions of the man also harmed her case, the court said.

Explaining the ruling, justices said: 'The rights of the affected man and the protection of his marriage and family override the rights of the applicant.'

'Men have a right to privacy and intimacy... that protects them from having to reveal their sexual relations.'

An appeals court in Munich, where the hotel chain is based, also declined to review the decision and threw its weight behind the original



Prince William is accused of 'hypocrisy' and cashing in on celebrity status by lawyer



(Agencies) Prince William has been accused of hypocrisy and cashing in on his celebrity status by a lawyer after demanding £1.3million compensation over topless photos of his wife Kate.

The Duke of Cambridge said the images were 'all the more painful' as they reminded him of the way his mother Princess Diana died. But a lawyer for the French magazine Closer, which printed the images of Kate sunbathing in the south of France in 2012, blasted the crippling payout demand. Lawyers for the couple outlined their demands on the first days of a criminal court case in the Paris suburb of Nanterre, where six defendants face trial.

Mr Veil told the town's Correctional Court that both William and Kate had suffered massively from the sneak long-lens pictures taken while they were on holiday. Mr Veil said the compensation represented

an 'Anglo-Saxon level of punitive damages'. In France, 'Anglo-Saxon' means British or American.

The couple also want the local newspaper La Provence to give them £42,000 for running similar images, but with the Duchess's breasts covered up.

He said they deserved damages and compensation amounting to 1.5 million euros (£1.3million), to add to 'significant fines' against the guilty parties.

But the defence barrister for French Closer magazine, which faces the pay-out, in turn accused the Royal couple of trying to make money out of their celebrity with 'punitive Anglo-Saxon damages'.

Paul-Albert Iweins said couples in France were always being pictured while out using sun cream during their summer holidays, and branded William and Kate as 'hypocritical'.

Obama's sex secrets laid bare

How he considered a gay fling, had passionate sex and COCAINE with one white girl, proposed twice to another - and CHEATED on Michelle before they married



(Agencies) The sex secrets of the young Barack Obama have been revealed in an authoritative new biography of the ex-president.

Obama slept with his girlfriend Genevieve Cook on their first date, before she wrote him a poem about their 'f***ing' and called their sex 'passionate', the book about the former president reveals. They also did cocaine together - and after they split she slept with his best friend.

Obama also considered a gay relationship while at college, twice proposed to another white girlfriend, and cheated on Michelle with his ex during the first year of their relationship.

His past is revealed in the 1,078-page biography *Rising Star: The Making of Barack Obama*, to be published on May 9.

Obama, a new Columbia graduate who was working for a firm that prepared financial reports at

the time, made dinner for Cook at his apartment in Manhattan two weeks after meeting her at a New Year's Eve party and handing her his phone number.

It was the start of a relationship which is one of a series revealed in *Rising Star*.

The 1,078-page biography is the most comprehensive work ever on Obama and the first to be published since he left office.

It was written after exhaustive research by Pulitzer-prize winning biographer David Garrow, and also reveals how he asked another woman to marry him - and continued a relationship with her while dating Michelle, before she became his wife.

Cook was 25 when she met 22-year-old Obama on New Year's Eve in 1983.

Australian-born Cook was living in her mother and stepfather's Park Avenue apartment at the time, but

had been brought up around the world, including - like Obama, Indonesia - as her father was an Australian spy and diplomat.

She wrote about it in a private memoir and said that at the party 'I remember being very engaged and just talking nonstop' with Obama.

The thing that connected us is that we both came from nowhere - we really didn't belong.'

Their first date involved more than talk however, with Obama cooking at the West 114th Street apartment he shared with two other roommates..

'Then we went and talked in his bedroom. And then I spent the night. It all felt very inevitable,' she wrote in a private memoir, revealed by Garrow.

She spent the night again with him a few days later and rated him highly in bed - even writing a poem to him saying: 'B. That's for you. F's for all the f***ing that we do.'

Garrow reveals that she said: 'Sexually he really wasn't very imaginative but he was comfortable. He was no kind of shrinking "can't handle it. This is invasive" or "I'm timid" in any way; he was quite earthy.'

Their relationship appears to have been deeply sexual, with writing that 'all this f***ing' was 'so much more than lust' and also saying in her diary: 'Making love with Barack, so warm and flowing and soft but deep - relaxed and loving -

opening up more.'

She also wrote in her diary about 'passionate sex', the book says.

But the couple also used drugs and Cook reveals that Obama was still a cocaine user when they were together.

He would spend time with other friends - Hasan Chandoo, Imad Hussain and Sohale Siddiqi, who he had been friends with at Occidental College, in Los Angeles - and Cook said the trio was taking 'lots of cocaine'.

They were far more prolific users than Obama, who she said probably preferred staying home to read than taking the drug. Chandoo - who was later to become a fundraiser for Obama - was the leader, the book claims.

'For every five lines that somebody did, he would have done half,' Cook said.

The book also notes that Cook and Obama would smoke pot but only at parties and records one time when during tension in their relationship she wrote in her diary that they went to a party and got 'high' on cocaine.

That Obama was still using cocaine in his early 20s is a significant revelation.

He had previously only disclosed that he used it as a teenage student.

The couple split in June 1985, after a year and a half together, the book says.

But she was hardly out of his life - because she became involved with his friend Sohale in September of that year.

She and Sohale did ecstasy together, and then had sex. When she wrote to Obama and told him he replied: 'The news of Sohale and you did hurt.'

He also used - possibly inadvertently - a racial slur to refer to Sohale and the other two Pakistani-born friends, calling them 'the Pakis' in the same letter.

His first name girlfriend in the book was Alex McNear, who is described as a 'beautiful blond' who was the focus of a crushes



College girlfriend: Blonde Alex McNair was the focus of crushes by men at Occidental but it was Obama who became her boyfriend

for many students at Occidental College.

One male student even fantasized that she was 'the most beautiful lesbian'.

Later, writes Garrow, Obama boasted to fellow Illinois state lawmakers at their regular poker games in the early 2000s about a sexual conquest who appears to align with her.

One close acquaintance told Garrow: 'The only woman he ever talked about screwing was some really hot blond chick that he was still proud of.'

'He was really proud that he'd banged some super-hot blonde from a super-rich family.'

McNear was not super-rich and Garrow suggests this was an 'exaggerated' version of her upbringing being used by Obama.

However the book is far sketchier on their time together, noting that she knew him in Manhattan as both moved there when he transferred from Occidental to Columbia.

When Obama came to write *Dreams From My Father*, he created a composite girlfriend from the early 1980s, representing all his white ex-girlfriends.

The book discloses that Jager felt particularly upset by his treatment of his white girlfriends in *Dreams From My Father*.

Not only did she become part of 'a woman in New York who I loved', their time living together in Chicago for two years was dropped, and - she said - love letters he sent her were the basis for much of the narrative.

Source
DailyMail.co.uk



As BJP breaches Muslim vote bank, secular parties lose their core constituency

The All India Shia Personal Law Board has explicitly supported all the three controversial moves of UP chief minister Yogi Adiyath: a negotiated settlement of the Ayodhya dispute, a ban on cow slaughter and triple talaq



(Agencies) In a Facebook interview with the Hindustan Times, UP health minister Siddharth Nath Singh had said in a lighter vein, 'Some Muslim women said they voted for me as they liked the dimples on my cheeks.'

But it's more than the dimples. The reports coming in from different corners of the state indicated a softening of the Muslims stance towards the Bharatiya

Janata Party, the party that had become an anathema for the community after the 1992 demolition of Babri mosque in Ayodhya and 2002 riots in Gujarat. Since then the community ruthlessly voted to defeat the BJP.

It could well be a judicious move by the Muslims who have now realised the political potency of the BJP, both at the state and the centre. A Muslim BJP leader, who has

stuck to the party despite the anger of the community opines, "The 2017 mandate has changed their mindset. People, who till the other day avoided meeting me have started sending invitations."

The Shias came on board first and now some Sunnis may also explore the saffron party despite its subtle thrust on the Hindutva agenda.

The All India Shia Personal Law Board has

explicitly supported all the three controversial moves of UP chief minister Yogi Adiyath

– a negotiated settlement of the Ayodhya dispute, a ban on triple talaq and cow slaughter, the third literally breaking the financial backbone of the community

notwithstanding. Some of them had even celebrated the BJP's victory and Samajwadi Party's defeat as 'yaun-e-nijjat' (day of riddance).

The 8% Shias have generally toed a different line from the Sunnis.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board has however rejected government interference in matters of Muslim personal laws and an out-of-court settlement of the Ayodhya dispute.

Although the AIMPLB has strongly censured the social practice of triple talaq and called for social boycott of those who misused it, Muslim

women are increasingly veering to the government's stand to end the humiliating practice.

It is not a small achievement for the party that had not fielded even a single Muslim candidate, both in the Lok Sabha and the UP Assembly elections, for the simple reason that their Muslim candidate would not have been able to muster support of his own community, especially when the BSP had fielded 100 Muslims and the SP and the Congress had stitched an alliance to retain their support.

What seems to have worked for the BJP is its commitment to the social problem that Muslim women are facing – triple talaq, which they could not oppose out of fear of earning the wrath of the maulanas and their men folk.

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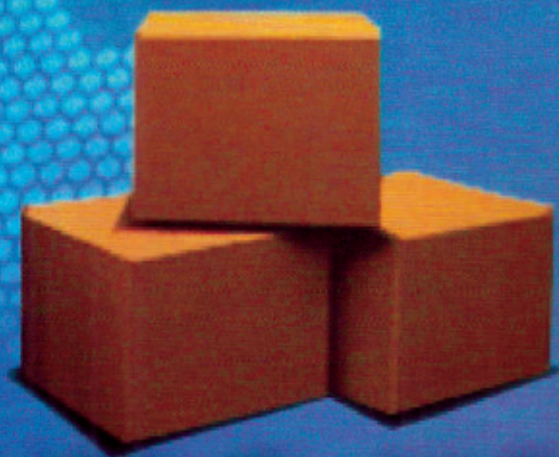
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The End of the Australian Dream?

(Agencies) Let me tell you a fairy tale called Australia. Despite what you may have heard about snakes and spiders and sharks, the remarkable thing about Australia is not its danger but its safety. At its best, this is a peaceful nation, with health care and education for almost everyone, that has enjoyed over the past two decades the longest period of economic expansion of any developed country in modern history. Our cities are regularly judged to be among the most livable in the world.

But we are in danger of stuffing it up, which is an Australian way of saying we may be ruining it all.

In the past 20 years, Australia has become a nation where getting ahead is a national obsession, partly because we have come to expect a world where the natural course of events is to become a little bit richer each year. The winnings of our repeated economic booms have been squandered on inflationary policies that fuel the rat race.

What we are discovering is that when you have a nation full of people trying to get to the top, eventually most of the population is forced to run just to keep up. Our enviable quality of life is at risk.

Consider what has happened with the housing market, Australia being a country where real estate is not just a place to live but a ticket to prosperity and a statement of taste and values.

Generous tax breaks for homeowners and real estate investors have fueled the market to the point where the median price of a house in Sydney, our largest metropolis, is \$1.1 million Australian dollars, or about \$824,000. An entire genre of newspaper writing is dedicated to telling Australians what they could buy for the same money in other parts of the



world — a small chateau in the South of France, even an apartment in Manhattan, for the price of an ugly brick house 40 minutes' drive from the center of the city. We watch shows like "Million Dollar Listing Los Angeles" and laugh.

So even though Australians do not have to put aside many hundreds of thousands of dollars for college degrees, or tens of thousands of dollars for health insurance, we are still in huge debt through our mortgages. Australia has some of the highest household debt in the world, especially if you compare our debt to our incomes and G.D.P. We are poised for disaster if there is a serious economic downturn. Even for those lucky enough to own their own home, there is a fool's-gold feel to this property boom. After all, if you own a three-bedroom house five miles from the city and it increases in value by 50 percent, that means you still have only enough money to buy a three-bedroom house five miles from the city. This is not so much rising wealth as glorified inflation.

And for those who are not owners? The property boom is dividing the nation along lines of age and class. For young people, property prices represent dashed hopes and a looming intergenerational battle.

Consider a recent furor when an older

demographer suggested in jest that young people would be better able to save for a house were they not wasting their money buying avocado toast at hipster cafes.

It is a familiar line of attack here, young people being told to stop wasting their money at cafes. No matter that you would need to forgo 31,429 flat whites to pay a 10 percent deposit on the typical home in Sydney.

Millennials, sick of being told that they don't know how good they have it, may well point out that Australia is home to some of the most spoiled baby boomers in the world. Many retirees divide their time between cruise holidays overseas and subsidized medical appointments here, all the time complaining that it is the young people who don't realize how good they have it.

Aside from tax policies that encourage speculation, other policies show successive governments have been fueling a rat race when they should have been building a society. Over the past two decades, federal government funding of private schools has expanded, including to those with very high fees and swimming pool complexes, beautiful gardens and performing arts centers, further dividing the country. Many middle-class parents have become anxious about sending

children to the local public high school out of fear that they will lag behind their peers at schools that are expensive or academically selective.

We need to rediscover our egalitarian roots. It is true that Australian culture can be anti-intellectual. We can deride achievement and cut down those who succeed, in a phenomenon we call tall poppy syndrome. But the egalitarian values of our society should not be discounted. In fact, it is on the matter of egalitarianism that Australia has made some of its most important

intellectual contributions to the world.

Australia was one of the first countries to institute a living minimum wage, in a famous court case back in 1907 regarding the employees of the Sunshine Harvester Works. The court decided that an unskilled worker should be paid enough to meet the needs of "a human being living in a civilized community," which included keeping his family in "frugal comfort." The cultural effects of this decision, the idea that every worker should have a decent standard of living,

have been at least as great as the legal ramifications.

Australia enjoys a relatively high minimum wage today of 17.70 Australian dollars, or about \$13.25, per hour. We have so far avoided the hollowing out of the middle class suffered by other countries like the United States. Australia has one of the world's highest percentages of middle-class people, with about 56 percent of the population falling into this category, according to a 2016 Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report.

Egalitarianism has been a major contributing factor to the quality of life we enjoy in our society, including for those who are better off. We have low crime rates. Few of us fear that medical bills will lead to bankruptcy as we have universal health care. Our university fees are rising, but we can pay the money back to the government over time, and only once we are earning a decent wage.

We need to remember what makes Australia a fairy tale and protect it.

Winds halt NASA's balloon launch attempt yet again



(Agencies) Wellington: High surface winds scuttled NASA's sixth attempt at launching a stadium-sized super pressure balloon from Wanaka in New Zealand on Friday, the media reported. NASA will make its seventh attempt at launching the balloon on Saturday, a Stuff.co.nz report said. "The wind speed was below our limit for a time, but unfortunately picked back up at a speed that would not support a launch today. We were close once again in our processing, but the winds didn't set up in the end," Gabe Garde, mission manager for the 2017 Wanaka Balloon Campaign, was quoted as saying. The balloon and its science payload was expected to drift north

east and begin a 100 day journey around the world. The balloon is designed to carry a pioneering telescope to detect ultra-high-energy cosmic rays from near space. The purpose of the flight is to test and validate the SPB technology with the goal of long-duration flight at mid-latitudes. In addition, the University of Chicago's Extreme Universe Space Observatory on a Super Pressure Balloon (EUSO-SPB) is a mission of opportunity flying on the 2017 SPB test flight. EUSO-SPB is designed to detect high-energy cosmic rays originating from outside our galaxy as they penetrate the Earth's atmosphere.

Donald Trump Embraces Another Despot

(Agencies) The United States has long seen itself as a beacon of democracy and a global advocate of human rights and the rule of law. It has faltered, sometimes badly, undermining leaders whose views did not fit its strategic objectives and replacing them with pliant despots. Yet for the most part American presidents, Republican and Democratic, have believed that the United States should provide a moral compass to the world, encouraging people to pursue their right to self-government and human dignity and rebuking foreign leaders who fall short.

Like so much else under President Trump, though, this idea has now been turned on its head and people are worried about the very survival of the values on which America built its reputation and helped construct an entire international system, including the United Nations. The latest example is Mr. Trump's decision to invite Rodrigo Duterte, the president of the Philippines, to the White House.

Though the Philippines is an ally and a democracy, Mr. Duterte is neither a democratic leader nor a worthy ally. For about two decades as mayor of Davao, he was accused of allowing death squads to roam the city and kill freely. Most victims were poor drug users and low-level criminals, but bystanders, children and political opponents were also caught up in the bloodshed.

After his election last year, Mr.

Duterte took the killing campaign nationwide, effectively giving free license to the police and vigilantes. He has boasted about his tenure in Davao, and admitted to personally killing three kidnapers without trial. The mayhem got so bad that last week a Filipino lawyer formally asked the International Criminal Court to charge Mr. Duterte and 11 officials with mass murder and crimes against humanity over the extrajudicial killings of nearly 10,000 people over the past three decades. During the last administration, Mr. Duterte disrespected President Barack Obama by calling him the "son of a whore" and threatened to abandon his country's alliance with the United States for one with China. This is obviously not a man who should be welcomed to the White House.

Mr. Trump extended his invitation in a telephone call that was described as "very friendly." Administration officials said the call was one of several the president made to reassure Southeast Asian leaders of America's continuing commitment at a time when they were feeling neglected over Mr. Trump's focus on China, Japan and North Korea. Administration officials said that Mr. Trump was looking to mend ties with the Philippines as a hedge against China's expansion in the South China Sea. But there is no evidence that he consulted the State Department, or that the White House has done anything to

prepare the groundwork for a Duterte visit. The normal way to mend diplomatic ties is to negotiate privately over months and have the process culminate in, not begin with, a White House meeting. What is not in any doubt is Mr. Trump's own authoritarian tendencies and his fondness for other strongman leaders who, like him, chafe at governmental checks and balances, including the courts. Mr. Trump reportedly admires Duterte's aggressive rhetoric about fighting the Islamic State and cracking down on drugs. He has praised President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey for winning a disputed referendum that will give him vastly more power and invited him to the White House on May 16. He has already given a friendly reception to President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt, who was barred from the White House after staging a coup four years ago and arresting thousands of political opponents. He has replaced harsh criticism of China with praise for President Xi Jinping, and in the past displayed a bizarre affection for Russia's Vladimir Putin.

American presidents must work with foreign leaders of all kinds to advance the national interest. But Mr. Trump erodes America's reputation when he uncritically embraces those who show the least regard for human rights, rule of law and democracy.



Canadian PM Justin Trudeau rebuffs calls for Defence Minister Sajjan's resignation

Trudeau went on to insist that Sajjan had served his country with distinction in a number of capacities, including as a police officer and as a soldier. As a Minister, he added, "He has my full confidence."

(Agencies) Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has rebuffed resignation calls for Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan over his "architect comments for a 2006 offensive against the Taliban, media reports said. Trudeau and his embattled minister endured a withering question-period offensive on Monday as opposition MPs accused Sajjan of "stolen valour" for overstating his role in planning Operation Medusa in Afghanistan, The Toronto Star. Opposition parties trained their sights squarely on Sajjan, who apologised again in the House of Commons. The Operation Medusa

was one of the bloodiest and most pivotal battles of the Afghan war. Interim Conservative leader Rona Ambrose called it a "cardinal sin" in the military circles for stealing valours of others. "How much more does the Prime Minister need to hear before he understands why our men and women in uniform have lost confidence in the Minister," Ambrose said. Trudeau, however, would not be moved from his talking points. "The Minister made a mistake," the Prime Minister said repeatedly. "He acknowledged his responsibility and apologised for it; that's what Canadians expect

when one makes a mistake," The Toronto Sun reported. Trudeau went on to insist that Sajjan had served his country with distinction in a number of capacities, including as a police officer and as a soldier. As a Minister, he added, "He has my full confidence." Sajjan, for his part, later rose and repeated his apology. What Sajjan didn't do is explain his "mistake," which Ambrose noted he'd made twice — once in 2015 and again two weeks ago during his India visit. As such, his apology did little to assuage the opposition, with both the Conservatives and the Democrats calling



on Trudeau to sack him. "It's not an error when you keep repeating the same lie," New Democratic Party Leader Tom Mulcair said after question period. In speech in New Delhi on April 18, Sajjan told the Indian Observer Research Foundation that he had been the "architect" of

Operation Medusa, which the Minister has since retracted. "On my first deployment to Kandahar in 2006, I was kind of a special situation and became the architect of an operation... where we removed about 1,500 Taliban fighters," Sajjan said in his speech.

Sajjan was a Major with the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan during Operation Medusa, and received a special commendation. Hundreds of Taliban fighters were killed or captured over a two-week period. Twelve Canadians were also killed in the fighting.

Being pragmatic with Pyongyang

Will China nudge?

Recently China has registered a policy shift reflecting unhappiness about Mr. Jong-un's behaviour, particularly the high-profile executions of those considered to be close to China. The most recent was the assassination of Kim Jong-nam, Mr. Jong-un's half brother, in February, which prompted China to halting coal briquette imports from North Korea. Air China stopped direct flights to Pyongyang last month but these are now being reinstated. North Korea has accused China of "dancing to the tune of the U.S.". However, China can neither permit a regime collapse which would create instability nor allow its communist ally to be subsumed into a unified

greater leverage by praising its President, Xi Jinping, as "a good man" who is "trying hard". After the latest missile test, Mr. Trump tweeted, "North Korea disrespected the wishes of China & its highly respected President when it launched, though unsuccessfully, a missile today. Bad!" Mr. Xi is unlikely to be persuaded. At the UN Security Council meeting on April 28, Foreign Minister Wang Yi reaffirmed support for a denuclearised Korean peninsula and previous Security Council resolutions but did not support additional punitive measures. Instead, he again suggested that the U.S. and South Korea could suspend their military exercises.

More than North Korea. Mr. Trump is trying to persuade China to exert

an unpredictable Trump initiating unilateral action which could create an escalatory spiral. Another concern is the U.S. decision to accelerate deployment of the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence) system in South Korea though it is hopeful that a moderate President gets elected in the May 9 election in South Korea and reverses the THAAD decision.

The way forward

Mr. Xi's objective is to persuade Mr. Trump that neither more sanctions nor military strikes are viable options; the only option is 'dialogue'. Second, while denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula can be a long-term objective, for the foreseeable future, Mr. Jong-un is not going to give up North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities. At most, he can agree to a

freeze on its programmes — no further tests, no exports or transfers and no threats. In return, the U.S. will need to provide assurances relating to regime acceptance and a gradual normalisation of relations. A moderate leader in Seoul will help the process of a sustained dialogue which also needs coordination with Japan.

Mr. Jong-un's stakes are existential and, having seen Western interventions in Iraq and Libya and Russian intervention in Ukraine, he is determined to retain his nuclear capabilities till the end of what will be a long and delicate negotiating process, a process which could all too easily be derailed by confusing rhetoric and mixed signalling that has escalated tensions.

The national in the municipal

One could see that the media immediately took its cues from the political signals of the BJP. Municipal elections elsewhere get a footnote or a terse notice. In Delhi, the footnote had become amplified to an epic quality. The municipal landscape, for a week, commanded national attention. For the BJP, and particularly for Amit Shah, the miracle of U.P. needed repetition. In many people's minds, municipal Delhi was a hinterland of U.P., an out-house of migrants from that State. As Yogi Adityanath entered the phase of governmentality, Mr. Shah had to invent a 'junior Adityanath', to convince political pundits of his political acumen. He did just that by appointing Bhojpuri star Manoj Tiwari to head the Delhi campaign. Mr. Shah had to produce an Adityanath for Delhi's wards, which are chock-full of migrants from the Purvanchal region of U.P.

Oddly, Mr. Tiwari's first foray into electoral politics had been as a Samajwadi Party candidate against Mr. Adityanath in Gorakhpur, in 2009. In Mr. Tiwari, Mr. Shah found a man to

outmanoeuvre Mr. Kejriwal. He offered a more cheerful theory of urbanism, a more optimistic scenario of citizenship, a smart election for the smart city boroughs of Delhi.

A municipal election, despite its miniaturised form, became representative of national possibilities. The U.P. State elections and the Delhi municipal elections became in that sense a hyphenated battle. Mr. Tiwari had to reproduce the devastating power of Mr. Adityanath's victory at the local level. He did.

Politicians often sense the future in little events. They read the tea leaves of localities to predict new possibilities. Mr. Shah is a brooding futurist who sensed the strategic value of Delhi's municipal elections. By rolling over a discouraged Mr. Kejriwal, he realised that municipal elections could be read as a major national victory. He did just that, consolidating his role as the electoral Napoleon of the BJP onslaught. The Delhi civic elections have clinched his reputation as a Mr. Jugger-naut. Even sceptics like this writer have to acknowledge the tactical power of the victory.

In My First 100 Days, I Kept My Promise To The American People

The change on defense has been profound as well. The Defense Department has begun to rebuild and restore our military readiness. We've reasserted American leadership by holding the Bashar Assad regime in Syria accountable for its monstrous use of banned chemical weapons against helpless, innocent civilians. Our suc-

cessful missile strike enforced the red line that the previous administration drew but ignored, thus restoring our credibility with our friends and our deterrence with our foes. Finally, NATO countries are starting to pay billions of dollars more since I have made clear that the United States expects all of its allies to pay their fair share.

I delivered on one of my biggest promises, appointing and confirming a new justice to the Supreme Court who will be faithful to the U.S. Constitution. This is the first time a new justice has been confirmed in the first 100 days in 136 years. As we've made these changes - on the border, on our economy, on our security - confidence has

soared. And a survey of manufacturing reveals record-breaking optimism in the future. Consumer confidence hit a 16-year high. Thousands of new jobs are being re-shored back to America - including jobs at Ford, General Motors, Fiat Chrysler, Sprint, Intel and so many more.

We are proving that Buy and Hire American isn't just a slogan - it's now the policy of the U.S. government. It, along with the many other things we are doing, will Make America Great Again. No longer will we listen to the same failed voices of the past who brought us nothing but war overseas, poverty at home and the loss of companies, jobs and our wealth to countries that have taken total advantage of the United States. The White House is once again the People's House. And I will do everything in my power to be the People's President - to faithfully, loyally and proudly champion the incredible citizens who love this nation and who call this God-blessed land their home.

By beheading soldiers, Pakistan has abandoned the dialogue option

When bilateralism fails or is abandoned, retaliation is the answer, not third party arbitration or intervention that Islamabad or the likes of Erdogan are prone to propose. The leader from Turkey is unaware perhaps that India doesn't even recognise the United Nations Military Observers' Group on India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) that could have played the referee. The UNMOGIP is allowed a "holiday posting" presence in India because the UNSC resolutions (39 and 47 of 1948) under which it was constituted haven't since been amended.

From the Indian standpoint, the military observers' mandate became infructuous post-1971 when the UN brokered ceasefire line became the bilaterally negotiated Line of Control (LoC). That position is strengthened by the letter and spirit of the 1972 Shimla Accord the sum of which is that all pending India-Pakistan disputes will be addressed bilaterally.

Be that as it may, Kashmir looks destined for a long summer of discontent—and cross-border attrition. Rawalpindi's aggressive posturing could be on the nudging of Beijing that has heightened its stakes in PoK with the ambitious China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. It's unhappy as much with the paradigm change in India's Balochistan policy and the Modi dispensation's refusal to keep the Dalai Lama from visiting Arunachal.



WINZONE REALTY INC.

Baldev Singh

146-20 34 av. Flushing NY 11354

Cell: 917 224 7395

Email: josanbaldev@yahoo.com



Associate Broker/Notary Public

How We Are Letting Heart of India Slip Away

There is no dearth of suggestions from the failing security forces themselves about how they might be strengthened: more forces; more equipment; an intelligence wing of their own as the army has; an AFSPA for the CRPF and other paramilitary forces (so that they can "kill on suspicion" as AFSPA permits); better cooperation from the local state police; quick filling of the over 10,000 vacancies in the state police in unemployment- and poverty-ridden Chhattisgarh state; better road construction technologies to finish roads on time instead of the years it is taking to complete the short road on which the Maoist attack took place; telephones in at least 14 of the police stations recently set up; at least 23 more police stations (this time with telephones, please), etc., etc. Yet, as a CRPF jawan, Pankaj Mishra, told Vijay Swarup of The Hindustan Times, knowing he would be quoted: "The entire system is bad. There is nobody to listen to us." Listen to him they did - and ordered all jawans to no longer speak to the media!

Looking at the CRPF, headless during the 50 days that led to the massacres at Bhejji and Burkapal, the answer they hear "blowin' in the wind" is that the CRPF must never be left headless. Of course, it must not. But would these attacks have been called off as the Maoists cowered in the face of yet another DG? For 50 years they've seen DGs come and go - and have remained unfazed.

Another eminently sensible suggestion is that instead of the CRPF forces being "tossed about the country, tackling everything from anti-riot duties to static guard", they should be divided into "theatre-specific counter-insurgency formations familiar with the conditions in which they operate". This is so obvious a suggestion that one wonders who ever promoted the mandarins in the Home Ministry to whom the idea has not occurred in 50 years. Yet, even that will provide little comfort, let alone victory, unless as Prakash Singh, the prolific former Director-General of the Border Security Force, points out on the same page, "appropriate socio-economic measures" are taken "to address the legitimate grievances of the tribals and draw them into the mainstream". Typical of our internal security community, Prakash Singh does not

spell out what these "socio-economic measures" need to be. That, of course, is not their business. But it is the business of the thrice-elected (and thrice-failed) Raman Singh government that has let the heart of India slide out of its hands, although there are no Pakistanis or Chinese visible in the centre of the country on whom to pin the blame.

Compared to former DGs turned public intellectuals, Praveen Swami, chief editor of The Indian Express, has far stronger credentials to take a more holistic approach to the issue. He draws attention to the fundamental lesson learned by the French in unsuccessfully combating the guerilla forces that led Algeria to dependence in 1961: "Our military machine reminds one of a

pile-driver attempting to crush a fly, indefatigably persisting in its efforts", said French security expert, Roger Tranquier, and, adds Swami, "fated, therefore, to fail". Pointing out that our Home Ministry under successive governments these past 50 years has been relying on "gargantuan concentrations of forces" in the belief that "pumping huge forces into under-policed Bastar would sever links between the Maoists and Adivasis, degrading the insurgency", Swami reminds his readers of then Home Secretary GK Pillai's claim that "within 30 days of security forces moving in and dominating the area, we should be able to restore civil administration there." However, the operation (termed "Green Hunt" by the media),"had the proximate

consequence of making the region less secure". "The option to finding better ways," warns Swami, unconsciously reprising Nandini Sundar, "is endless war."

The Times of India in its editorial has underlined, "There has been a stream of reports of human rights abuse perpetrated by both security forces and Maoists in Chhattisgarh's 'red zone'. Alienation of tribals needs to be addressed if long-term development and peace are to prevail. In fact, the government needs to deploy the right mix of security, development and human rights protection to root out the Maoist problem. This can be done by bringing Adivasi groups, civil society organizations and political parties together." In-

stead, the state government, in cohorts with the centre, has been hounding civil society activists like Nandini Sundar, ignoring Adivasi groups, and keeping torn as under political parties that are not their own.

What others are saying is what I have been pleading for decades as a parliamentarian, a cabinet minister and a media commentator. But because no one listens to me, I thought it best to fill this column with quotations from those more expert than me, more versed in counter-insurgency than me, and better informed on Panchayat Raj than me. I fear, however, that the plea will continue to fall on deaf ears, for those with 56-inch chests bounce all constructive criticism off their broad bosoms. Alas!

AAP And The Perils Of Speaking In The Name Of The People

AAP needs to drop the identity of the aam aadmi as there can be no such thing in politics. The Indian neta has always been 'khaas aadmi'

(Contd from page 1) The naissance of the Aam Aadmi Party and its eventual success must and foremost be attributed to the mammoth negative perception of the wrongdoings of the UPA regime in the public psyche. India Against Corruption was a response, constructed upon the rightful anger of the tax-paying citizens and some brilliant perception management strategists who later on donned the (now) infamous cap of the Aam Aadmi. The re-election of the AAP in 2015 -- despite the fiasco in 2013 and the powerful rise of the Narendra Modi-led BJP in the Centre -- was largely due to the desire of the people to see their 'experiment' reach its logical conclusion. But today, despite not facing any major charges of corruption or even bad governance per se, Arvind Kejriwal's AAP finds itself with one of the least popular political voices in the nation. The results of the MCD elections are but a mere confirmation of the very evident disenchantment of the aam aadmi with the party that goes by its name.

Historically, in precipitate moments of revolutionary fervour, men and women of the world have tended to behead tyrants, monarchs, and other facets of centralized powers, only to find themselves in utter chaos and helplessly in the power of unstable anarchic forces. When

the Rump Parliament of seventeenth century Britain decided to execute King Charles (I) in the name of the people, those very people suddenly found themselves agonizing under the regicidal dictator Cromwell and a number of them openly regretted the state of the nation and fell into a deep nostalgia for its monarchic past. A century later, the French decided to chop their king's head off; but at the end of it all, found themselves sulking at the convenient swap of power and wealth by the nobility and bourgeoisie. Not only did the peasant and lower-income strata of the French population remain underprivileged and poor, they also found themselves living in a country that was more unstable, dangerous and gory than it used to be under the monarchy.

But we need not go back to dusty volumes of history books to understand this phenomenon: we need only to look at the events that followed the downfall of the last Indian tyrant, Indira Gandhi. The Janata coalition, led by the extremely popular Jayaprakash Narayan, could dismantle arguably the most oppressive head of state India had seen, but failed miserably to hold on to power as the various factions constituting the coalition were only united by their hatred for Mrs. Gandhi. Thus, the very people who risked their lives on the streets

protesting against the great tyrant voted her back to power with an enormous majority only a few years later. The AAP seems to have run into a similar conundrum. The anti-establishment party seems bewildered at its paradoxical status of being the new establishment. The Indian voter, as has been proved on a countless number of occasions, votes principally on perception -- and not just the perception created by the corporate media -- but also on his/her own political understanding of party ideologies and discourses. This is where the AAP has failed most spectacularly; accustomed to hurling accusations and branding political adversaries as corrupt, communal and the other usual C-words of Indian politics, the party seems moronically perplexed when placed at the receiving end of questions by the media and the people. To his credit, Arvind Kejriwal did try his very best to maintain his anti-establishment credentials by protesting even when in power, dishing out certificates of corruption and sleeping on streets during his short-lived first tenure as Chief Minister of Delhi. However, the second time around, his almost Donald Trumpesque abuse of the social media to hurl accusations and insults at an immensely popular Prime Minister has backfired completely, and the only weapon in the



AAP's arsenal became its own kryptonite. In current public perception, the Aam Aadmi Party has been reduced to a perpetual whiner. (Who can forget the barrage of tweets about 'faulty' voting machines and the Election Commission being the stooge of Modi). If the AAP wishes to survive the battle against its own extinction, it needs to stop talking about what it is 'not', and/or what it is against, but rather to invent a political identity of its own. That would inherently mean dropping the identity of the aam aadmi as there can be no such thing in Indian politics. The Indian neta has always been a 'khaas aadmi' and that is precisely why he has managed to survive the wrath of the people and win their love over and over again. One needs to accept the fact (however radical it may seem in today's world of Che Guevara t-shirts and azadi slogans) that inside the collective subconscious of the masses resides a natural desire for stability and for some form of not overtly oppressive authority. One must then (as the AAP learns the hard way) be extremely wary of speaking in the name of the people.

The Growing Rahul Gandhi Problem Of The Congress

As the Bharatiya Janata Party wins election after election, India's oldest political party, the Congress, which still fancies itself as the principal opposition, faces a crisis of credibility and leadership.

Rahul Gandhi as Vice-President has been unable to provide any kind of leadership to the party which has seen serial desertions of leaders and others who are still hoping for a political future. Those who remain, squabble in public, take pot shots at each other and the occasional jab at Gandhi. Like senior leader Sheila Dikshit's comment after the Delhi municipal election loss that she was never asked to campaign by Gandhi favourite Ajay Maken and that "Gandhi should go to office for a couple of hours".

While Dikshit's was a genteel understatement, it does underscore the fact that Gandhi is still not a 24/7 politician and has a curriculum vitae that is blank. Apart from a solitary 2009 win in Uttar Pradesh, Gandhi has been unable to win a single election for the congress. Yet the party has never held him accountable. State chiefs such as Raj Babbar after the UP debacle, Sanjay Nirupam after the Mumbai rout, Maken after the Delhi crisis all offered their resignations, but the buck never stops with Gandhi.

So much so that the party currently resembles a cult devoted to protecting one family. On the condition of anonymity, a Congress leader complained, "We have one job - that is that no blame should ever fall on the family".

Digvijaya Singh, former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister who was once regarded as Gandhi's political "guru", fell from grace in 2012 after repeatedly going against the party line such as on the Batla House encounter in September 2008 against Indian Mujahideen (IM) terrorists, in which an inspector lost his life. Mr Singh demanded a probe despite then Union Home Minister P Chidambaram saying the encounter was genuine. Singh has repeatedly raised the issue of "saffron terror" and lands the party in uncomfortable hot spots - this week, he accused the Telangana police of encouraging Muslim youth to join global terrorist outfit Islamic State. "Tell me a single statement of mine which has harmed

the Congress party or the Gandhi family. I have spoken against all kinds of extremists. You in the media highlight only one type."

Apart from his controversial statements, it is his mishandling in Goa, where the Congress failed to form the government despite winning the most seats, that has led to him losing charge of the holiday state along with Karnataka. "I remain faithful to the Gandhi family. Whatever decisions they have taken, I accept" he told me.

Others such as nine-time member of parliament Kamal Nath are less understanding. Frustrated at Gandhi's lack of leadership, 70-year-old Kamal Nath, it is believed, plans to do an Amarinder Singh on Gandhi - he wants to be given full charge of the Madhya Pradesh Congress or could revolt, just as Singh planned in Punjab.

As rumours swirled that he would join the BJP, Kamal Nath recently met Congress President Sonia Gandhi with Digvijaya Singh and the third contender for running the Madhya Pradesh campaign, Jyotiraditya Scindia. Now a decision has to be taken on who will be the main man for the party for the election that's due in next year in the state. Notice that like in the case of Amarinder Singh, it took Sonia Gandhi's intervention to defuse the situation - it was only after this meeting that Kamal Nath publicly refuted the rumours that he was joining the BJP.

Sonia Gandhi has often expressed a desire to retire to a cottage in the hills and hand over charge of the party to her son. But with Rahul Gandhi unable to establish an equation with senior leaders of the Congress, or those of other parties, she's repeatedly having to return as the interface like with the plan for a joint opposition candidate for President, seen as a precursor to a possible mahagathbandhan of the opposition for the 2019 general election.

With the Congress party deciding to contest zila parishad or local body elections alone as announced by state chief Raj Babbar on May 1, the fate of Rahul Gandhi's alliance with the Samajwadi Party is obvious. Perhaps that's why he was absent from Akhilesh Yadav's side when he accepted defeat in Uttar Pradesh. It made for terrible optics and looked like Gandhi was running away from accepting re-

sponsibility for his share of their alliance's defeat. This time around, Sonia Gandhi has led the talks. Last month on April 21 she met the CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury to discuss the possibility of "like minded parties" fielding a common candidate for the Presidential poll. Gandhi is also likely to meet Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav to discuss a "mahagathbandhan" while roping in Bengal CM, Mamta Banerjee and Mayawati to take on the BJP.

Even when the report on to Robert Vadra's land deals in Haryana was leaked last week, forcing Priyanka Gandhi to qualify that her land transactions in the state are not linked in any way to her husband, Rahul Gandhi maintained a conspicuous silence. A senior Congress leader who asked not to be named, vented, "At least Modi takes decisions, whether good or bad is debatable, but he is perceived as decisive. What kind of leader is Rahul? He hops from issue to issue. One day he says he will burst Modi's bubble on corruption in demonetization and is unable to come up with any proof. We got Prashant Kishor on board in UP, yet listened to none of his advice. The BJP has already kicked off (its campaign) in Gujarat, we still don't even have a strategy in place. If Rahul had not upset Himanta Biswa Sarma by treating him with utter contempt, we would have won Assam. That win truly gave the BJP unbeatable momentum."

That is the Congress' problem in a nutshell. The party rules

barely six percent of India - the lowest since independence. The only large state it governs is Karnataka which will vote early next year. The party is completely wiped out from the northern heartland of the country as well as the central and eastern parts.

As party leaders admit, young people are not joining the party and strong regional leadership, which is the only recipe for winning elections, is anathema to the high command which is surrounded by rootless Rajya Sabha wonders.

An entire generation of talented grassroots leaders such as Sachin Pilot, just recently given a free hand in Rajasthan, Jyotiraditya Scindia, and Sarma, who left, are not being allowed to take over states and provide a strong opposition to the BJP. "The Gandhis only seem comfortable with time-servers such as Mohan Prakash, a Rahul favourite, who comfortably coast from defeat to defeat. Yet, if you hold an AICC session today, everyone will support Gandhi and demands will be made to make him President. It's time that he woke up and realised that either he should provide leadership or get out of the way. The party will keep losing elections, yet the Gandhi grip is such that it (the party) will still not revolt. Leaders who care about their future will just walk out," said a Congress leader. Even Digvijaya Singh concedes "we need strong regional leadership", a point made also by

Amarinder Singh who won Punjab for the party.

Apart from the crisis of leadership, the Congress lacks a convincing narrative, a story the people want to hear. Gandhi has blindly opposed Modi on everything, yet never told India what he stands for or what the party believes in.

Earlier, the party was seen as stoutly mainstream; now, on a host of issues including the "surgical strikes" against Pakistan and even the JNU issue, it is seen as fringe, as Modi and Shah are pushing it to the edge on the issue of emotive nationalism. So even the Delhi municipal election was fought on Modi's name and nationalism, while the Congress was unable to highlight the incumbent BJP's horrific civic record.

Whether it is gau rakshaks, the huge crisis in Kashmir, relations with Pakistan, the Congress is unable to get its act together and counter the BJP. The Congress now does not even claim credit for its ideas such as Adhaar and GST, both vehemently opposed by the BJP while in opposition, and now being implemented to large acclaim.

Beside his one rhetorical flourish of "Suit Boot Ki Sarkar" and getting the land acquisition act nixed, Gandhi has been unable to corner Modi with any clarity.

With the numbers set to change in the Rajya Sabha after the BJP's UP win, the BJP will soon be an all-dominant party. India desperately needs an opposition. At present, it's a gaping vacancy.

Bill To Repeal Obamacare Passed

as Winston Churchill said of another government project at dusk on D-Day, it was the end of the beginning.

Whatever it may turn out to be, President Trump was full of gratitude and optimism, even if manufactured optimism. "Make no mistake," he said after the calling of the House roll. "This is a repeal and a replace of Obamacare. Make no mistake about it. Make no mistake."

Well, not quite all of that. Repeal, but hardly a replacement. That must wait for the Senate, where sloth and slack is often sold as thoughtful deliberation. A United States senator, full of gas and self-importance, might be the only man (or woman) who would sit down on a red-hot stove and give the idea of getting up much due deliberation.

But the Thursday beginning was what the president and his party needed to get up a

head of steam for the fights ahead. The speaker showed a bit of bravery (or foolhardiness) by calling up the legislation for a vote. Losing a second vote on Obamacare repeal was a prospect too awful to contemplate. Failure would have earned the men and women on Capitol Hill the undisputed title of "the do-nothing Congress," as Harry Truman famously called a predecessor Congress.

Everyone is watching. "If, after voters delivered control of Congress to them in 2016, these same Republicans can't — or will not — produce an ObamaCare reform," observes Dan Henninger in The Wall Street Journal, "those voters may reasonably ask in 2018: Why do we need these people? What is a Republican for? Even by current bread-and-circuses standards, the GOP elephants are losing their entertainment value."

The Collapse of American Identity

united by voluntary assent to commonly held political beliefs.

But recent survey data provides troubling evidence that a shared sense of national identity is unraveling, with two mutually exclusive narratives emerging along party lines. At the heart of this divide are opposing reactions to changing demographics and culture. The shock waves from these transformations — harnessed effectively by Donald Trump's campaign — are reorienting the political parties from the more familiar liberal-versus-conservative alignment to new poles of cultural pluralism and monism.

An Associated Press-NORC poll found nearly mirror-opposite partisan reactions to the question of what kind of culture is important for American identity. Sixty-six percent of Democrats, compared with only 35 percent of Republicans, said the mixing of cultures and values from around the world was extremely or very important to American identity. Similarly, 64 percent of Republicans, compared with 32 percent of Democrats, saw a culture grounded in Christian religious beliefs as extremely or very important.

These divergent orientations can also be seen in a recent poll by P.R.R.I. that explored partisan perceptions of which groups are facing discrimination in the country. Like Americans overall, large majorities of Democrats believe minority groups such as African-Americans, immigrants, Muslims and gay and transgender people face a lot of discrimination in the country. Only about one in five Democrats say that majority groups such as Christians or whites face a lot of discrimination.

Republicans, on the other hand, are much less likely than Democrats to believe any minority group faces a lot of discrimination, and they believe Christians and whites face roughly as much discrimination as immigrants, Muslims and gay and transgender people. Moreover, only 27 percent of Republicans say blacks experience a lot of discrimination, while 43 percent say whites do and 48 percent say

the same of Christians.

Taken as a whole, these partisan portraits highlight contrasting responses to the country's changing demographics and culture, especially over the past decade as the country has ceased to be a majority white Christian nation — from 54 percent in 2008 to 43 percent today. Democrats — only 29 percent of whom are white and Christian — are embracing these changes as central to their vision of an evolving American identity that is strengthened and renewed by diversity. By contrast, Republicans — nearly three-quarters of whom identify as white and Christian — see these changes eroding a core white Christian American identity and perceive themselves to be under siege as the country changes around them.

Americans of both political parties sense the unraveling of a broadly shared consensus of American identity, although they cite different reasons for feeling that way. About seven in 10 Republicans and Democrats fear that the United States is

losing its national identity, the A.P.-NORC survey found. The two political parties may not share much, but each is increasingly aware that the other has embraced a radically different vision of America's identity and future.

These responses are shifting the political magnetic field that defines the parties. Republican leaders are finding strong support among their base for the Trump administration's executive order barring travel to the United States from particular Muslim-majority countries. But their plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act was dramatically derailed by factions within their own party.

Democrats, on the other hand, are enjoying energetic backing from their base for pro-immigration and pro-L.G.B.T. stances, but they are experiencing increasing opposition to their support for free trade.

There have been other times in our history when the fabric of American identity was stretched in similar ways — the Civil War, heightened lev-

els of immigration at the turn of the 20th century and the cultural upheavals of the 1960s.

But during these eras, white Christians were still secure as a demographic and cultural majority in the nation. The question at stake was whether they were going to make room for new groups at a table they still owned. Typically, a group would gain its seat in exchange for assimilation to the majority culture. But as white Christians have slipped from the majority over the past decade, this familiar strategy is no longer viable.

White Christians are today struggling to face a new reality: the inevitable surrender of table ownership in exchange for an equal seat. And it's this new higher-stakes challenge that is fueling the great partisan reorientation we are witnessing today.

The temptation for the Republican Party, especially with Donald Trump in the White House, is to double

down on a form of white Christian nationalism, which treats racial and religious identity as tribal markers and defends a shrinking demographic with increasingly autocratic assertions of power.

For its part, the Democratic Party is contending with the difficulties of organizing its more diverse coalition while facing its own tribal temptations to embrace an identity politics that has room to celebrate every group except whites who strongly identify as Christian. If this realignment continues, left out of this opposition will be a significant number of whites who are both wary of white Christian nationalism and weary of feeling discounted in the context of identity politics. This end is not inevitable, but if we are to continue to make one out of many, leaders of both parties will have to step back from the reactivity of the present and take up the more arduous task of weaving a new national narrative in which all Americans can see themselves.

20,000 Indians to return from Saudi Arabia via amnesty scheme

(Agencies) CHENNAI: Thousands of Indian workers stranded in Saudi Arabia after travelling there illegally and those who overstayed their visas, including a large number from Tamil Nadu, are ready to return to India under a 90 day amnesty period that the kingdom's government has offered them.

Speaking to TOI by telephone from Riyadh on Tuesday, Anil Nautiyal, counselor (community welfare) at the Indian embassy, said 20,321 Indian nationals had applied till Monday evening to return home under the amnesty scheme.

Around 1,500 blue collar workers from Tamil Nadu are among those who are using the amnesty to come back to the country. Most of the other workers who are availing of the scheme are from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Nautiyal said the Saudi Arabian government had set up an exclusive centre in Riyadh for In-

dian nationals who want to exit the country. The Indian embassy had appealed to all Indians stay-



ing in Saudi Arabia illegally to take advantage of the amnesty that, unlike a similar offer in 2013 that was restricted to Riyadh and Jeddah, is available in 21 locations across the kingdom, he said.

"The majority of applications we received were from blue collar workers wanting to return to India," Nautiyal said. "The numbers are fewer than during the 2013 amnesty period but many families who overstayed now want to use the scheme to return."

"Volunteers are assisting embassy officials through the entire process," he said. "We have put up tents in the embassy and consulate for the Indians who have applied to fly back to India." Most applicants expressed relief at being able to return home. "I have been through hell in the last four years, working for four different sponsors, most of whom did not pay me," said P Murugavel a native of Kallakurichi taluk in Villupuram district, who is now returning home. "The working

and living conditions were harsh. I am thankful for the amnesty offer and that I am returning home even though I'm empty-handed and do not know what the future holds for me." Nautiyal said Saudi officials are giving out passes (one-way travel documents the authorities issue to Indian nationals to travel back home in the absence of passports) and exit visas free of charge to applicants. While they are facilitating the exit process, the applicants have to pay the flight cost.

US citizenship of Indian-American Ismail Ali Khan revoked

US Attorney John Horn said. "What's more, this defendant became a naturalized US citizen by giving a false statement to the government about his criminal history, while he was engaged in this illicit drug scheme. "Khan's willful criminal pursuit earned him more than a prison sentence. It cost him his citizenship and deportation after prison," the attorney said.

At the sentencing hearing, Judge Steve C. Jones ordered that Khan's status as a naturalised US citizen be revoked and his certificate of naturalisation was declared void. He also ordered that Khan be immediately deported to India once he completes his prison term. At that time, supervised release will not be enforced. Khan filled out an application in 2013 to become a naturalized US citizen while the drug conspiracy was going on. He became a naturalized US citizen in March 2014.

The Media Bubble Is Worse Than You Think

The national media really does work in a bubble, something that wasn't true as recently as 2008. And the bubble is growing more extreme.

How did big media miss the Donald Trump swell? News organizations old and new, large and small, print and online, broadcast and cable assigned phalanxes of reporters armed with the most sophisticated polling data and analysis to cover the presidential campaign. The overwhelming assumption was that the race was Hillary Clinton's for the taking, and the real question wasn't how sweeping her November victory would be, but how far out to sea her wave would send political parvenu Trump. Today, it's Trump who occupies the White House and Clinton who's drifting out to sea—an outcome that arrived not just as an embarrassment for the press but as an indictment. In some profound way, the election made clear, the national media just doesn't get the nation it purportedly covers.

What went so wrong? What's still wrong? To some conservatives, Trump's surprise win on November 8 simply bore out what they had suspected, that the Democrat-infested press was knowingly in the tank for Clinton all along. The media, in this view, was guilty not just of confirmation bias but of complicity. But the knowing-bias charge never added up: No news organization ignored the Clinton emails story, and everybody feasted on the damaging John Podesta email cache that WikiLeaks served up buffet-style. Practically speaking, you're not pushing Clinton to victory if you're pantsing her and her party to voters almost daily.

The answer to the press'

myopia lies elsewhere, and nobody has produced a better argument for how the national media missed the Trump story than FiveThirtyEight's Nate Silver, who pointed out that the ideological clustering in top newsrooms led to groupthink. "As of 2013, only 7 percent of [journalists] identified as Republicans," Silver wrote in March, chiding the press for its political homogeneity. Just after the election, presidential strategist Steve Bannon savaged the press on the same point but with a heartier vocabulary. "The media bubble is the ultimate symbol of what's wrong with this country," Bannon said. "It's just a circle of people talking to themselves who have no fucking idea what's going on."

About the Illustration

The map at the top of this piece shows how concentrated media jobs have become in the nation's most Democratic-leaning counties. Counties that voted for Donald Trump in 2016 are in red, and Hillary Clinton counties are in blue, with darker colors signifying higher vote margins. The bubbles represent the 150 counties with the most newspaper and internet publishing jobs. Not only do most of the bubbles fall in blue counties, chiefly on the coasts, but an outright majority of the jobs are in the deepest-blue counties, where Clinton won by 30 points or more.

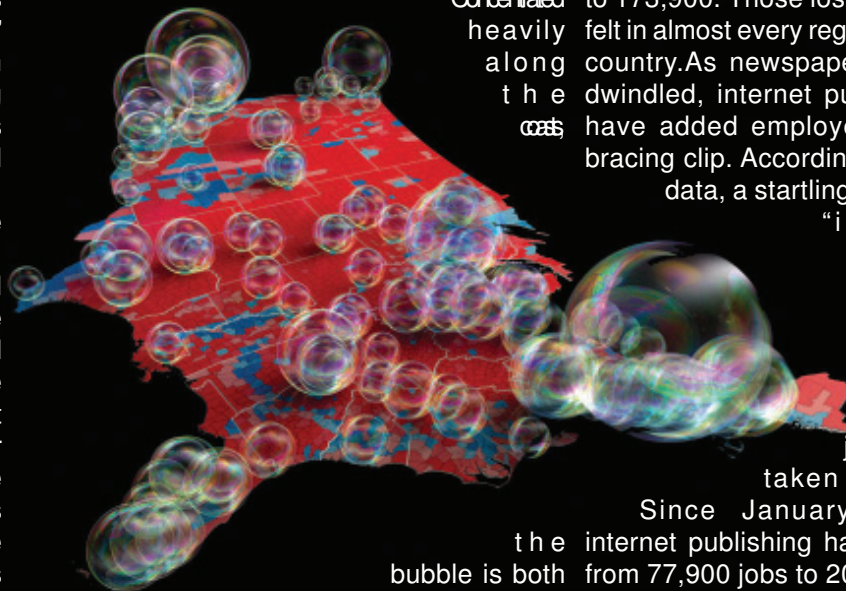
Illustration by DataPoint; data reporting by Tucker Doherty

But journalistic groupthink is a symptom, not a cause. And when it comes to the cause, there's another, blunter way to think about the question than screaming "bias" and "conspiracy," or counting D's and R's. That's to ask a simple question about the map. Where do journalists work, and how much has that changed in recent years? To determine this, my colleague Tucker Doherty excavated labor statistics and cross-referenced them against voting patterns and Census data to figure out just what the American media landscape

looks like, and how much it has changed.

The results read like a revelation. The national media really does work in a bubble, something that wasn't true as recently as 2008. And the bubble is growing more extreme.

Concentrated heavily along the coast



the bubble is both geographic and political.

If you're a working journalist, odds aren't just that you work in a pro-Clinton county—odds are that you reside in one of the nation's most pro-Clinton counties. And you've got company: If you're a typical reader of Politico, chances are you're a citizen of bubbleville, too.

The "media bubble" trope might feel overused by critics of journalism who want to sneer at reporters who live in Brooklyn or California and don't get the "real America" of southern Ohio or rural Kansas. But these numbers suggest it's no exaggeration: Not only is the bubble real, but it's more extreme than you might realize. And it's driven by deep industry trends. Parts of the media have always had their own bubbles. The national magazine industry has been concentrated in New York for generations, and the copy produced reflects an Eastern sensibility. Radio and TV networks based in New York and Los Angeles likewise have shared that dominant sensibility. But they were more than balanced out by the number of newspaper jobs in big cities, midsized cities and smaller towns throughout the country, spreading journalists everywhere.

No longer. The newspaper industry has jettisoned hundreds of thousands of jobs, due to falling advertising revenues. Dailies have shrunk sections,

pages and features; some have retreated from daily publication; hundreds have closed. Daily and weekly newspaper publishers employed about 455,000 reporters, clerks, salespeople, designers and the like in 1990, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. By January 2017, that workforce had more than halved to 173,900. Those losses were felt in almost every region of the country. As newspapers have dwindled, internet publishers have added employees at a bracing clip. According to BLS data, a startling boom in "internet

publishing and broadcasting" jobs has taken place.

Since January 2008, internet publishing has grown from 77,900 jobs to 206,700 in January 2017. In late 2015, during Barack Obama's second term, these two trend lines—jobs in newspapers, and jobs in internet publishing—finally crossed. For the first time, the number of workers in internet publishing exceeded the number of their newspaper brethren. Internet publishers are now adding workers at nearly twice the rate newspaper publishers are losing them. This isn't just a shift in medium. It's also a shift in sociopolitics, and a radical one. Where newspaper jobs are spread nationwide, internet jobs are not: Today, 73 percent of all internet publishing jobs are concentrated in either the Boston-New York-Washington-Richmond corridor or the West Coast crescent that runs from Seattle to San Diego and on to Phoenix. The Chicagoland area, a traditional media center, captures 5 percent of the jobs, with a paltry 22 percent going to the rest of the country. And almost all the real growth of internet publishing is happening outside the heartland, in just a few urban counties, all places that voted for Clinton. So when your conservative friends use "media" as a synonym for "coastal" and "liberal," they're not far off the mark.

What caused the majority of national media jobs to concentrate on the coasts? An alignment of the stars? A flocking of like-minded humans? The answer is far more structural, and far more difficult

We crunched the data on where journalists work and how fast it's changing. The results should worry you.

to alter: It was economics that done the deed.

The magic of the internet was going to shake up the old certainties of the job market, prevent the coagulation of jobs in the big metro areas, or so the Web utopians promised us in the mid-1990s. The technology would free internet employees to work from wherever they could find a broadband connection. That remains true in theory, with thousands of Web developers, writers and producers working remotely from lesser metropolises.

But economists know something the internet evangelists have ignored: All else being equal, specialized industries like to cluster. Car companies didn't arise in remote regions that needed cars—they arose in Detroit, which already had heavy industry, was near natural resources, boasted a skilled workforce and was home to a network of suppliers that could help car companies thrive. As industries grow, they bud and create spinoffs, the best example being the way Silicon Valley blossomed from just a handful of pioneering electronics firms in the 1960s. Seattle's rise as a tech powerhouse was seeded by Microsoft, which moved to the area in 1979 and helped create the ecosystem that gave rise to companies like Amazon.

As Enrico Moretti, a University of California, Berkeley, economist who has studied the geography of job creation, points out, the tech entrepreneurs who drive internet publishing could locate their companies in low-rent, low-cost-of-living places like Cleveland, but they don't. They need the most talented workers, who tend to move to the clusters, where demand drives wages higher. And it's the clusters that host all the subsidiary industries a tech start-up craves—lawyers specializing in intellectual property and incorporation; hardware and software vendors; angel investors; and so on.

What the Press Still Doesn't Get About Trump

He's not unprecedented. He's not going to change. And 11 other lessons the media still haven't learned about the president.

There was lots of hand-wringing after the election about how the media had messed up. Were we too quick to believe the polls? Did we have any idea what real Americans actually thought? Did we give Donald Trump too much attention—or not enough? Now that journalists have spent a few months covering President Trump, we asked a range of media critics, political operatives, historians and more: What does the press still get wrong about Trump, and what do we just not get at all?

1. We forget what has always driven Trump.

Gwenda Blair, author of *The Trumps: Three Generations of Builders and a President*

Too often, the press forgets the very lessons Trump himself has taught us about how he operates and why it often works. For example, journalists often imply that Trump's reliance on cable news is a liability because it leaves him ill-informed. And so it does—but it also leaves him highly attuned to that medium and able to respond to what he sees there with immediate, pitch-perfect tweets or other comments that come across as direct, authentic and trustworthy.

Another example: the power of repetition. Frequently, reporters assume that because they have already responded to a Trump assertion, the issue is settled. But then he repeats the same misinformation, as he did in defending the size of his inauguration crowds. In part, this is because he's incapable of acknowledging loss or error. More important, it's because one of his highest priorities is the construction of an alternate narrative and the delegitimization of the mainstream media, traditional authorities, and the primacy of

facts.

Likewise, the press seems to have forgotten the power of distraction. Coverage of the Trump-ordered missile attack in Syria made little reference to how conveniently it deflected attention from Russia-gate, Trump's conflicts of interest, his draconian budget cuts, etc. The media also understate Trump's reliance on bullying, which works surprisingly well for him. With the recent exception of the House Freedom Caucus' refusal to knuckle under and vote for the GOP's health care act, most people (e.g., the other Republican presidential candidates and many TV commentators) back down.

Trump has also mastered the power of grievance and continues to use it. When an issue gets too sticky, he reverts to self-pity—fashioning himself as the victim of Barack Obama's supposed wiretapping, for instance. The media might call such behavior weak or petty, but it also re-cements Trump's bond with his followers as fellow victims of the Washington elite.

Finally, the press tends to forget how much Trump needs to keep experiencing the act of winning—and how much this drives his behavior. The likeliest reason for his charge that Obama wiretapped him is that Trump wants to feel as if he's continuing to beat the biggest competitor he can find. And what bigger target than Obama?

2. Trump. Won't. Change.

Kurt Bardella, president and CEO of Endeavor Strategies

Anyone who thought Trump would pivot and become a more conventional political figure after he took the oath of office was completely misreading him and his psyche. Trump is, and always will be, a promoter.

Facts and specifics are secondary to tone, style and strength. In the immediate aftermath of his first address to Congress, the political and media community was quick to point to that speech as a turning point. For one hour, Trump acted presidential—"acted" being the key word. Days later, he took to Twitter and remarkably and falsely accused his predecessor of wiretapping his offices. So much for turning over a new leaf. And that's the point: No matter what happens, how far his numbers plummet or how often his statements are fact-checked, Trump is not going to change, and his audience doesn't want him to. For almost a decade now, the American people have been bombarded with messaging from campaigns that highlight how Washington is broken, how the status quo is failing them and how change is needed. Hundreds of millions of dollars in advertising across all TV, print, radio and digital have been spent hammering this fundamental message into the minds of the American people. Trump is not part of the status quo that Americans have now been conditioned to oppose—and he's not going to change to accommodate to Washington.

3. We still trust the polls too much.

Helmut Norpoth, political scientist at Stony Brook University

During the campaign, almost nobody in the media gave Trump a chance to win the election. That gloomy prospect largely derived from his poor standing in the polls, both nationally and in the major battleground states, with almost no poll showing Trump leading in the three states that clinched his victory in the Electoral College—Michigan,

Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. This failure, one might think, would give the media some pause in seizing on polls that now show Trump with low approval, the worst of any president at this stage. But no, polls nowadays feed news coverage that gives Trump little chance to make it through his first term and assumes there's no way for him to avoid a midterm disaster. Granted, presidential approval is not the same as a vote choice, but it is a proven predictor of the vote in midterm and presidential elections. It is odd to see journalists retain their faith in a discredited source instead of questioning its reliability. Shouldn't they instead launch an inquiry into the 2016 polling fiasco?

4. 'Trump is crazy' has become a cliché.

John McWhorter, associate professor of linguistics at Columbia University and author of *Words on the Move: Why English Won't—and Can't—Sit Still* (Like, Literally)

The cherished idea that Trump is mentally unstable, endlessly massaged by media writers, is weak. Too many of us have known people much like him in his boyish, defensive, unfocused and breezily incurious essence; it is almost weird that we are pretending that it is a sign of pathology that someone has a hard time admitting he's wrong. Trump is simply a profoundly mediocre person tragically unfit for the presidency. What's "crazy" is that he wound up there.

Social media's eclipse of the smoke-filled room accounts for that much more gracefully than an alarm painting Trump as fit for psychoanalysis and medication. Is this idea of Trump as madman possibly a variation

on the too-typical disparagement of the modestly educated whites "out there" who voted for Trump? Now that the general call in the media is to hold off on tarring them as racist troglodytes and sexists, it seems that a new way of punishing them is to say that they were so dumb they elected an obvious lunatic to the presidency because he said he would get their jobs back. But what if he is less loony than just a jerk? Plenty of presidents have been jerks, and possibly most of them.

Neither the media nor the "out there" people deserve anything called blame for Trump's election. Social history is not only nasty but complex. Pointing fingers, however, isn't.

5. We're not only stuck in bubbles—social media is making them worse.

Emily Parker, former chief strategy officer at Parlio and author of *Now I Know Who My Comrades Are: Voices from the Internet Underground*

On March 15, a Guardian correspondent tweeted a photo of a Trump voter at a rally for the president in Nashville. The man was holding a sign that read, "I've made a huge mistake." This was a perfect distillation, it seemed, of the regret that onetime Trump supporters were surely feeling now that he was actually in office. Sure enough, the tweet was retweeted more than 40,000 times. Viral images create their own kind of truth. One man's sign can give the impression that Trump voters are changing their minds more than they are, or that the rally was a failure. This is not the Guardian correspondent's fault. There's no reason to believe that the photo was fake news, or that the journalist was trying to mislead. He was reporting "from the ground," and not from the coastal media bubbles. That same day, he also tweeted a photo of White House press secretary Sean Spicer surrounded by fans (though it very got few retweets).

The "huge mistake" tweet is just one example of a more widespread phenomenon. Images like this can buoy those in the Trump opposition—who, after all, may be more likely to read reporters' tweets. But such images also risk lulling people into thinking that Trump is less popular than he is. Too often, we cherry-pick examples that fit our worldview, and social media blows them out of proportion. Many journalists vastly underestimated Trump's popularity before the election; the media need to avoid making the same mistake now that he is president.



Hiroshima Prefecture is located in the Chugoku region and has two UNESCO World Heritage sites – the Atomic Dome and Itsukushima Shrine.

By **Lipla Negi**

THERE'S a renewed interest among Indians about Japan, especially given the 'special relationship' Prime Minister Narendra Modi shares with his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe. Yet, not many believe they would want to go to the Land of the Rising Sun. For some, Japan is an "utterly expansive" place, while others have issues with its foods and also that Japan is all about bricks and mortars.

In reality, Japan is a land that hosts one of the most culturally vibrant societies which is a delight to travellers. It is a land that offers something to everyone, in a way that is bound to make for an exciting holiday whether you are travelling alone or with family and friends. We bust five myths commonly associated with Japan.

MYTH1: JAPAN IS EXPENSIVE

IT'S the most commonly held opinion. Yes, Tokyo is expensive. But so can be any other world-class city in the world. "I have lived for many years in Paris and Brussels, and I must say these places are far more expensive than the Japanese cities," says a Japan Embassy official based in New Delhi.

Japan offers everything to everyone. "If you want \$10 meals, you can have them in Japan. If you want \$100 hotel, you can have it in Japan," he says, adding how you can buy almost luxurious goods in Ginza but can also pick a few well-priced electronic gadgets from Akihabara. It's all about your choice and how much you are willing to spend. A well-planned holiday in Japan is as cheap or costly as any other holiday in Europe or the US.

MYTH2: INDIANS CAN HAVE FOOD ISSUES

Indians can be picky eaters. Some of us don't even eat fish or meat, which can be a staple diet in most other countries. But worry not, if someone tells you that in Japan you can't get anything without fish in it, they probably have never been there.

In Japan, vegetarians can eat as well as they do in India. First of all, there are many Indian



Mount Fuji, at 3,776 m, is the highest mountain peak in Japan.

restaurants in Tokyo, as well as in other Japanese cities. There are restaurants like Annam, which not only serve Indian delicacies like Butter Chicken, but also vegetarian fare. Then there is local vegetarian food. In fact, Japanese love their greens. In any restaurant in Japan you can order dishes like Kirimochi, Kabocha, Zosui, Kabocha soup, Shiitake Yakitori (grilled veggies) and all of them are vegetable preparations.

And in case you don't have any inhibitions about what you eat, you can spend days sampling the best food that Japan offers. From fresh sushi, which you will get nowhere else, to different kind of desserts and tofu preparations — you can have it all in Japan.

MYTH3: JAPAN IS FOR BUSINESS TRAVEL ONLY

This myth has probably gained currency because a lot of the world's top companies are from Japan. But this is far from reality. Not all travel to Japan for business. The country actually offers so much more. Steve Jobs, for instance, would often visit Japan — and they were not business trip. He would travel to Kyoto and two temples in the city — Saihoji and Ryoanji — to get away from all the hustle-bustle of the city life and meditate. He found the places so soothing that he would travel there with family.

At the same time, Japan offers nightlife and fun that is unlike any other place, if you are look-

5 RESTAURANTS TO TRY IN TOKYO

■ **Hakushu:** This family-run restaurant in Shibuya serves delectable pieces of Kobe at a very reasonable price.

■ **Aoya:** Situated in an old house on a Nakameguro backstreet, this restaurant is known for its tea and desserts.

■ **Nihonryori Ryugin:** Among the world's best restaurants, this place is known for its fusion cuisine. Go there to indulge.

■ **Maisen:** Situated on Jingu-mae, Shibuya, this restaurant is known for its well-priced crispy deep fried food, which is served with a secret tonkatsu sauce.

■ **Sukiyabashi Jiro Honten:** It may not look like a fancy joint managed by Jiro Ono is so good that every year it earns three Michelin stars. And as for Jiro, he is such expert at making sushi that Hollywood has made a film on him.

ing for some thrills. Mega clubs like Womb and AgeHa in Tokyo provide the kind of party scene that is unmatched by any other club in the world. Or you can walk through the hip Roppongi area, hopping into pubs and just having a good time.

MYTH4: LANGUAGE IS A BIG PROBLEM

It's another myth. The signage in Japan is mostly bilingual, especially on the trains. All large train stations have a tourist information centre and can help with transport and accommodation. Cities like Tokyo are global cities and just like residents of any other big, global city, the residents of Tokyo too can communicate with travellers in English.

MYTH5: JAPAN IS JUST ULTRA-MODERN

Japan isn't just a concrete jungle. For, it's host to one of the world's oldest cultures. The old Japanese tradition is deeply integrated into the way of life, providing amazing spectacles and insight to travellers.

Not only Japan offers great historical monuments such as the Kiyomizu-dera Buddhist temple, Golden Pavilion and Himeji Castle, it also has a few natural wonders like Jigokudani Monkey Park and Mount Fuji that will delight any adventurer. Of late, the country has been experiencing a hiking boom, attracting tourists from across the world looking for its breathtakingly beautiful "walking holidays".

How to wean yourself off sugar

IN MY clinic, people often say they will never be able to give up sugar. However, you'd be surprised how quickly your taste buds change and how you come to appreciate the sweetness of other foods such as roasted sweet potatoes and carrots.

I would suggest that you have a good spring clean of your food cupboards and discard anything containing sugar. It's tempting to give away food if the sell by date is fine but do you really want to encourage anyone else to eat sugar? Bin it.

When I started out in the nutrition field over 30 years ago, it was much harder for people as there simply weren't the choices there are now. Nowadays if, say, you don't have time to make your own salad dressing, there will usually be an alternative in the shops that you can use, avoiding ones with high levels of sugar and sweeteners.

The same goes for spaghetti sauces and mayonnaise. It is just a question of getting used to buying different brands. You may find that your local health food shop will stock some alternatives for foods that you regularly buy that are sugar-free (with no artificial sweeteners added) and that will taste quite delicious. I have included some sugar-free recipes in this book. I have also included some savoury ones as you may be surprised to find just how much sugar is in the savoury foods you eat.

Mainly, I want to show you that you can have sweet foods that are not laden with an ingredient that is full of calories and has no nutritional value

Eat little and often

To keep your blood sugar balanced and to avoid the dips (low blood sugar, hypoglycaemia) that will send you racing off to get a quick fix with a chocolate bar or a packet of biscuits, make sure that you are eating little and often. My recommendation is have a good breakfast, lunch and dinner and also to include a mid-morning and

a mid-afternoon snack.

Don't go longer than three hours without eating (this is especially vital for women) or your blood sugar levels will drop too low and your body will give you a craving for something sweet to rectify the drop quickly. If you miss breakfast you are setting yourself up to fail because by 11am you will be craving a coffee and a Danish because your blood sugar will have dropped so low.

Remember that breakfast means 'breaking the fast'. You have not eaten since dinner the night before and that first meal of the day is the one that breaks the fast. Of course it needs to be a good breakfast. If you opt for a

sugary breakfast cereal, this will give a quick rise in blood sugar followed by a drop soon afterwards, giving you the feeling that you need something else.

Having caffeine can also make you crave sugar so it would be better to limit caffeine in order to make it easier to stop the sugar.

Weaning yourself off sugar

I would suggest you follow these simple steps to make coming off sugar easier. You could take these steps one week at a time or a day at a time. First of all, take out of your diet all the



Sugar has same effect as opiates on the nerve centre in the brain.

savoury foods that contain added sugar.

This might be as simple as just changing the brand so you keep the same food but the ingredients are healthier. Or you might have to ditch that food, if there isn't an alternate, or make it yourself. Foods to think about are tomato (spaghetti) sauces, mayonnaise, salad dressings, baked beans and soups.

Wean yourself off added sugar, gradually diminishing the amount you use each day over a period of days or maybe weeks. Next, have a look at the sweet foods you are eating on a regular basis that contain added or hidden sugar. You might think fruit yogurt that says 'live' on the tub is healthy but bear in mind, as we have seen, that it can contain up to eight teaspoons of sugar.

Buy natural organic yogurt and drop in or blend in your own fruit, fresh or frozen.

The five-day sugar detox

If you find the idea of slowly weaning yourself off sugar difficult, you may prefer a more radical approach. Some people find it easier to cut out all sugar. If you want to make a radical change to your health, this is a great way to kickstart your body's healing.

It involves eliminating all added sugar, artificial sweeteners, fruit and starches for five days. Look at this as a chance to rethink the way you eat; a chance to recalibrate your metabolism and reprogramming your taste buds to appreciate a variety of tastes in your food, rather than just sweetness.

Having caffeine can also make you crave sugar so it would be better to limit it



Poisonous compounds are created when vegetable oils are cooked at high heat.

GHEE ISN'T AS BAD AS YOU THINK

WHEN I go to my local curry restaurant, I always ask the waiter to make sure my chicken *jalfrezi*, spinach curry and lentil *daal* is cooked in ghee, not vegetable oil. They know me now so I don't get rolling eyes and shrugs any more.

As a cardiologist with an interest in obesity and heart health, there is no way I am going to put my health at risk by eating poisonous compounds that are created when vegetable oils are cooked at high heat.

Unfortunately, curry lovers are doing just that - they have abandoned traditional ghee in favour of 'healthier' vegetable oils. The

outcome of this trend has been higher rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer.

Studies now show that sunflower oil, corn oil and other vegetable oils are unstable at high temperature and quickly break down into toxic aldehyde which is linked to an increased risk of developing getting cancer among other things. A recent study showed that cooking in vegetable oil for just 20 minutes, produced 20 times the permitted levels of aldehyde recommended as a maximum limit by the World Health Organisation. For years, we have thought that vegetable oils, including sun-

flower oil and corn oil, were better than butter and animal based fats. But the tide of opinion has changed and the latest scientific evidence reveals that dairy products actually protect against heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Sadly, the news has come too late for the millions of people who now shun full-fat milk and butter because they think it is bad for them. Cold pressed extra virgin olive oil however will protect your heart and give you a bit of a boost when it comes to antioxidants which help to mop up damaging free radicals in the blood.

DESPITE doing everything right — be it a healthy brunch or an afternoon run — some people find they simply cannot fall asleep on a Sunday evening.

But they are not alone, with close to 60 per cent of people suffering from "Sunday Night Insomnia".

Mindfulness experts spoke to Femall about to find out how to cure Sunday night sleeplessness.

According to them, as well as countless other sleep experts, there are a number of things at play when taking into account why we sleep so badly on a Sunday.

As well as the biological rhythm your body is used to and your natural sleep and waking pattern being altered at the weekend, often people find themselves lying awake thinking about what they have to do and accomplish that week on a Sunday: "Sunday night is to-do list night," the experts said.

"Our brains automatically start mulling over the week ahead of us, which makes it hard to sleep while we have so much brain activity."

Experts said that on a Sunday, "good sleep hygiene" is more important than ever.

"Banning smartphones and devices from the bedroom might sound like a cliché, but it really works," experts said.

"Also, try to go to bed at your regular weeknight time and have a relaxing bath before you head into your room."

"Things like keeping the bedroom dark help, too. I recommend doing some gentle yoga poses like placing your legs up the wall, or listening to a restful meditation podcast to get your body and mind primed for sleep."

"If you have too many thoughts running around your head when you switch off the light, don't try too hard to sleep. In fact, do the opposite and it's amazing how quickly sleep will happen."

WHILE there is no direct science as to why some people sleep badly on a Sunday, the experts all agree that the reason why every office worker is so bleary-eyed at 9am on a Monday morning is down to the shock of going back to the regular routine.

"Sleeping in and staying out late over the weekend definitely affects our bodies and the quality of sleep we get," says sleep expert Clarissa Hughes.

"The human body likes routine and when we mess with the routine, our sleep pattern struggles."

While she says we can usually overcome one bad night's sleep pretty quickly, if we have a few or even a couple in a row, we start to suffer from "sleep deficit", which is hard to make up and leaves us cranky by mid Monday afternoon, as well as craving sugary foods.

Stress is also a factor, and fretful nights spent thinking about meetings and deadlines the next day, are not good for the body.

When it comes to tips for banishing your Sunday night sleeplessness, experts advise:

"Prepare for sleep earlier in

the evening by eating a light dinner at a reasonable time. Don't drink too much before bedtime, and turn off the TV at least an hour before bed, before having a bath or shower."

They also say that changing into your pyjamas is useful, too,

as it tricks the mind into thinking it's time to switch off.

"Make your room a gadget-free zone without smartphones or TVs that emit blue light," she says, and before you go in, listen to a little soothing music.

Finally, experts say that people's bedrooms should always be kept at a "good temperature of around 20 degree Celsius".

That being said, the bed and duvet should be warm, to stop you from shivering underneath it.

So why don't you give it a try this Sunday night?

That way, by the time Monday morning rolls around, with any luck you won't be half as heavy-lidded and sluggish as the rest of your colleagues.

Put on pyjamas & ban your phone for a good night sleep

PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION



Experts say banning smartphones and devices from the bedroom might sound like a cliché, but it really works.

Lack of sleep can leave you 'functionally drunk'

FAILING to get enough sleep can leave a person "functionally drunk", in a matter of days, experts on Sunday warned.

They note sleep is much more important than many people realise.

Even if a person achieves six hours a night, they are building up a sleep debt, Olivia Walch from the University of Michigan said.

Her warnings come as a new study, co-authored by Walch, reveal the sleep patterns of people across the world.

The findings show middle-aged men are the most likely to be sleep deprived, often failing to get the recommended seven to eight hours shut eye.

Researchers found women are more concerned with scheduling their sleep, planning around 30 minutes more a night, on average than their male counterparts.

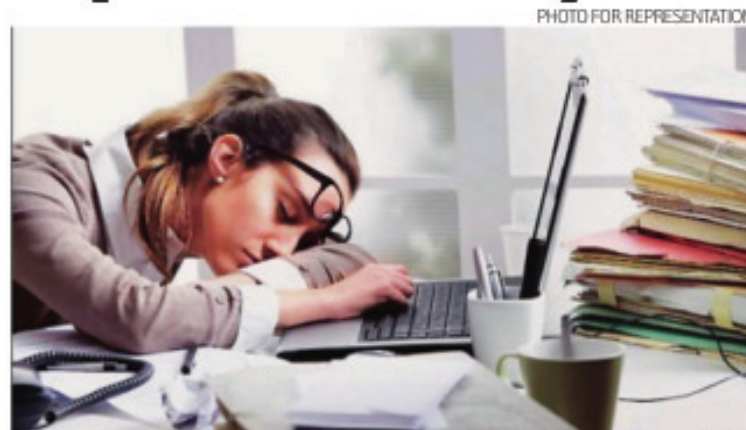


PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION

Even with six hours a night, you are building up a sleep debt.

Women tend to go to bed earlier and wake up later, especially those aged between 30 and 60, the study found.

Those people who spend time in sunlight each day tend to go to bed earlier and get more sleep

than those people who spend most of their time cooped up inside all day.

Walch said: "It doesn't take that many days of not getting enough sleep before you're functionally drunk."

"Researchers have figured out that being overly tired can have that effect. And what's terrifying at the same time is that people think they're performing tasks way better than they are."

"Your performance drops off but your perception of your performance doesn't."

Researchers collated their data using a free smartphone app that helps reduce jetlag.

It allowed them to gather robust sleep data from thousands of people across 100 countries.

The researchers examined how age, gender, the amount of light and home country affect the number of hours sleep people around the globe get each night.

They also looked at when people went to bed, and when their

alarms go off in the morning.

Researchers found that cultural pressures can override natural circadian rhythms, with the effects being most markedly seen at bedtime.

While morning responsibilities, such as work, children and school, play a role in a person's wake-time, the researchers said they are not the only factors.

Dr Daniel Forger, who also took part in the study, said: "Across the board, it appears that society governs bedtime and one's internal clock governs wake time, and a later bedtime is linked to loss of sleep. At the same time, we found a strong wake-time effect from users' biological clocks — not just their alarm clocks."

Middle-aged men are most likely to be sleep deprived, often failing to get the recommended eight hours shut-eye

'The Black Prince' awarded at Houston Film Festival



Magon and Sophie filmmaker Kavi Raz and providing a visual narrative Stevens. Produced by filmed widely across the of one of India's most B r i l l s t e i n Britain and India. It noble kings, and his carefully captures the fragile relationship with, tragic, yet fascinating Queen Victoria, who was true story and legacy of Godmother to his directed by Hollywood Maharaja Dilip Singh, children.

(Agencies) 'The Black story of the last king of Prince' Hollywood film Punjab – Maharaja Dilip featuring Punjabi Singer- Singh and is set for Poet Satinder Sartaj and international release on very well known bollywood July 21. Sartaj, who actress Shabana Azmi marks his acting debut with was awarded the special jury Remi Award at the Maharaja Dilip Singh while 50th annual world-fest- Shabana portrays Rani Houston International film Jindan, the exiled King's festival. The film is a mother. The film also historic biopic on the life features Jason Flemyng,

Amanda Root, Keith Duffy, David Essex OBE, Canadian actor Rup



Kim Kardashian slammed for Virgin Mary Kimoji

(Agencies) Los Angeles: Reality TV star Kim Kardashian has received backlash online after transforming into Virgin Mary for the newest Kimoji. For the Kimoji, Kim has transformed into The Virgin Mary and each of the animated image becomes blurred when it's played, indicating that this Kimoji was made to "celebrate" 420 a.k.a. Weed Day. The caption of one of the images read, "420 DROP NOW AVAILABLE." Another image was captioned with "WHEN KIM BLESSES YOU WITH THAT 420 DROP." Fans immediately left harsh comments on Kimoji's Instagram, saying that this act is beyond disrespectful and offensive, reported Ace Showbiz. One commenter said, "This is beyond disrespectful!! What does this even have to do with 4/20 ? Just some pathetic idea but mostly... Disrespectful to God." Another pointed out that Virgin Mary is a sacred figure. "This is shameful. Remove this image our blessed Mother Mary is irreplaceably sacred. We will not stand for this mockery," the commenter said. Many people have demanded Kim to take down the images. Not only used as emojis, but the Virgin Mary Kimoji is sold as a candle. This candle is sold for USD 18 on Kimoji's official website, causing people to label Kim "disgusting." One comment read, "You are disgusting! You should be ashamed of yourself!" while the others told her to "have some respect."



Another look from Irrfan Khan And Saba Qamar's Hindi Medium Revealed



(Agencies) Hindi Medium starring Irrfan Khan and Saba Qamar is directed by Saket Chaudhary. It is a slice of life film where in Irrfan plays a Punjabi businessman from Chandni Chowk and Saba his wife. They are a hindi speaking couple who do their best to get their child admitted in an English speaking school. The film is produced by Dinesh Vijan and Bhushan Kumar and will be releasing on 19th May.



Diljit Dosanjh Owns a Private Jet

(Agencies) Rulling on million hearts the Polly wood king Diljit Dosanjh recently posted some picture and videos of him in his recently brought private jet. Sardarji of Punjabi cinema, Diljit Dosanjh is not only popular but also wealthier in the industry. The singer turned actor Diljit, who has been recently seen in Phillauri movie has shared a picture and video of his private jet with his fans. The "Naughty Billo" singer took to twitter to post a picture of his jet and captioned it, "New Beginning Starts with private jet" Diljit Dosanjh will start his journey for his 'Dream Tour Canada 2017' in May and before that he bought a private jet. It looks like Diljit is so excited about his tour to Canada. So from now onwards, Diljit Dosanjh will travel in his newly owned private jet and the journey will start with his 'Dream Tour 2017' trip to Canada. With a new Jet Plane, Diljit Dosanjh has become the first Indian singer to own a private plane.

Agent Vinod

Tall, taciturn, he rode his cougar-like beauty like the meanest gunslinger in B-town



(Agencies) The mere mention of Vinod Khanna conjures up images of a Bollywood hunk with the looks of a Greek god—the best prototype, perhaps unmatched, that could do both shifts in office with equal elan. That is, be a manly chevalier straight out of a Mills & Boon romance that every girl could swoon over; and, at the same time, have all the cold steel and feline sinew needed to be the last man standing in any scrappy western shoot-out. The one every guy in town would imitate. With his John Wayne swagger, flowing mane, unbuttoned shirt and disarmingly endearing smile, the West Punjab-born stud farm thoroughbred had everything it takes to make a successful hero. And yet, he had to begin his celluloid journey as a villain, often getting beaten up by a hero who could be his sidekick in real life. That's how the roulette spun for him. Impressed with his personality, Sunil Dutt, who was launching his younger brother Som Dutt in *Man ka Meet*, had picked him for the negative character. A string of like roles followed, where all he had to do was smear a black tilak on his wide forehead, ride a horse and snarl at the camera. Nonetheless, anybody who saw his amazing screen presence in those early, eminently forgettable movies knew instinctively he was but biding his time. Khanna lived up to the promise, making a seamless transition to pivotal roles. He had already done night duty as the gun-toting, teeth-clenching desperado. So he arrived just in time as the Seventies dawned, with its reinvention of the hero as a masculinised avatar who looked as if he could really beat the guys in yellow striped T-shirts to pulp. And yet, he was not all about looks. Though not extravagantly emotive, beneath that tough Ado-

nis persona lay a capacity for fragility, the undertow of a wise, knowing pain. Gulzar was the first film-maker who saw the latent sparks in him. In *Mere Apne* and *Achanak*, Khanna blended both—the svelte street toughie who could crumble, the officer with the hounds of his past chasing after him. In these two films, he proved he was not just a bundle of well-shaped muscles.

But the spirit of the age, and his sleek persona, conspired to ensure that Vinod Khanna never quite broke free from the stereotypical commercial cinema. The towering Amitabh Bachchan and the astounding success of *Sholay* had opened the floodgates to multi-starrers, and Khanna, like other A-listers, took them by the dozen. In *Manmohan*

Desai's *Amar Akbar Anthony* and *Parvarish*, he held his own against Bachchan—and became the only one, outside Shatrughan Sinha, to challenge him for numero UNO status. *Main Tuli Tere Angan Ki* and *Qurbani* rolled by; he was safely the second highest-paid in B-town. Amidst all that, he stole time to do offbeat films like *Shaque*. That was when he gave it all up, at the very pinnacle of his career. The signs of an inner fatigue, of disillusionment with the ways of cinema and his role in it, could be retrospectively read as he sought (and found) solace in Rajneesh's commune in Pune. When his guru decided to shift to Oregon in the US, Khanna followed him, leaving his family, friends and all the trappings of stardom back. The industry speculated wildly: was he on the verge of a nervous breakdown to turn to spiritualism? But out in Oregon, Khanna had quietly taken to gardening and cooking by the side of his guru. In his mid-30s then, he had lost none of his drop-dead, gorgeous looks despite his flowing white beard. The actor-turned-sexy sanyasi was at

peace with himself. That blissful abstention stretched all of five years, years that could have been his peak. It may have been longer, but destiny had other ideas. Controversies over Osho and his ashram in the US brought the ascetic back to the world he had renounced. Any other actor may have struggled to pick up the threads. But in an industry still mourning Vinod Khanna's loss, he found many takers waiting for him with open arms. Soon, films like *Insaaf*, *Satyamev Jayate* and *Dayavan* followed, kickstarting his second innings. Khanna was well-placed to become the topmost star after the Bachchan aura faded in the wake of damp squibs like *Ganga Jamuna Saraswati*, *Toofan* and *Jaadugar* in the late '80s, but he was not bothered. Reports about his rank unprofessionalism, late arrivals and tantrums started doing the rounds. During the making of *Jurm*, he's said to have troubled the Bhattas so much that they vowed never to work with big stars again, a promise they kept for years. In the '90s, like many of his peers, he never

appeared serious and signed films indiscriminately. He eventually paid the price for it. While Bachchan reinvented himself to stay relevant to the millennial generation, Khanna fell by the wayside, doing bit-roles in *Imtihan*, as much as the Salman and Shahrukh

starrers. A brief political life ensued, even a ministerial berth in the Vajpayee government. But he was essentially cut out to be nothing but a film star, composed of charisma, and now nostalgia. Always the sleek professor of swashbuckler of *Qurbani*.

LIFE & TIMES OF AN ICON

- 1946: Vinod Khanna was born to Kamla and Kishan Khanna, a textile merchant, on October 6 in Peshawar
- 1957: The family moved to Delhi, where he studied in DPS, Mathura Road
- 1960: He graduated with a commerce degree in Mumbai. His love for cinema blossomed in this period
- 1968: Actor-producer Sunil Dutt gave Khanna a break in his production *Man Ka Meet*, as a villain
- 1971: He married Geetanjali from whom he would have two sons — actors Akshaye and Rahul Khanna
- 1982: He quit Bollywood for Bhagwan Osho Rajneesh's ashram in Oregon, US
- 1987: Khanna returned and gave several action hits
- 1990: Married again after divorcing first wife in 1985
- 1997: He joined BJP & was elected MP next year. He won three more elections



Family, friends and prominent Bollywood personalities, including old friend Amitabh Bachchan (top), bid a tearful adieu to veteran actor Vinod Khanna, who was known as one of Bollywood's most handsome heroes and had a career spanning over five decades.

Will always remember Vinod Khanna as a popular actor, dedicated leader & a wonderful human. Pained by his demise.

— NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

Will miss you Amar. Rest In Peace. Remembering the good times with you, Vinod. Thank you for being my friend.

— RISHI KAPOOR, ACTOR

He was kind and affectionate. Loved his panther like walk. Will remember his larger than life performances & graciousness.

— ANUPAM KHER, ACTOR



ACHANAK 1973
In his first major lead role, Khanna drew plaudits for his portrayal of Major Ranjeet Khanna, inspired by the Nanavati case.



MERA GAON MERA DESH 1973
Khanna essayed the role of a baddie that is etched in memory of his fans.



AMAR AKBAR ANTHONY 1977
He transitioned from a baddie to a cop with effortless ease for this feel-good multi-starrer that won many awards & set new records.

FROM DACOIT TO COP

Remembering some of Khanna's most memorable performances over the years



SATYAMEV JAYATE 1987
His comeback vehicle after the Osho phase, the movie was a big hit and instantly put him back among A-listers in Bollywood as producers lined up to sign him.



QURBANI 1980
The action thriller was a big hit among women as they drooled over the two leading men.

have you heard?

MEXICAN FLAVOUR

The Mexican remake of Rajkumar Hirani's 3 Idiots (2009) will release on June 2. Titled 3 Idiotas, the film has Vidhu Vinod Chopra as one of the executive producers. The All Izz Well track has also been redone in Mexican

'Bahubali' in wax



To coincide with the roaring success of Bahubali: The Conclusion, a wax statue of **Prabhas** was installed at Madame Tussauds, Bangkok, on Tuesday. Measurements were taken by the museum folk late last year. Prabhas is said to be the first South star to have his wax work at the museum. It features him as his famous character, Amarendra Bahubali, from SS Rajamouli's hit epic drama. Fans have been making a beeline to the museum and uploading snapshots of the wax model on social media.

This time for Africa

Hours after slaying the red carpet at the Met Gala in New York, **Priyanka Chopra** took off for Johannesburg. PeeCee has made her way to South Africa for a fundraiser. Being UNICEF's global goodwill ambassador, the actress is part of an event which highlights the challenges faced by children in violence-hit regions. The fundraiser will take place in Johannesburg on May 6, proceeds of which will go towards the child protection programmes of UNICEF in that country. She will also attend Indian-origin designer Gavin Rajah's fashion show. Expect her to make yet another sartorial statement. At the Met Gala, she impressed the fashion police in a trench coat with the 'longest' train. On Monday, Priyanka posted on social media: "Travel as much as you can, as far as you can, as long as you can. Life's not meant to be lived in one place." PeeCee seems to be doing just that.

Sallu's mommy turns producer

Salman Khan's mother, **Salma Khan's** name features on the posters of his upcoming production, Tubelight. The poster reads: Produced by Salma Khan and Salman Khan. This is the first time that the superstar has put mommy dearest's name on the publicity material of his film that also features younger brother, actor-producer Sohal Khan. It is well known that Sallu shares a close bond with her. While hosting Bigg Boss, he would always wrap up the episode by saying, "Do whatever



you want man, but don't trouble your mother." Now, that's like a good (mamma's) boy.

Looking West

Vibha Gulati (right), who has assisted Rajkumar Hirani on Munna Bhai MBBS (2003) and directed a few short films, is ready with her next project. Titled Forbidden, the short film stars South actress **Salony Luthra** in the lead. The script demanded that the character perform stunts, and Vibha zeroed in on Salony after she cleared a string of tests. Says Salony, "I was confident about every requirement for my role, but for the American accent. I spent three weeks in the US to get it right."



SPOTTED



Gauhar Khan (left) hosted a dinner for friends and family at an Andheri restaurant to celebrate sister **Nigaar's** birthday on Tuesday night

Sign of the times

Apart from being part of Nandita Das's biopic on Urdu writer Saadat Hasan Manto, **Rasika Dugal** will be seen playing mother to two hearing-impaired kids in Tu Hai Mera Sunday. The actress learnt sign language while prepping for Milind Dhaimade's film that has Barun Sobti and Shahana Goswami as co-stars. Since the two child actors are hearing impaired in real life too, she had to work hard on getting the nuances right for effective communication.



TELLY TATTLE

Hema's daily fix

Hema Malini is a fan of the soap, Badho Bahu. The actress-danceuse makes it a point to catch up with the show whenever time permits. She apparently also keeps telling fellow MPs about her daily fix. Hema recently sent a message to the makers saying how the show's



protagonist (**Rytasha Rathore**) is different from the typical heroines on the tube. She also hopes Badho realises her dream of becoming a wrestler.

Break ke baad

After trying the knot in February this year, Nagarjuna — Ek Yoddha actress **Pooja Banerjee** went on a break. She's now back on the scene and will be seen in Ekta Kapoor's Chandra Nandini. She plays a vishkanya in the fantasy drama. Pooja tied the knot with long-time boyfriend, swimmer **Sandeep Sejwal**, who is an Asian Games 2014 medalist.



Om Swami gets a lap dance



The controversial ex-Bigg Boss contestant, **Om Swami** is at it again. Yesterday, a video of the self-styled godman deep in meditation with a girl in lingerie seducing him went viral. The clip is said to have been taken on the set of his upcoming film, Man Ka Mel. It is said that the starlet was shooting in a bikini, but Om disapproved of it. Strangely, however, he approved of the mismatched lingerie. Watch it at your own risk.



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