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I want my children to love and respect all religions: SRK



STORY ON page 30

Will This Hug Change The World ?



(SAI Bureau) The camaraderie between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump was on full display today as the two leaders heaped praise on each other, voiced appreciation for each other's leadership and embraced more than once at the White House.

The two leaders underlined the close ties between their countries, with Trump saying India has a "true friend" in the White House.

Trump said the friendship between the United States and India is built on shared values, "including our shared commitment to democracy." "During my campaign, I pledged that if elected, India would have a true friend in the White House. And that is now exactly what you have, a true friend," Trump said at the White House Rose Garden following his first bilateral meeting with Modi. "I am thrilled to salute you, Prime Minister Modi, and the Indian people for all that you are accomplishing

together. Your accomplishments have been vast," Trump said.

Modi on his part said he deeply appreciates Trump's strong commitment to the enhancement of bilateral relations. "I am sure that under your leadership, our mutually beneficial strategic partnership will gain new strength, new positivity, and will reach new heights, and that your vast and successful experience in the business world will lend an

aggressive and forward-looking agenda to our relations," he said.

Modi said he would like to thank Trump for his "great leadership" in building US-India relations. "Be assured that in this joint journey of our two nations towards development, growth and prosperity, I will remain a driven, determined, and decisive partner," he said. Trump said he enjoyed his "very productive conversation" with Modi,

saying the "the future of our partnership has never looked brighter. India and the United States will always be tied together in friendship and respect." After Trump finished his speech, Modi walked towards the US president and hugged him. After Modi's speech, the two leaders again briefly embraced. Yet another hug was to come between the two, this time at the White House portico, as Modi departed for his hotel.

Tump Modi Meet: Closer Ties Promised In White House Meeting

(SAI Bureau) Washington : President Donald Trump's first meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House on Monday was long on proclamations of friendship and short on confrontation over delicate policy issues.

The duo touted ties between India and the United States during a series of events, with both heralding the military

cooperation between the United States and India. Though a largely controversy free visit, the focus on military cooperation with India thrusts the new President into the delicate world of India-Pakistan relations.

At least publicly, the two world leaders looked like fast friends, sharing multiple hugs and handshakes during the visit. Trump

administration officials hoped to "roll out the red carpet" for Modi, capped by a working dinner in the White House residence. The meeting between the off-the-cuff President and the prime minister who leads one of the world's fastest growing economies could have been filled with contentious issues, but publicly that wasn't evident.

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Sikh couple in UK told 'they can't adopt white child'



(News Agencies) London : A Sikh couple in the UK have alleged that they were refused permission to adopt a white child because of their "cultural heritage" and told to adopt a child from India instead.

saying that they were told not to apply to become adoptive parents on the basis that white British or European applicants would be given preference.

The couple, who are of Sikh-Indian heritage, had told Adopt Berkshire adoption agency that they would be delighted to adopt a child of any ethnic background but were

rejected as potential parents on the grounds that only white children were available.

The Manders, both in their 30s, claimed they were told to adopt a child from India instead.

Adoption agencies are allowed to prioritise on the basis of race in order to match children to prospective parents of the same ethnic background. But the government has also said that a child's ethnicity should not be a barrier to adoption.

The Manders, whose

cause has been taken up by Prime Minister Theresa May as their local MP, will take their case to court.

They are applying to Slough county court, seeking a declaration that the policy should allow them to adopt. They are being represented by the law firm McAllister Olivarius and their case is supported by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

David Isaac, chair of the EHRC, said, "There are many children who are waiting for a loving family like Sandeep and Reena to

help give them a better life. To be denied this because of so-called cultural heritage is wrong." The Manders had an assessment and home visit from Adopt Berkshire, an agency run by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM), last year. They were allegedly told that, while in other respects they would be suitable adoptive parents, they could not apply because only white children were available for adoption and therefore white couples would be given priority.

Expedited entry into US for Indian travellers from now on



(Insider Bureau) Washington : Low-risk Indian travellers to the US from now on would experience speedy entry into the country after landing, with India making a formal entry into an American initiative. US President Donald Trump welcomed India's entry into the International Expedited Traveler Initia-

tive (Global Entry Program), saying it would facilitate closer business and educational ties between the citizens of India and the US. The India-US joint statement, issued after talks between Trump and Modi, said the US President applauded the entrepreneurship and innovation of Indians and

Indian-Americans that have directly benefited both nations+. The citizens of Switzerland and the United Kingdom are also part of the programme, which India has now joined. Global Entry is a US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) programme which allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travellers upon arrival in the United States. On landing at select airports, the programme members enter the United States through automatic kiosks, instead of queueing up to clear the immigration by meeting an immigration officer.

Martin Shkreli's fraud trial begins



(Insider Bureau) Martin Shkreli, the former pharmaceutical executive who gained notoriety for hiking up the price of a life-saving drug, will finally go on trial Monday on charges of ripping off investors. Shkreli sparked outrage in 2015 for increasing the price of Daraprim, a drug used by AIDS patients, by more than 5,000% from \$13.50 to \$750 a pill while he was CEO of Turing

Pharmaceuticals. But that controversy has nothing to do with his criminal trial, set to begin on June 26 in federal court in New York. Shkreli faces charges of securities fraud, wire fraud and conspiracy for allegedly cheating investors out of more than \$11 million between 2009 and 2014 in what federal prosecutors called a "Ponzi scheme." Shkreli is accused of mismanaging money at his investment funds Elea Capital, MSMB Capital, MSMB Healthcare, as well as while CEO of Retrophin (RTRX), the pharmaceutical company he founded in 2011. Prosecutors say Shkreli lied to investors at MSMB Capital and MSMB Healthcare about the performance and assets of the investment funds and used money from Retrophin to pay off MSMB investors as well as Shkreli's personal loans and other debts. A former lawyer for Retrophin, Evan Greebel, is charged with helping in the allegedly fraudulent activity. Both have pleaded not guilty. Shkreli, 34, faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted. He resigned from Turing after his arrest in 2015.

US Supreme Court Takes Up Travel Ban Case, and Allows Parts to Go Ahead



(News Agencies) WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court cleared the way on Monday for President Trump to prohibit the entry of some people into the United States from countries he deems dangerous, but the justices imposed strict limits on Mr. Trump's travel ban while they examine the scope of

presidential power over the border.

Mr. Trump quickly hailed the court's decision to hear arguments on the travel ban in October, saying — in a formal White House statement, not a tweet — that the justices' temporary lifting of some of the legal roadblocks to his ban was

a "clear victory" for national security. As president, I cannot allow people into our country who want to do us harm," Mr. Trump wrote, calling his efforts to limit entry into the country a "suspension" instead of a ban. "I want people who can love the United States and all of its citizens, and who will be hardworking and productive." He later tweeted: "Very grateful for the 9-0 decision from the U. S. Supreme Court. We must keep America SAFE!" But those challenging the travel ban said the court's opinion would protect the vast majority of people seeking to enter the United States to visit a relative, accept a job, attend a university or deliver a speech. The court said the ban could not be imposed on anyone who had "a credible claim of a bona fide

relationship with a person or entity in the United States."

Karen Tumlin, legal director of the National Immigration Law Center, said advocates for refugees and other immigrants would urge the justices this fall to lift the president's travel ban for everyone seeking to come to the United States.

"We think it's repugnant to our values that they might be treated differently because of where they are from or how they choose to pray," Ms. Tumlin told reporters.

The court's opinion sets up a historic legal clash in which the justices will weigh the president's power to set national security priorities against the need to protect individuals from discrimination based on their religious beliefs or national origin. In saying they would take

the case, the justices partly endorsed the administration's view that the president has vast authority to control who crosses the border. They said the president's powers to limit immigration "are undoubtedly at their peak when there is no tie between the foreign national and the United States." But the opinion also signaled that some of the justices might believe that Mr. Trump exceeded even that broad authority when he twice sought to impose a blanket ban on entry to the United States from certain predominantly Muslim countries. With the limits imposed on Monday by the court, the travel ban will be far narrower than the one he proposed in his first week in office and a later, revised version.

Detroit judge halts deportations of Iraqi immigrants nationwide



(News Agencies) A federal judge in Detroit on Monday put a temporary hold on the deportation of scores of Iraqi nationals swept up in immigration enforcement raids around the country in recent months. U.S. District Judge Mark Goldsmith had already issued a 14-day stay of removal Thursday for at least 114 Iraqis — most of them Chaldean Christians — detained in the Detroit area, saying he needed time to weigh whether he has jurisdiction over the case. On Monday, he granted a request from lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union and other immigrant rights advocates to extend the order nationwide to prevent Immigration and Customs Enforcement from deporting people they said could face persecution, torture or death in Iraq. “Such harm far outweighs any interest the government may have in proceeding with the removals immediately,” Goldsmith said in a written decision. The order applies to more than 1,400 Iraqi immigrants who have been issued final orders of removal, either for

overstaying a visa or because of a criminal conviction. In many cases, those orders were issued years ago, the ACLU said in its petition. But Iraq refused to accept them, so the government eventually released them, often under supervision orders. Some have now lived in the U.S. for decades and have spouses or children who are citizens. The roundups began after an agreement was reached with Iraq in March to take back its nationals, said Khaalid Walls, a spokesman for the ICE field office in Detroit. In addition to those immigrants detained in Detroit, at least 85 others have been taken into custody around the country since May, he said. They include Ghassan Kassab, who was picked up at his Detroit home in late May. Kassab was 5 years old when his family fled Saddam Hussein’s brutal government in Iraq. He has lived most of his life 47 years in the U.S. But he now faces the threat of being sent back to a country where he has no ties and where his family fears his Christian faith could get him killed.

Trump could start a trade war this week

President Trump could get a lot tougher this week on America’s top trading partners.

(News Agencies) His decision that we’ve seen administration could slap in decades,” says big tariffs on shipments of Edward Alden, a senior steel from other countries, fellow at the Council on claiming they pose a risk Foreign Relations. “It’s to national security. The extremely significant.” tariffs can go as high as Commerce Secretary Trump wants — and could Wilbur Ross is expected easily trigger retaliatory to announce the results measures by other of an investigation into countries, hurting other steel imports. Trade American industries. experts and Wall Street “This may be the investors are convinced most important trade it’s a foregone

conclusion: Tariffs are coming. It’s just a matter of how high and against whom. Canada, Mexico, Brazil, the European Union and Japan are among the top steel exporters to the United States. China, which Trump has criticized for cheating on steel prices, ranked 11th last year, and trade experts say it is a likely target. One key question is whether the Trump administration will impose a tariff on steel from all countries or target specific countries. Another is whether countries will retaliate with their own tariffs on American products, including outside the steel industry — a trade war that could cost American jobs.



That possibility alarms military equipment and advocates for U.S. infrastructure like roads and bridges. If steel-producing nations turned against the United States, the argument goes, it wouldn’t be able to build tanks and other essentials to defend itself. The U.S. auto industry is one of the biggest buyers of foreign steel and opposes the tariffs. The Automotive Policy Council, which lobbies for GM (GM) and Ford (F), warned in May that sweeping steel tariffs would mean “American auto sector jobs would be lost.” But steel industry leaders have encouraged Trump to go after foreign competition. Barbara Smith, president of Commercial Metals Company, a Texas steel producer, said at a Commerce Department hearing in May that her company has closed 30 U.S. locations since 2008 and fired 4,000 workers because of foreign competition. The company has about 8,400 employees on foreign steel for today.

Over 8,000 migrants rescued in Mediterranean in 48 hours

(News Agencies) Rome: More than 8,000 migrants have been rescued in waters off Libya during the past 48 hours in difficult weather conditions, Italy’s coastguard said today. “On Monday, we rescued about 5,000 people from four large boats, one smaller one and 18 rubber dinghies,” a spokesman told AFP.



People were pulled to safety by coastguard vessels, military ships operating under the EU’s border agency Frontex and aid boats run by privately funded organisations. Their efforts were coordinated by the coastguard. “Together with Sea Watch and Sea Eye our crew was able to save more people last night under bad weather conditions,” the German NGO Jugend Rettet tweeted on Tuesday, referring to two other nonprofit groups. It said that “three people died”, though it was not clear whether the victims were found dead or died during the rescue. Italy’s coastguard said it was seeing “a lot of activity” on Tuesday, “but not at the same level as on Monday”. Spain’s Civil Guard said one of its vessels serving under

Frontex’s anti-trafficking Operation Triton had rescued 133 people found on an inflatable dinghy off Libya. Those rescued included 17 minors, two babies and 23 women, seven of whom were pregnant, it said. The crew was coming to the assistance of two other dinghies and had been asked to assist three others, it said, adding that the vessel expected to end up with 1,300 migrants on board, “its maximum capacity”. Traffickers on the North African coast take advantage of periods of good weather to set large numbers of migrants seeking passage to Europe out to sea, a

notoriously dangerous crossing. On Sunday, over 3,300 people were rescued in 31 separate operations, while two bodies were recovered. The record for migrants rescued on a single day stands at 7,000, plucked from their unseaworthy vessels on August 29, 2016. Over 73,300 migrants have landed in Italy since January, a 14 percent increase from the same period last year. Just over 2,000 people have died attempting the crossing or are missing feared drowned since the beginning of 2017, according to the UN’s refugee agency.

Post Islamic State, Iraq could emerge as a model for a modern Arab nation

Of all the countries coming out of the present round of violence and political instability, Iraq shows promise if Baghdad sticks to its democratic, republican, federal and non-sectarian ways and inspires the rest of West Asia



The Iraqi city of Mosul this week celebrates its first Eid free of the oppressive rule of the self-styled Islamic State (IS) in three years. The IS announced its existence from ramparts of the 600-year-old Grand al Nusri mosque in Mosul. In keeping with the IS' nihilistic tendencies, its retreating fighters blew up the famous leaning minaret of the mosque. Kurdish troops have begun a similar process of driving out IS from its present capital of Raqqa, across the border in Syria. IS is now a shadow of its former self, at least in territory. It still holds a few blocks of Mosul and the battle for Raqqa is in its first rounds. But few doubt, including the self-styled caliphate's own leadership, that the endgame is well under progress. These developments would

hopefully lead West Asia and, in particular, the Arab world to contemplate what lessons they can draw from IS' short but brutal life. The Iraqi government should remember that IS fighters were initially welcomed with open arms by the Sunni inhabitants of Mosul because of their anger at the corrupt, pro-Shia regime of the then prime minister Nouri al Maliki. The present ruler has shown himself to be less sectarian in his policies, but addressing the sensibilities of Iraq's Sunni Arab and Kurdish minorities will determine whether IS will not reappear in a new avatar. There is little evidence that the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad has shed any of his dislike for the Sunni majority of his country – and his conduct of the war will make it all but impossible to put Syria back together in any stable form. The Baghdad regime will have to show the sort of enlightened political leadership and willingness to look beyond the narrow tribal-cum-religious allegiances that define so much of the Arab world. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi is an expert on transportation and connectivity, both political and economic, and should be what the policies of a post-IS Iraq should be about. He will be sorely tested: The Kurdish north is already planning a referendum on independence. Christian Europe underwent nearly a century of slaughter before it developed and accepted the concepts of modern secularism. The Arab Islamic world need not follow that path. But the past dichotomy of secular dictators and religious monarchies has shown itself to be a failure. Of all the countries coming out of the present round of violence and political instability, Iraq is probably the only one that could emerge as the model for a new modern Arab state – democratic, republican, federal and non-sectarian – that West Asia needs for its future.

Why are Indian news channels so disappointing?

India has killed television by legislating the subscription model to death. This is leading to a serious lack of ambition and a curbing of creative juices, since recovering investments is impossible

Ashok Malik

Recently, a news channel had camerapersons running behind Indian cricketers to ask why they hadn't worn black armbands during the recent Champions' Trophy final against Pakistan, in sympathy with soldiers killed in the Kashmir Valley. As a test of patriotism and as a news item, it was ridiculous. Yet, this has come to be expected of Indian news television, now increasingly part of the entertainment economy rather than the information ecosystem.

Why are Indian news channels so astonishingly disappointing? They oscillate between over-the-top studio debates and relatively sober studio debates. There is rarely deep reportage. Documentaries are practically unheard of. Spending on editorial and news gathering scares managements. Preference is given to

paying some talking head a few thousand rupees to scream for 30 minutes.

What is at the root of this? Is it the fault of a few anchors? Is there something wrong with us as a society? Are we incapable of producing and appreciating sensible news programming? Actually, the phenomenon has much to do with the business model of television in India.

In the early television age, there was the belief that as access technology for viewers became more organised – with a consolidation of cable networks, and introduction to DTH and then digital platforms – a market would be created for high-quality, niche news channels. These channels would spend generously on editorial content and raise revenue through subscriptions.

Some 15 years ago, however, India decided to impose price caps on various types of channels. Incredibly, this task

devolved on the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). As per the TRAI tariff order of 2016, the price ceiling for a news channel is Rs 5 per month. In contrast the price ceiling for a general entertainment channel is Rs 12 per month.

Consider what this means. In theory, the general entertainment channel could be re-running old soaps (cost of content: zero). The news channel would be required to constantly generate fresh content. Even so, the former is allowed to charge more than double what the latter is able to. Besides a general entertainment channel is always likely to get more subscribers. So it is a double hit for anybody seeking to build a serious news channel.

Over time news channel owners have simply given up, and decided to take the route of reality TV. Today, with the sheer volume of free – occasionally dubious



and sometimes outright fake – content available online, one wonders if the news business can ever be rescued in India.

The price cap trap has hurt more than just news. Children's channels in India are packed with reruns of 20-30 year old Japanese cartoons. The motivation to spend money on quality Indian animation or children's programming, using graphics and special effects that – ironically – Indian back-end companies generate for

Hollywood, is absent. After all there is a price cap of Rs 7 a month for children's channels – irrespective of whether they telecast a dazzling and expensively produced series on Indian history or Doraemon, an ancient Japanese series, on a loop.

This explains why there is such little educational and knowledge-based programming and so few documentaries on television. Despite

India's rich heritage, a National Geographic type network, in any language, English or regional, is not feasible. Even general interest channels suffer from the problem. In the developed world – the so-called "mature media markets" – news and entertainment channels earn about 70% of revenue from subscription. In India, only 36% comes from subscription. The rest is sacrificed to the advertiser, the mad race for TRPs and the lowest common denominator.

What Followed After Modi-Trump Hug Was Net Win For India

World leaders who pride themselves on having shaken up their respective systems by taking on the "liberal elite" and "draining the swamp", US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Modi have more in common than many of their counterparts. As many compared the two for their propensity towards populist politics, distaste for critique, and disregard of the free press and civil society, and speculated on possible outcomes of the meeting between them in Washington yesterday, the leaders of the world's oldest democracy and largest democracy came together on the one thing they can, without argument - the threat of terrorism.

Undoubtedly, America's decision to designate Syed Salahuddin - the leader of the Hizbul Mujahideen who has stoked terror in the Kashmir Valley from his base in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir since 1989, is a big win for India. In its statement, the US said Salahuddin had vowed to block a peaceful resolution to the Kashmir conflict and turn the Valley into a "graveyard for Indian forces." As fresh waves of militancy claim a record number of lives, especially of security personnel in Kashmir, the announcement, coming just as the two leaders sat down for the first time to create that personal rapport every India-US analyst was looking for, set the tone for the visit, and allayed some concerns over uncertainty and unpredictability that had crept into the India-US canvas since Trump was elected. Over the last six months, since he entered the White House, America's South Asia policy has been seemingly restricted to Afghanistan - anything east of the Durand Line, a concern in so far as it impacts Af-Pak and the Western world's security. If India's challenge ahead of this visit was to draw some of the attention from Afghanistan to its own specific security concerns, vis-a-vis Pakistan, China and the all-weather China-Pakistan nexus, this is certainly a step in the right direction.

Since 9/11, India-US ties from the Bush Administration through the Obama years saw significant expansion in defense, counter-terrorism and trade cooperation. While Salahuddin's designation is an indication of the continuing relationship that diplomats and national security managers have worked hard to steer, the other issues seem somewhat trickier. Over Iran, for example, Delhi has so far found itself in a spot - not wanting to upset Washington (Iran is one of the six countries under the travel ban), and not wanting to disturb a hard-fought stability with Tehran that could impact the energy trade. But the Ayatollah's statements raking up Kashmir for the first time in seven years, as Modi and Trump met, could give Delhi the excuse it needs to signal support of America's position on Iran.

On the defense front, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson cleared the way for the United States to sell India non-weaponized Guardian drones for surveillance purposes - the first non-NATO country to be offered these. But India, looking for possible weaponized systems is still shopping around, perhaps even from Israel where the PM travels next week, is yet to commit to a purchase from America. The \$2 billion deal could go a long way in boosting jobs in the US and certainly ties in with Trump's "America First" policy, but might be less attractive to India than it appears at first glance.

The bear hugs that PM Modi offered Trump, as a glorious Melania looked on, were great optics and good diplomacy, but, as an article in The New York Times suggests, the dynamic between India and America today is far more complex, especially when it comes to China, on which the two sides have common cause for different reasons. For all his hospitality towards Xi Jinping earlier this year, Trump is furious about China's lack of interest in imposing pressure on North Korea for its brinkmanship over its nuclear programme. PM Modi, having joined the China and Russia-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization this month, has been unequivocal about concerns over Chinese expansionism in the region via the Belt and Road Initiative. But Trump has shown far less interest than his predecessors so far in the need for a balance of power in Asia, or in developing and strengthening security alliances in region, even though Modi and Trump called themselves "responsible stewards" in the Indo-Pacific region in the joint statement issued after the meeting.

Since taking over office, President Trump's pointed messages have been against the threat of Islamic terror, and protecting America's security and economy. The declaration on Salahuddin came as the US Supreme Court cleared the way for Trump's controversial travel ban of 90 days on people from six Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa. India has maintained a diplomatic silence on the travel ban so far, even though it has resulted in rising xenophobia and Islamophobia within the US. In fact, an Indian - Srinivas Kuchibhotla - was the first person to be killed in a hate crime that was blamed on the ban. Trump took six days to condemn the killing in the US, while PM Modi at home also stands out for his silence on Islamophobic vigilantism in India, targeting Muslims.

Pentagon report is proof that India's Afghan policy is on the right track

The importance of Pentagon's report lies in its timing. It is the first one released under President Donald Trump and is taking place as the geopolitical playbook in Afghanistan is once again being rewritten

In geopolitics, a friend in need is when you should be a friend indeed. The half-yearly Pentagon report on the status of Afghanistan has declared India the most reliable friend of the Kabul regime. This is merely a statement of fact: Even the United States has been wayward in comparison to the continuity that has marked Indian support. The report's importance lies in its timing. It is the first one released under the Donald Trump presidency and is taking place as the geopolitical playbook in Afghanistan is once again being rewritten. The Trump administration is still carrying out a major Afghan policy review. But all the evidence points to the US recommitting itself to upholding the Kabul government. While Mr Trump believes the US must get out of Afghanistan eventually, he has rejected his predecessor's ill-conceived public deadlines for withdrawal declarations that hardened the resolve of the Taliban and their Pakistani backers.

Washington today accepts that only strength on the battlefield will convince the Taliban to hold sincere talks. Earlier this month, Pentagon chief James Mathis was authorised by the White House to decide on the level of US troop deployment in Afghanistan and more troops are already on their way. All of this is music to India's ears. While India's most extensive overseas aid and military training programme is with Afghanistan and it recently provided helicopter gunships, New Delhi has severe limitations as to what it can do to help Kabul militarily.

At the start of the year the Afghan government was unusually isolated. Iran and Russia, traditional opponents of the Taliban and Pakistan, began shifting to a view that undermining the US in Afghanistan and wooing Pakistan made more sense. Kabul's regional allies were reduced to India and a few Central Asian governments. In such circumstances the US decision to hold the line in Afghanistan, if even for the short term, is welcome. The Trump administration's final Afghan policy is still awaited though the few straws in the wind are positive. The great game, in any case, is changing again. Iran and Pakistan have seen relations sour after recent violence on their border. India will seek to encourage the US to ensure its tough stance against the Taliban encompass Pakistan as well. In all this, New Delhi's commitment to Kabul, as the Pentagon acknowledged, is notable for its stability. Afghanistan was known as the graveyard of empires. Today this should be updated to the graveyard of grand strategies. Which is one reason India is right to keep its Afghan policy short and simple: Support an independent Kabul regime.



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Nitish Kumar Teaches Opposition An Important Lesson

Swati Chaturvedi So it will be a Dalit versus Dalit contest for “Mahamahim” (President) as the Congress and Left prevailed over what seemed to be only a “mini-gatbandhan” and announced former speaker Meira Kumar as their candidate against the NDA’s Ram Nath Kovind. The choice of Meira Kumar who is from Bihar and a Jatav Dalit has certainly put Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in a tight spot politically which was the intent of Sonia Gandhi and RJD chief, Lalu Yadav, who are upset with Nitish Kumar’s “defection” in saying his party will vote for Kovind. Sources say that the opposition was seething at how Nitish Kumar virtually disowned the “maha-gatbandhan” which he helped deliver into being two months ago. Lalu

Prasad rubbed it in, saying triumphantly “Bihar Ki Beti, Babu, Jagjivan Ram Ki Beti (she is both Bihar’s Daughter and Jagjivan Ram’s daughter). Nitish Kumar had earlier told Sonia Gandhi that the entire opposition would have to sink their differences and unite against Narendra Modi, who post his grand UP win could not be contained by individual leaders and parties. Since Nitish Kumar has a huge following among Bihar’s women after his prohibition move, his not supporting Meira Kumar will certainly create some trouble even in his own party, the JDU. Meira Kumar’s choice has spared Mayawati’s blushes she has rushed to offer her support to her fellow woman candidate and Jatav Dalit. Nitish Kumar, who is an extremely shrewd leader, is not likely to have second thoughts about his support for Kovind. Sources in his camp say he was utterly disillusioned by the “pointless meetings” held by the opposition. “You people cannot even decide on a name. We just keep having meetings. If we wanted an election, we should have announced a name before the BJP. This is not Lucknow where you exhibit manners and grace by saying first, you go ahead,” Nitish Kumar apparently told senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad who made a desperate trip to see him in Patna at a local congress Iftar on Tuesday evening.

Nitish Kumar understood the Sonia Gandhi-Lalu plan was to embarrass him and he refused to attend today’s meet after proactively offering Kovind

support. The Bihar Chief Minister can now claim that the opposition’s choice was made too late and that he had already committed support by the time Meira Kumar was decided.

But it’s much more complicated than just a symbolic contest for President. Nitish Kumar seems fed up of Lalu, the errant ally, and is looking to maneuver to a safer political space. He is hugely uncomfortable with the lengthening list of corruption cases of the Yadav clan which he feels are affecting his credibility. Assured of the BJP’s support in Bihar, he can afford to up the ante against Yadav.

The BJP, who has the numbers to win the Presidential election and aced the early contest by picking the non-Jatav Kovind from the Kori Samaj sub-caste, has first-mover

advantage. BJP leaders dismissed Meira Kumar’s name as predictable saying that all that the unimaginative opposition had was a “dynastic Dalit”, a clear me-too pick against their “meritorious Dalit” and this was the politics of “tokenism”. Left unsaid was the fact that even their choice was clear tokenism and a bid to extend their foray into the huge vote-bank of the non-Jatav Dalits who seem to be viewing the BJP with increasing interest. By ensuring that the Muslims don’t matter electorally in UP (not giving a single Muslim a ticket) despite their numbers, the BJP is now looking at making huge in-roads with the Dalits, specially the non-Jatavs, who are up for grabs with only tenuous links now to Mayawati, a Jatav.

While Kovind looks to be

a shoo-in for President, the way the politics has unfolded has been instructive. Modi, Shah and the RSS ensured with their usual precision that the opposition was totally on the back foot; they also made a game attempt at splitting opposition unity and ensuring that Kovind, an ideological fellow traveler who would be no challenge to Modi, would be installed as President. The opposition - well, worse played than expected. Despite the cries for unity, they could not agree on a name for far too long with huge bickering over the shortlist they came up with. Mamata Banerjee was clear she wanted the Mahatma’s grandson, Gopal Gandhi. The Congress, never proactive, wanted to see what hand the BJP played.

(Contd on page 20)

Farmer protests: Over-reliance on a single crop has cost them dear

India needs a paradigm shift in agriculture for economic and ecological sustainability



Mihir Shah

Whenever flashpoints are reached, such as the current farmers’ agitation, there is a clamour for immediate palliatives. This is understandable, as those in acute distress need relief. But what we must not overlook are the profound possibilities of reform that such crises open up. Take Madhya Pradesh (MP), the epicentre of the agitation, which best exemplifies the required reforms. Over the last decade, MP has been India’s leading state in agricultural production.

In many ways, paradoxically, this has set the scene for the present crisis. It is clearly not enough to increase production without a concomitant emphasis on reducing costs, ensuring sustainability, providing a secure market and moving farmers up the value chain. As any player in the stock market knows, portfolio diversification is the best hedge against market risk. In farming, it is also the safest guarantee of sustainable returns, more so in the present context of climate

change. Over the last three decades, soybean has emerged as the single most important crop in MP. This over-reliance on a single crop has cost MP farmers dear. What they face today is a crisis of “over-production”. Farmers want a rise in incomes, not just production. This depends critically on both costs of production and being able to sell what they produce at a reasonable price. Soybean farmers have got squeezed at both ends. The major demand for soybean has been from companies that

export soymeal, which accounted for almost 80% of output. But over the last seven years, Indian soymeal exports have crashed thanks to a 150% increase in global soybean output. Argentina and Brazil produce almost 50% of world soybean at lower costs and higher productivity. The Indian market has been flooded with cheaper soymeal and edible oil, with India being outpriced by as much as \$150/tonne in the global soymeal market.

In many ways, therefore, this was a crisis just waiting to happen, as we have steadfastly refused to reform agriculture in India. The first need is to diversify and never revert to this over-dependence on one crop. India is a land of great agro-ecological diversity. This is our strength. Through monocropping we have converted this into our biggest weakness, hugely magnifying the risks of farming. There are many parts of the country facing a massive water

crisis. But by procuring only rice and wheat, we continue to incentivise farmers to grow these crops, which take up nearly 50% of our water. Until we diversify procurement operations to include millets and pulses, farmers will not have the incentive to cultivate these crops, which are much more suited to soil and water conditions in large parts of India. We must include these crops in the massive anganwadi and mid-day meal schemes so that our children eat more nutritious food, while providing farmers a steady demand for these crops. We also need to lower costs of cultivation by reducing dependence of farmers on chemical fertilisers and pesticides, prices of which have soared and whose impact has been declining over the years. To produce the same output, we need to use much more of these costly inputs. They also cause immeasurable damage to soil and water, further lowering productivity and increasing costs. The good news is that all over India, farmers are blazing the trail with non-chemical agriculture. However, these attempts need strong government support so that they can be taken to scale. The huge and misdirected fertiliser subsidy needs to be increasingly focused on non-chemical options. Diversification also means support for India’s livestock sector, the fastest growing segment of the rural economy. Recent policy changes, which could jeopardise this potential, need to be urgently reconsidered. As for the perishable segment of fruits and vegetables, they will have no future without massive investment, public and private, in agro-processing, cold chains etc, so that farmers can move up the value chain. Unfortunately, investment in agriculture is declining at 0.8% per year (at constant prices) over the past seven years.

Why US designation of Hizb's Salahuddin as global terrorist will put Pakistan in spot

The US designation of United Jihad Council chief Syed Salahuddin as a "global terrorist" will make it more difficult for Pakistan to allow its territory to be used by anti-India militants.



Rezaul H Laskar organisations as department, such as The US "specially designated global terrorists" in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Pakistan-based chief of Hizbul Mujahideen and United Jihad Council, as a global terrorist is significant for India's efforts to counter cross-border terror in several ways. Since the US state department began listing individuals and

organisations as "specially designated global terrorists" in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Pakistan-based chief of Hizbul Mujahideen and United Jihad Council, as a global terrorist is significant for India's efforts to counter cross-border terror in several ways. Since the US state department began listing individuals and

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fund-raising rallies at a short distance from the Pakistani military's General Headquarters. He has also attended rallies and meetings organised jointly with the Jamaat-ud-Dawah and Defa-e-Pakistan Council. Last December, Salahuddin joined Jamaat-ud-Dawah chief Hafiz Saeed and several other militant leaders to address a rally in PoK capital Muzaffarabad that called for the revival of jihad in Kashmir.

And while the US has designated other anti-India groups and individuals – such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Jamaat-ud-Dawah chief Hafiz Saeed – it has usually done so only after the groups set up cells in the West, established links with al-Qaeda or targeted US troops or citizens in terror attacks. There is no evidence currently of Hizbul Mujahideen establishing a presence in the West though the state department announcement designating Salahuddin and imposing sanctions are on foreigners who "pose a significant risk of committing acts of terrorism that threaten the security of US nationals or the national security, foreign policy, or economy" of America. Though the 71-year-old Salahuddin is no longer seen as directly controlling the day-to-day operations of the Hizbul Mujahideen, he remains a key ideological leader driving its recruitment and fund-raising activities in Pakistan and networking with other terror groups. Pakistan has responded to the US designation of Salahuddin by linking it to the movement of Kashmiri people for the right to self-determination. A statement from the Foreign Office, which didn't name Salahuddin, described the movement as "legitimate" and the US sanctions as "completely unjustified". But with the US position on terrorism in the region aligning more closely with that of India, it may be difficult for the Pakistani security establishment to resist pressure to crack down on terrorists such as Salahuddin.

Fix a timeline to carve out a separate state of Gorkhaland

This sensitive geography of the country with three international borders – Bhutan in the east, Nepal to the west and Bangladesh in the south and also China a little further to the north – cannot continue to remain fragile.



Mahendra P Lama "chicken neck Gorkha ex-servicemen corridor". Firstly, the demand for Gorkhaland is now 110 years old. Such repressions have taken place several times in the past in the Queen of the Hills. A large number of people have been killed, disrespecting basic human and constitutional rights. Who can forget the brutal assault on the

The deployment of police, paramilitary forces and army in Darjeeling to quell the historic demand for a separate state is alarming. Peace-loving and highly tolerant hill folk do not deserve this vicious state led repression at all. Four backdrops could be built to this huge instability in the

Gorkha ex-servicemen in Siliguri in 2009. No one has ever been held accountable for making Darjeeling a killing field. The last and only inquiry commission's report (Bhattacharya Commission) on the police firing in 1981 is yet to be made public even after 36 years. The state government has always tried to douse the fire of the statehood

demand, without realising that there is a fire inside the fire. This fire inside actually represents the demand for justice, correction of historical wrongs, emancipation from Bengal's exploitative institutions, respect for geo-politics and national security of our motherland and recognition of the contribution of the Indian Gorkhas in the making of modern India. Second, in post independent India, in order to suppress this demand, all kinds of political and parochial manipulations have been practised by the State. This ranges from treating Darjeeling as a bastion of internal colonialism; depriving it of its British India status of 'partially excluded a r e a ' ;

misrepresentation in the State Reorganisation Committee and Act of 1956, misdirection in the Mandal Commission Report in early 1980s and playing with statistics and development indicators. Not content with all these, the Bengal government manipulated the delimitation of Darjeeling and Dooars parliamentary and state constituencies; and gave a communal colour and 'anti-national' tag to the demand for statehood. It consciously and systematically changed the demographic character and balance in the terai and plain areas of this district with unprecedented migrant influx. Much later, it demolished the three-tier Panchayati Raj; injected

never imagined caste-based and communal divisions in the hills in the name of Development Boards, and is now desperate to link statehood demands with 'insurgents' and 'foreign countries'. This is another new hegemonic narrative the Bengal government is trying to spread. Ignoring the 1961 language resolution passed by the West Bengal Assembly to implement Nepali language in the Darjeeling district, Bengali was nearly foisted by the present Government. Nepali is enshrined in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India. In a vibrant democracy like ours, food, language, culture, clothing, religion, ideology and political affiliations are at their best when they are left to voluntary adoption and adaptation.

Darjeeling unrest: Mamata Banerjee corners BJP but may have to pay for political brinkmanship

It was Mamata Banerjee's announcement to make Bengali language compulsory in schools that gave Bimal Gurung, the GJM chief, an opportunity to regain his dwindling political stocks



DK Singh and property worth health of K Darjeeling hills appear crores destroyed as a headed for a prolonged violent agitation for a spell of unrest over separate Gorkha state Gorkhaland issue, thanks rocks the picturesque hill to the conflicting interests station of Darjeeling. of major stakeholders. Having seen how the including the BJP, the Congress paid heavily Trinamool Congress and for its Telangana gambit the Gorkha Janmukti months before the 2014 Morcha (GJM). Three Lok Sabha elections, the people have died in BJP is wary. In police firing, several December 2009, alarmed security officials injured by the deteriorating

committee for Madhya Pradesh and inclined to get into what consultation on the Uttar Pradesh were not they believe could be a situation in Andhra Pradesh but it was too so strong then, as one 'Telangana trap' by taking witnessed over any follow-up action in late. The chain of events Telangana. With chief pursuance of the party's set off by minister Mamata pre-poll promise. Facing Banerjee turning the heat from the BJP in statement eventually Gorkhaland issue into West Bengal, the chief forced the then ruling one of Bengali pride and minister might be Congress to give in sub-nationalism, the savouring the ahead of the general BJP, once a votary of the discomfiture in the BJP elections. The Congress smaller states, can't risk camp at this moment but was wiped out in its ambitions in West she would soon realize Telangana and Andhra Bengal—with 42 Lok the perils of her Pradesh Lok Sabha and Sabha seats—by brinkmanship in assembly elections that supporting Gorkhaland. Darjeeling. It was her followed. The BJP is, They would rather leave announcement to make therefore, wary of it to Mamata Banerjee Bengali language initiating any process that government to take the compulsory in schools could land it in a similar lead in resolving the that gave Bimal Gurung, trap over Gorkhaland. crisis. BJP leaders the GJM chief, an The party does have its maintain that they never opportunity to regain his share of state bifurcation promised statehood in 2009 dwindling political stocks history as the NDA had or 2014 manifesto and all . She might have presided over the that they committed was to cornered the BJP for now formation of Jharkhand, "sympathetically examine but West Bengal might Chhattisgarh and and appropriately have to pay the price for Uttarakhhand in 2000. But consider" the long-pending her political misadventure anti-bifurcation demand of Gorkhas. in the long run. sentiments in Bihar, Party leaders are not

Green tribunal should step in to prevent the assault on Aravalis

With dwindling water resources, the Natural Conservation Zone concept is highly relevant today since concrete structures on wetlands, gullies, ravines, foothills and storm water drains disrupt the replenishment of ground water



Among all the example, the ongoing phrases that are tussle between the currently hot favourites Haryana government and environmentalists 'sustainable development' tops the list. Every government (ANCZ) at the National document speaks about the need to ensure that economic development happens without depletion of natural resources. But on the ground, things are different. Take for

spreads across 11,500 hectares. On Tuesday, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) came to the rescue of the ANCZ. Hearing a petition filed by environmentalist SS Oberoi, the NGT issued notices to the Haryana government and forest department, seeking replies by July 3. With dwindling water resources, the NCZ concept is highly relevant today since concrete structures on wetlands, gullies, ravines, foothills and storm water drains disrupt the replenishment of ground water. The assault on the India's ecology has assumed gigantic proportions. According to a recent report by the WWF, three major Sites — the Western Ghats, Sundarbans National Park and the Manas wildlife sanctuary — are facing threats from harmful industrial activities. Activities such as mining, illegal logging, oil and gas exploration threaten 114 out of 229 natural World Heritage sites, including the Sundarbans, known for the iconic Royal Bengal tiger, the Western Ghats and the Manas sanctuary in Assam, home to many endangered species including Indian rhinoceros, it said. One of the main reasons why many don't understand the long-term value of ecosystems is because nature's economic worth is invisible. But today many economists are trying to point out that a nation's progress should include its natural capital base, not just GDP. The United Nations Environment Programme's Green Economy Initiative has demonstrated that the greening of economies is not a burden on growth but rather a new engine for growing wealth, increasing decent employment, and reducing persistent poverty. Unfortunately, most Indian policymakers don't seem to comprehend such ideas thanks to their myopic attitudes and the pressure of five-year election cycles when development becomes a big vote-catcher.

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***Lawyers said the GST is bound to attract thousands of lawsuits in a legal system already grappling with a backlog of more than 24 million cases.**

(News Agencies) India's new goods and services tax will spark a flood of litigation on everything from which tax



Why Lawyers Are Smiling as GST is Set to Launch

brackets companies fall into to the revenue they generate, some of the country's top lawyers predict. The complex nature of India's GST — which has four tax brackets ranging from five percent to 28 percent — is bound to attract thousands of lawsuits in a legal system already grappling with a backlog of more than 24 million cases, lawyers said. Even before the planned July 1 roll out, about 100,000 indirect tax appeals were clogging India's judicial system at the end of March, 2015, locking away some \$23 billion in potential government revenue,

according to a government report.

The government insists GST will decrease tax-related litigation. But for lawyers who recall McDonald's Corp.'s 12-year legal saga to have soft-serve ice cream classified a tax-exempt dairy product, and not ice cream which attracted a 16 percent duty, the potential for years of billable hours is plain to see.

"I absolutely expect more litigation, so we are increasing our team," said Sandeep Chilana, a partner at Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co. "The most impacted industry by GST is my industry. And we are obviously impacted

positively."

One of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's most ambitious reforms, the tax will combine more than a dozen levies, creating a uniform market across India for the first time. Most goods and services will fall into four main "slabs" or brackets: 5, 12, 18 and 28 percent. Many staples, such as fresh vegetables, are exempt.

The multiple rates have helped PM Modi's government mitigate political controversy, including the potential for food price inflation on vegetables such as onions, which have been known to sway election results. But

the different levies, along with huge compliance requirements and the potential for state-versus-central government disputes makes the tax litigation-prone, lawyers said.

Soft Serve

"The present goods and services tax is the most complex" in the world, Arvind Datar, a senior lawyer who practices at the Supreme Court, said by email. The new regime will increase classification and valuation disputes as companies dispute which brackets they fall into or push to keep their valuations lower,

legitimately or not.

To see just how contested the legal landscape may be, investors could look to the Indian tax authority's battle with McDonald's, Chilana said. From 2000 to 2012, the two sides fought over whether soft-serve ice cream cones were really ice cream.

The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, where judges eventually ruled in favor of the tax department, declaring that soft ice cream cones must attract duty. "When there are different tax rates,

there is always a possibility that someone will want to be in the lower slab," Chilana said.

In another case, the Supreme Court ruled coconuts were neither dry fruit, nor vegetable but an entity unto themselves that must attract entry duty. The Delhi High Court also recently ruled that footwear without back straps were sandals rather than "chappals" or slippers as the government contended. And lawyers themselves have already challenged a law in the apex court that brings certain

lawyers under the current service-tax net, arguing the extra cost to litigants is against the constitution's aim to ensure justice to all.

Losing Cases

At the same time, the Indian government seems to be losing more tax cases in recent years: Its success rate fighting tax appeals fell to 26 percent in 2015 from 33 percent in 2013, according to a government report. A Ministry of Finance spokesman didn't respond to an email and text for comment.

Despite state representation on the federally-organized GST Council during negotiations,

India's myriad local governments could also still challenge the legitimacy of the council in court, Hitender Mehta, a partner at Vaish Associates Advocates, said. "It will settle down in another five to 10 years — it will take that much time but it will settle down," said V Lakshmikumaran, founder and managing partner of Lakshmikumaran & Sridharan. "Judicial precedence will be there and people will adjust and wrinkles will be ironed out."

Indrani Mukerjea was beaten up, threatened with sexual assault by jail authorities: Lawyer

After being allegedly beaten inside the jail and threatened with sexual assault, Indrani Mukerjea wants to complain against jail officials and show the injuries.

(News Agencies) After Indrani Mukerjea, the prime accused in the Sheena Bora murder case, was booked for allegedly rioting following the death of an inmate on Saturday, her lawyers said she was beaten and threatened with sexual assault by jail authorities inside Mumbai's Byculla women's prison.

Indrani's lawyer Gunjan Mangla filed the application in the special CBI court saying she fears Indrani has been beaten at the jail.

Mangla met Indrani at the jail this morning and told the court that she met Indrani who showed certain bruise marks on head, hand and leg. Mangla said Indrani has

a neurological condition.

She was allegedly beaten at the jail and threatened with sexual assault. Indrani wants to complain against jail officials and show the injuries.

Mangla said she was assaulted because she gave a statement against the jail officials. He alleged that Indrani said she was beaten by superintendent and jail officials.

Hearing in the case is on July 4. Mangla has asked the court that Indrani should be produced in the court as early as possible.

Mangla said Mukerjea has given a statement against the police in the custodial death case wherein an inmate was

tortured to death.

WHAT HAPPENED INSIDE BYCULLA JAIL

Jail inmate Manjula Shete who died allegedly at the hands of jail officials was a warden at Byculla jail. As a warden her role was to see that discipline is maintained. However she led a gang completely against jail officials. She was the one who regularly fought with jail officials every now and then.

THE TALE OF 2 EGGS AND 5 BREADS

The incident occurred after two eggs and five breads disappeared from the jail which led to fights between jail officials and Shete. She alleged that this was done by jail officials deliberately but jail officials denied this and instead

held her responsible.

The next day the inmates came to know about the incident and they led the protest. The investigations revealed that of 5 inmates Indrani Mukerjea was the prime conspirator leading the agitation.

The jail officials later carried lathicharged inside the jail in which Indrani too got some thrashing.

The doctors say that Shete died after she was hit with blunt and hard object on her head. Whether a rod was inserted inside her private parts is still being investigated.

Another inmate Mariyam Sheikh is the complainant in the case who shared the barrack



number 5 with 51 other inmates at the Byculla prison. According to her statement given to the police, she stayed in barrack number 5, along with 51 other accused.

Manjula Shete was summoned by jailer Manisha Pokharkar to her office and soon after the jail inmates heard her shrieks and cries. Shete was then brought back to the barrack, in a yellow sari, which was around her neck. "At noon, Pokharkar

and other jail officials came back to our barrack and started hitting Manjula. She was stripped, two jail officers held her legs and the stick was inserted in her private parts and Manjula began bleeding. She was left like that for several hours. At 7 PM, Shete asked her to take her to the bathroom, so along with another prisoner I took her to the bathroom, where she collapsed," Sheikh said.

Syed Salahuddin designated global terrorist

How much does he matter in the Valley?

The Hizb is not just the largest militant outfit, it is also credited with the resurgence of militancy in recent years – slain Hizb commander Burhan Wani was the outfit's operations chief in the Valley and was instrumental in promoting militancy in Kashmir.



(News Agencies) s before Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's met with President Donald Trump, United States declared Mohammad Yousuf Shah, the Pakistan-based chief of the Hizbul Mujahideen, a global terrorist. A politician-turned-militant commander Shah, known by his alias of Syed Salahuddin, has been on India's most wanted list for a long time.

While the US declaration could put Pakistan in a tight spot – a native of central Kashmir's Budgam, Salahuddin is based in Pakistan – the declaration may not have a major impact on the ground in the Valley, where the local leadership appears to be

well entrenched.

Salahuddin is the chief of the Valley's largest indigenous militant outfit, the Hizbul Mujahideen, and by virtue of it he is also the chairman of the United Jihad Council (UJC) – an umbrella group of militant outfits operating in Jammu and Kashmir. Though the outfit maintains links with militant outfits like Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), unlike them it has no global agenda thus far.

In fact, recently Salah-ud-din had warned the people of Jammu and Kashmir to stay away from the influence of global terror outfits like the Islamic State (IS) and al Qaeda. Instead, the militant outfit and its political

patrons like the Hurriyat Conference have always pinned their hopes on the intervention of western powers – the United States to European Union – for a resolution of the Kashmir issue.

In the Valley, the Hizb is not just the largest militant outfit, it is also credited with the resurgence of militancy in the Valley in recent years – slain Hizb commander Burhan Muzaffar Wani was the outfit's operations chief in the Valley and was instrumental in promoting militancy in Kashmir. Since his death last July, the Valley has been frequently disrupted by clashes between security forces and local outfits.

In the light of renewed militancy in the Valley, the declaration of Salahuddin as a global terrorist might be seen as a major diplomatic win for New Delhi and pave the way for the government to deal with militants without many questions being asked by the West. However, though Salahuddin is the "supreme commander" of Hizb, currently there is little coordination between the Pakistan-based Hizb leadership and the militants in the Valley. Operational decisions are taken by the local commanders and at times in defiance of the Salahuddin-led central command of the outfit. Local

Hizb commander Zakir Musa's recently said that militants are fighting for the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate, contrary to Hizb's position. His outburst against the Hurriyat which the Hizb distanced itself from led Musa to threaten to disassociate himself with the latter. The US decision on Salahuddin could strengthen the lobby that identifies itself with the militants like Zakir Musa. Any such ideological shift in Kashmir militancy would also mean that Kashmir could attract international outfits like the Islamic State – which would not be good news for either the central Indian state or the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

How NSA Doval rescued PM Modi at White House event



(News Agencies) Washigton : Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on Tuesday saved from a possible embarrassment by an alert National Security Advisor Ajit Doval when wind swept away some pages of his prepared remarks to the media at the White House

While the prime minister was attentively listening to the remarks of US President Donald Trump at the Rose Garden of the presidential mansion after their first meeting+ , a sudden gust of wind swept away some pages of Modi's prepared statement to the media. Doval, who was seated on the front row along with some other senior Indian officials, sprang up and quickly retrieved the papers and handed it back to the prime minister. The wind again played naughty and the papers were blown away once again to be retrieved by Doval. Prime Minister Modi's summit with President Trump was the first face-to-face meeting between the leaders of the two major countries.

Modi-Trump meet: India, US move closer on Pakistan than during Obama years

(News Agencies) New Delhi : On terrorism and Afghanistan-Pakistan, India and US appear to be closer today than they were during the Obama years. After Monday's summit, which was preceded by the US listing Syed Salahuddin as a global terrorist+ , the two sides decided they would "destroy radical Islamic terrorism". While Trump has always spelt out "Islamic" terrorism, Modi has been careful to not associate terrorism with any religion, having spoken enough on the subject.

Two things stood out in the Modi-Trump joint statement+ . First, the creation of "a new consultation mechanism on domestic and international terrorist designations listing proposals." This would presumably help US and India to coordinate their moves both bilaterally and multilaterally on listing terrorists. Currently, the US, UK and France are together sponsoring a move to ban Masood Azhar in the 1267 committee of the UNSC. This is being opposed by China, which has maintained a block on this for over a year now.

Trump in his remarks said, "Both our nations have been struck by the evils of terrorism, and we are both determined to destroy terrorist organizations and the radical

ideology that drives them. We will destroy radical Islamic terrorism."Pakistan did not get off lightly this time. At least on the statement, the sentiment was unusually sharp, holding Pakistan responsible for creating safe havens for terror groups

They called on Pakistan to ensure its territory is not used to launch terrorist attacks on other countries. Pakistan was also asked to bring to justice the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai, Pathankot, and other cross-border terrorist attacks perpetrated by Pakistan-based groups.

These are old lines and have found space in previous joint statements. Pakistan wasn't deterred then and it is unlikely to be deterred now.

The Modi-Trump meeting happened days after the Trump administration wrapped up the SRAP (Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan) office in the State Department, signalling that Pakistan does not need special attention. The US is also expected to announce an Af-Pak policy soon, though the shape of that policy was part of the discussions. On Afghanistan, Trump



said, "I also thank the Indian people for their contributions to the effort in Afghanistan". The joint statement elaborated it further. "The increasing instability due to terrorism in Afghanistan is one of our common concerns. Both India and America have played an important role in rebuilding Afghanistan and ensuring its security. In order to attain our objectives for peace and stability in Afghanistan, we will maintain close consultation and communication with the US to enhance coordination between our two nations."

Panamagate JIT summons Maryam Nawaz

(News Agencies)The joint investigation team (JIT) probing the Sharif family's business dealings abroad has summoned Maryam Nawaz to appear before it for questioning for the first time. In the summons addressed to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's daughter, the JIT has asked Maryam to appear before it on July 5.

Maryam is currently in London to attend her son's graduation ceremony, PML-N leader Talal Chaudhry told DawnNews shortly after the summons were issued. The Supreme Court-appointed JIT has also asked the prime

minister's sons % Hussain and Hassan Nawaz % to appear before it for further questioning on July 4 and July 3, respectively. Hussain, the premier's elder son, has appeared before the JIT for questioning five times; whereas Hassan has been questioned three times.

The prime minister's cousin, Tariq Shafi, has also been summoned to make his second appearance before the JIT on July 2. The six-member JIT is due to present its report before the apex court on July 10. In its judgement of April 20 in the Panama Papers case, the Supreme Court had constituted a JIT

and empowered it to summon the prime minister, his sons and any other person necessary, to investigate allegations of money-laundering, through which the four apartments in London's Park Lane area were purchased.

A number of witnesses have appeared before the JIT for questioning so far including the PM Sharif who was questioned on June 15, becoming the first sitting prime minister to be directly questioned by investigators. The PM's brother, Chief Minister Punjab Shahbaz Sharif also appeared before the JIT last week. A few days later, the prime

minister's son-in-law, retired Captain Mohammad Safdar was questioned for around five hours by the investigating team. Former interior minister Rehman Malik also appeared before the JIT last week and presented before the probing body a report he had compiled as an FIA official about two decades ago on alleged money laundering by the prime minister and his family members. While speaking to journalists after testifying, Malik made it sound like his testimony had left no room for the Sharif family to escape the money laundering charges.

India-US alliance to check China will be catastrophic: Chinese media



(Insider Bureau) Beijing : Any attempt by India to become US ally to counter China will not be in its interests and could even lead to "catastrophic results", a state-run Chinese daily said as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump held their maiden meeting.

"Washington and New Delhi share anxieties about China's rise. In recent years, to ratchet up geopolitical pressure on China, the US has cozied up to India," an article in the Global Times said.

Underlining that India is not a US ally like Japan or Australia, it said, "To

assume a role as an outpost country in the US' strategy to contain China is not in line with India's interests. It could even lead to catastrophic results."

The daily said if India regresses from its non-alignment stance and becomes a "pawn" for the US in countering China, it will be caught up in a strategic dilemma and new geopolitical frictions will be triggered in South Asia.

With an eye on China and the disputes in the South China Sea, Modi and Trump after their meeting in the White House called for freedom of navigation and resolving of territorial and maritime disputes peacefully in accordance with international law. A joint statement on the meeting said as responsible stewards in the Indo-Pacific region, Trump and Modi agreed that a close partnership between the United

States and India is central to peace and stability in the region. The Chinese daily in the article said both former Soviet Union and the US under Kennedy presidency tried to pit India against China but the results were not "satisfactory". "From the end of the 1950s to the beginning of the 1960s, both the Soviet Union and the US wanted to play the India card to check China. Then the Kennedy government supported India's Forward Policy. But the result wasn't what was expected. India isn't able to balance China, which has been proved by history," it said.

Asserting that India should avoid being roped into a "geopolitical trap", the daily said despite New Delhi's anxieties over Beijing's rise, maintaining a stable relationship with China is of more importance to its security and development.



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(Insider Bureau) 'Goldeneye' ransomware strikes across the globe, with US drug firm Merck, advertising giants WPP and Ukrainian power grid among victims

Hackers have unleashed a major cyber attack causing huge disruption to companies and governments across the globe including in the UK, US and Russia.

The Petya ransomware hijacks victims' computers before encrypting their files and holding them hostage until a fee is paid.

Chernobyl's radiation monitoring system has been hit by the attack with its sensors shut down while UK advertising giant



get files back. 'It's early days - we don't know if we can find a fix yet. But if it's decryptable we will find a way.' Hutchins, 22, continued: 'Everyone's looking at this right now and I'm working with other researchers. 'I was just praying it wasn't the Wannacry exploit again. Ideally we'll have to find a way to decrypt the files or else people are not going to get them back.'

The ransomware targets computers using the Windows XP operating system which have not installed the latest security updates released by Microsoft. Experts fear that could mean major infrastructure such as healthcare systems and power networks using archaic technology will be the worst affected.

One security researcher going by the name BleepingComputer told MailOnline that x-ray machines and other critical medical devices could be deactivated in hospitals, adding: 'We're going to see wide-scale damage.' He continued: 'The biggest computers that may have an issue are those running old legacy hardware or software systems such as healthcare and control systems for industrial services.'

Cyber attack hits CHERNOBYL radiation system

WPP, the largest agency in the world, among dozens of firms affected.

The ransomware appears to have been spread through popular accounting software and specifically targeted at bringing down business IT systems.

The outage began in Ukraine as the country's power grid, airport, national bank and communications firms were first

to report problems, before it spread rapidly throughout Europe.

Companies in the US, Germany, Norway, Russia, Denmark and France are among those to have confirmed issues so far.

It comes just weeks after the WannaCry attack which paralysed the NHS and left hundreds of thousands of users

around the world unable to access their data.

More than 200,000 victims in 150 countries were infected by that software, which originated in the UK and Spain last month, before spreading globally.

But cyber security experts have warned that this time the virus is much more dangerous because it has no 'kill switch' and is designed to spread rapidly

though networks.

Marcus Hutchins, who foiled the previous WannaCry attack by discovering a way to stop it from infecting new computers, told MailOnline that even if users pay the fee their files could now be lost forever. He said: 'The company that hosts the email account which the ransomware asks you to contact has closed the account. There's no way to

Yazidi sex slave unwittingly ate her one-year-old son

Starving woman had been kept in a cellar for three days without food or water
ISIS then cooked her one-year-old boy and fed him to the unsuspecting mother
Claims were made by Iraqi MP Vian Dakhill during harrowing television interview



(Insider Bureau) A Yazidi sex slave unwittingly ate her one-year-old son after ISIS fanatics cooked the child and served it with rice after starving her for three days, an Iraqi politician claims.

The starving woman had been kept captive in a cellar for days without food or water before she was tricked by her evil guards, according to MP Vian Dakhill.

ISIS regards Yazidis, who are neither Arab nor Muslim, as being devil-worshippers and have carried out terrible atrocities against the minority in Iraq, massacring thousands

and taking women and children as sex slaves.

During a harrowing television interview, Dakhill told Egyptian TV channel Extra News: 'One of the women whom we managed to retrieve from ISIS said that she was held in a cellar for three days without food or water.

'Afterwards, they brought her a plate of rice and meat. She ate the food because she was very hungry.

When she was finished they said to her: "We cooked

your one-year-old son that we took from you, and this is what you just ate".'

The interviewer had to pause to wipe away tears as he took in the sickening details.

But Dakhill revealed yet more atrocities carried out by the extremist group, which is on the retreat in northern Iraq after a US-backed push by the country's armed forces.

She revealed that one little girl, aged just ten, had been raped to death before her



father and five sisters.

'One of the girls said that they took six of her sisters,' she said.

'Her younger sister, a ten-year-old girl, was raped to death in front of her father and sisters. She was ten-years-old.

'The question that we ask yourselves is: "Why? Why did these savages do this to us?"'

The beliefs of the Yazidi community combine elements of several ancient Middle Eastern religions.

When ISIS swept across northern Iraq almost three years ago, it carried out massacres against the

minority which the United Nations said qualified as genocide.

Most of the several hundred thousand members of the minority live in northern Iraq, mainly around Sinjar, a large town which anti-ISIS forces have now retaken but was largely destroyed.

In 2014, ISIS jihadists captured Yazidi women and turned them into sex slaves to be sold and exchanged across their self-proclaimed 'caliphate'.

Around 3,000 of them are believed to remain in captivity. A number of mass Yazidi graves were uncovered in 2015.



Scientists discover coffee could be the key to losing weight AND exercising more



been linked to helping people shed the pounds, but the underlying process remained a mystery until now.

The latest findings shed light on the mechanisms involved, providing fresh insights into how caffeine regulates metabolism. They may even lead to an anti obesity pill based on caffeine, the team at Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, believe.

Lead author Professor Guo Zhang said: 'We found caffeine significantly reduced the food intakes and increased the wheel-running activities of diet-induced obese mice.

'Together, the results demonstrate caffeine treatment ameliorates obesity through both

the reduction of food intake and the promotion of energy expenditure.'

One of the effects of caffeine is how it affects a molecule called adenosine, which plays a role in sleep and energy production. When mice were dosed with caffeine, it blocked adenosine receptors in an area of the brain called the hypothalamus. This is the central regulator of energy balance in mammals - who share many similar features with mice, researchers said in Nature Communications.

In mice, this triggered the release of oxytocin from brain cells, reducing levels of obesity in the lab animals.

'A critical mediator' Professor Zhang, who gave the

mice two weeks of caffeine injections, added: 'Oxytocin is a critical mediator of the anti-obesity effect of caffeine.'

'Hence, targeting adenosine receptors by caffeine or its derivatives could represent a relevant strategy to counteract obesity and related illnesses.' However, the doses used were very high - 60mg/kg, estimated to be equivalent to between 24 and 36 cups of coffee in humans. The new findings come after a Dutch report last month showed that drinking more coffee may help to stave off liver cancer. Researchers found people who drink just one cup of coffee a day are 20 per cent less likely to develop the most common form of the disease.

(Insider Bureau) Drinking coffee really could hold the key to combating obesity, new research implies. Caffeine, the beverage's main stimulant, helps to burn off calories by boosting the release of oxytocin. This hormone affects both appetite and metabolism - allowing people to battle their bulging waistline, scientists

suggest. In trials on overweight mice who were given high amounts of caffeine, the drug was found to help them slim down. It made them eat less and inspired them to be much more active on a wheel running machine, Chinese researchers found. Caffeine consumption has long

Pentagon backs White House warning that the Assad regime is preparing Another chemical weapons attack



(Insider Bureau) America's top military brass have backed a White House report, warning that the Assad regime is planning another chemical weapons attack against the Syrian people.

The Pentagon on Tuesday said it detected 'active preparations' by Syria for a chemical weapons attack, giving weight to a White House statement hours earlier that the Syrian government would 'pay a heavy price' if it carried out such an attack.

The U.S. accusation and ominous warning marked a further escalation of tensions in a country where the U.S. is using Syrian Arab and Kurdish proxy soldiers to combat the Islamic State group in its remaining strongholds, even as Russia and Iran work to prop up

President Bashar Assad, who has gained the upper hand in a long civil war.

A Pentagon spokesman, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, said the U.S. had seen 'activity' at Shayrat airfield that 'indicated active preparations for chemical weapons use.' That is the same base from which the Syria air force launched an attack in April that the U.S. and others said used lethal chemicals to kill civilians. Syria denied the charge.

The White House said that the impending attack will likely harm 'innocent children and civilians'.

'The United States has identified potential preparations for another chemical weapons attack by the Assad regime that would likely result in the mass murder of civilians, including innocent children. The activities are similar to preparations the

regime made before its April 4, 2017 chemical weapons attack.

'As we have previously stated, the United States is in Syria to eliminate the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

'If, however, Mr. Assad conducts another mass murder

attack using chemical weapons, he and his military will pay a heavy price,' it said. There was no further detail given of how the US will respond to a fresh attack.

If imminent, the attack would coincide with the end of Eid. President Assad greeted fellow worshippers as he left a mosque in Hama on Sunday to observe the holiday. On April 4, 89 people died in a Sarin gas attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun. Photographs taken in the aftermath of the atrocity of children writhing in pain as adults frantically tried to clean their bodies with water bottles shocked the world.

The attack was so horrifying it prompted President Trump to launch missile strikes on one of the Assad regime's airbases. Assad not only denied having any role in the attack but suggested that it was a hoax that had been thought up by

one of his many enemies.

He suggested that the photographs which shocked the world including those of a grieving father weeping over his dead twin babies had been staged by terrorist groups eager to turn the West against him. He was bolstered in his offensive claims by the Kremlin which also criticized how the blast site was handled after the atrocity. US troops are already in Syria providing training and resources to Kurdish an Arab rebel forces in their ongoing fight against ISIS. As the White House posted its warning on Monday, news emerged that a group of Kurdish fighters had seized al-Qadisiy, part of the ISIS stronghold Raqqa. A spokeswoman for the group Syrian Democratic Force said it was the result of sustained airstrikes in the region since the start of the month.



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Major cyberattack sweeps globe, India affected, Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Mumbai hit

News agency PTI reported that operations at one of the three terminals of the country's largest container port were impacted as a fallout of the global ransomware attack, which crippled some central banks and many large corporations in Europe.

The rapidly spreading cyber extortion campaign underscored growing concerns that businesses have failed to secure their networks from increasingly aggressive hackers, who have shown they are capable of shutting down critical infrastructure and crippling corporate and government networks.

It included code known as "Eternal Blue," which cyber security experts widely believe was stolen from the US National Security Agency (NSA) and was also used in last month's ransomware attack, named "WannaCry."

"Cyber attacks can simply destroy us," said Kevin Johnson, chief executive of cyber security firm Secure Ideas. "Companies are just not doing what they are supposed to do to fix the problem."

The ransomware virus crippled computers running Microsoft Corp's Windows by encrypting hard drives and overwriting files, then demanded USD300 in bitcoin payments to restore access. More than 30 victims paid into the bitcoin account associated with the attack, according to a public ledger of transactions listed on blockchain.info.

Microsoft said the virus could spread through a flaw that was patched in a security update in March.

"We are continuing to investigate and will take appropriate action to protect customers," a spokesman for the company said, adding that Microsoft antivirus software detects and removes it.

Russia and Ukraine were most affected by the thousands of attacks, according to security software maker Kaspersky Lab, with other victims spread across countries including Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and the United States. The total number of attacks was unknown.

Security experts said they expected the impact to be smaller than WannaCry since many computers had been patched with Windows updates in the wake of WannaCry last month to protect them against attacks using Eternal Blue code.

Still, the attack could be more dangerous than traditional strains of ransomware because it makes computers unresponsive and unable to reboot, Juniper Networks said in a blog post analyzing the attack.

Researchers said the attack may have borrowed malware code used in earlier ransomware campaigns known as "Petya" and "GoldenEye".

Following last month's attack,

governments, security firms and industrial groups aggressively advised businesses and consumers to make sure all their computers were updated with Microsoft patches to defend against the threat.

The US Department of Homeland Security said it was monitoring the attacks and coordinating with other countries. It advised victims not to pay the extortion, saying that doing so does not guarantee access will be restored.

In a statement, the White House National Security Council said there was currently no risk to public safety. The United States was investigating the attack and determined to hold those responsible accountable, it said.

The NSA did not respond to a request for comment. The spy agency has not publicly said whether it built Eternal Blue and other hacking tools leaked online by an entity known as Shadow Brokers.

Several private security experts have said they believe Shadow Brokers is tied to the Russian government, and that the North Korean government was behind WannaCry. Both countries' governments deny charges they are involved in hacking. The first attacks were reported from Russia and Ukraine. Russia's Rosneft, one of the world's biggest crude producers by

volume, said its systems had suffered "serious consequences," but added oil production had not been affected because it switched over to backup systems. Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Pavlo Rozenko said the government's computer network went down and the central bank reported disruption to operations at banks and firms including the state power distributor. Danish shipping giant AP Moller-Maersk said it was among the victims, reporting outages at facilities including its Los Angeles terminal. WPP, the world's largest advertising agency, said it was also infected. A WPP employee who asked not to be named said that workers were told to shut down their computers: "The building has come to a standstill."

A Ukrainian media company said its computers were blocked and it was asked to pay USD300 in the cryptocurrency bitcoin to regain access.

"Perhaps you are busy looking for a way to recover your files, but don't waste your time. Nobody can recover your files without our decryption service," the message said, according to a screenshot posted on Ukraine's Channel 24.

Russia's central bank said there were isolated cases of lenders' IT systems being infected. One consumer lender, Home Credit, had to suspend client operations.

Middle Earth Moguls

Start with Pawan Kumar on his 50-bigha, or 12-acre, farm in Tatarpur, near Hapur, western UP. Last year he sowed potato and, by February, reaped a rich harvest of 1,200 quintal. The prices were rather low at the time—touching Rs 6-8 a kilo, well below the comfort zone of Rs 10-12 he could have managed just before demonetisation. So he stuffed the entire produce into hundreds of 50-kilo sacks—altogether 2,200 such sacks—and packed them off into a cold storage. Then he waited for the summer's demand spike. But in three months, he got burnt.

In June, amid a bumper harvest, the resulting price crash and all the politics around it, potatoes are changing hands in the Ghazipur mandi in Delhi for Rs 5 to Rs 5.50 per kilo—trader to trader. At Azadpur, another Delhi mandi, prices ranged between Rs 3-17 on Wednesday; the most common varieties were at Rs 5-7. At these rates, you'd think, Pawan Kumar should be getting Rs 250-275 for a 50-kilo sack. But that would be barely breaking even for him. And the reality is starker than that.

"The bichaulia (middleman) is offering me Rs 100 per 50-kilo packet, or Rs 2 per kilo. My cost is at least Rs 5 per kilo. I'm ruined," says Pawan, who has roughly Rs 8 lakh worth loans to pay off at two local credit societies and a bank. He also cannot afford the rent of storage and has written off the rest of his crop. With India's overall yield seven per cent higher than last year, which itself was a good crop, the 200-odd potato growers in and around his village face a similar

crisis.

Meanwhile, the bichaulia Pawan sold to—the very first middleman in the chain—would have more than doubled the price as he sold onward. The differential between what the farmer got and what the consumer pays is distributed across six or seven such intervening layers, each of which is an essential element, offering a service that makes up the totality of the Indian agriculture bazaar. The profits at each layer too would expand or contract depending on the season, but never enough for governments to topple or suicide rates to climb.

In a simplified graph, here's how the supply chain works. To cut costs, most potato growers sell their produce to local traders. At this stage, there's the cold storage, where either the farmer or the first trader rents space. Once at the mandi, a commission agent (called an 'artia' in Punjab) buys it off the first middleman. He's an aggregator, who buys off many such sources, then sorts, grades and packs the produce. (Sorting is also outsourced to another informal layer of workers at the mandi.) Now, the artia's commission is fixed by law, with state-specific ceilings. Typically, the artia sells to a sub-wholesaler within the same mandi—dealing only in graded, packed potatoes—who in turn sells to a wholesaler in a larger city mandi, such as Delhi, paying for the transport. From here on, there's a distributor and finally the last vendor from whom you buy.

Each time it changes hands, the potato naturally becomes costlier—a service is rendered, a cost incurred, and profits worked in.

The tragedy is that the farmers—and they alone—are bearing the burden of the price crash. It's business as usual at all points downstream. That the price escalation doesn't benefit the farmer becomes obvious at both mandis in Delhi. It's equally apparent at the 'farm gate'. Contacted by Outlook, several potato farmers from Hathras, Hapur, Agra and Aligarh say that if the local bichaulia offers anything under say Rs 6 a kilo, they would not break even. Even if they sell at the farm (avoiding the cost of transporting to the mandi), it still involves packaging into sacks (Rs 10-12 apiece) and often hired labour. These farmers are being offered as little as Rs 1-2 per kilo, even 50 paise.

Sahukar Singh, a farmer in Aligarh who pulled out his potatoes from the cold storage and brought it to Delhi's Ghazipur, says he spent Rs 230 per 50-kilo packet, including cost of seeds. Each crop also yields new seeds which farmers often sell, but there were fewer seed buyers post-demonetisation, so farmers sowed that too—which also explains the bumper harvest. Sahukar grew 50 kg per bigha, paid Rs 126 per pack for storage, and another rupee for transportation to Delhi. "If I won't earn Rs 6 per kilo, how can I break even? I would have sold it at the farm without storage if I'd known prices would crash," Singh says. Potato is amenable to freeze-storing, but it costs Rs 130 per 50-kilo bag for four to six months. But farmers expect prices to dip, not rise.

Like Pawan, Om Dutt Singh, a farmer from Hapur, can't afford to incur more cold storage costs—he too has written off his entire crop. "We are ruined. I can't afford to get my potatoes out of cold storage because at rock bottom prices, -after paying for storage, I'll have nothing left," says Om Dutt.

After October, time to sow a fresh crop, cold storage owners will do the inevitable. To clean their stores they will sell at a discount, discard it if it rots, or give it away. "What choice have we got," says Jainaram Sharma of Raghunandan Cold Storage in Sasni, near Hathras. If farmers don't pick up their produce, he loses too. The potato is now practically worthless. With no expectation of an uptick—the contrary, in fact—Sharma predicts dead loss. "Right after demonetisation, farmers froze their produce because traders had no cash to buy, so prices dipped. But four months later, prices have collapsed," he says.

"Big potato is selling for Rs 5-5.50 a kilo," says Bilal, a commission agent at Ghazipur. Consider a farmer bold enough in deflationary times to bring his own goods to mandis. He would add transport, labour, loading, unloading and packaging charges, taking costs to an unviable Rs 500-550 per sack. "That's why potato farmers are not coming to mandis themselves this year," says Bilal, whose own commission, he says, is 6 per cent, besides a 1 per cent mandi tax.

Typically, when prices are stable, the local middleman buys off the farmer and stashes it in freezers: the kisan needs quick money to pay off loans, start sowing.

'Trump Is What Happens When a Political Party Abandons Ideas'

Trump has turned out to be far, far worse than I imagined. He has instituted policies so right wing they make Ronald Reagan, for whom I worked, look like a liberal Democrat. He has appointed staff people far to the right of the Republican mainstream in many positions, and they are instituting policies that are frighteningly extreme. Environmental Protection Administration Administrator Scott Pruitt proudly denies the existence of climate change, and is doing his best to implement every item Big Oil has had on its wish list since the agency was established by Richard Nixon. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is actively hostile to the very concept of public education and is doing her best to abolish it. Every day, Attorney General Jeff Sessions institutes some new policy to take incarceration and law enforcement back to the Dark Ages. Trump's proposed budget would eviscerate the social safety net for the sole purpose of giving huge tax cuts to the ultrawealthy. And if those policies weren't enough, conservatives—who, after all, believe in liberty and a system of checks and balances to restrain the government to its proper role—have plenty of reason to be upset by those actions Trump has taken that transcend our traditional right-left ideological divide. He's voiced not only skepticism of NATO, but outright hostility to it. He's pulled America back from its role as an international advocate for human rights. He's attacked the notion of an independent judiciary. He personally intervened to request the FBI to ease up on its investigation of a former adviser of his, then fired FBI Director James Comey and freely admitted he did so to alleviate the pressure he felt from Comey's investigation. For those conservatives who were tempted to embrace a "wait-and-see" approach to Trump, what they've seen, time and again, is almost unimaginable. And yet as surprising as this all has been, it's also the natural outgrowth of 30 years of Republican pandering to the lowest common denominator in American politics. Trump is what happens when a political party abandons ideas, demonizes intellectuals, degrades politics and simply

pursues power for the sake of power. In the wake of Goldwater's defeat, many conservatives concluded that their philosophy was insufficiently well-grounded in the social sciences and lacked an empirical foundation. For example, Goldwater talked about privatizing Social Security, but had no plan whatsoever for how to do it. Hearing his rhetoric on the subject, those receiving Social Security assumed, not unreasonably, that they would just be cut off.

Conservative leaders like William F. Buckley, the editor of *National Review*, the leading conservative publication, took to heart progressive historian Richard Hofstadter's critique of widespread paranoia on the right. Buckley purged the extreme libertarians like Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard, anti-Semites like Willis Carto of the Liberty Lobby, and the conspiracy-obsessed John Birch Society. And he made peace with the civil rights movement, as historian Al Felzenberg has documented.

In the 1970s, the conservative movement became receptive to moderate conservatives, called "neoconservatives," such as Irving Kristol (father of Bill, the prominent anti-Trump conservative), who had been turned off by the anti-intellectualism of movement conservatism in the Goldwater era. Irving Kristol established an important journal, *The Public Interest*, which brought intellectual rigor and sophisticated policy analysis to the conservative table. Politicians like my former boss, Representative Jack Kemp, began reading it religiously. Others, like Rep. Dave Stockman, wrote for it and made names for themselves in the process. Eventually, this crowd found a powerful leader in Reagan, who appointed important neoconservatives like Stockman and Jeane Kirkpatrick to high-level positions.

The Heritage Foundation, established in 1973, was formed in part to provide policy analysis that was conservative, deeply studied and concisely digestible. When I worked there in the mid-1980s, it was a genuine think tank, an intellectual institution that did academic-quality

research. We saw our job as putting policy flesh on the bones of Reagan's conservative rhetoric, helping plow the ground for conservative initiatives too radical to be proposed by the administration just yet. In this era, important work was done at Heritage on reforming the tax system, welfare, Social Security and the health system—work that has stood the test of time.

When I became active in the Republican Party in the mid-1970s, it was the party of thoughtful men and women who were transforming America's domestic policies while strengthening its moral leadership on the global stage. As Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote in a July 1980 *New York Times* article, "the GOP has become a party of ideas."

And then, everything began to change. Republicans took control of Congress in 1994 after nationalizing the election into broad themes and catchphrases. Newt Gingrich, the marshal of these efforts, even released a list of words Republican candidates should use to glorify themselves (common sense, prosperity, empower) and hammer their opponents (liberal, pathetic, traitors); soon, every Republican in Congress spoke the same language, using words carefully run through focus groups by Republican pollster Frank Luntz. Budgets for House committees were cut, bleeding away policy experts, and GOP committee chairs were selected based on loyalty to the party and how much money they could raise. Gone were the days when members were incentivized to speak with nuance, or hone a policy expertise (especially as committee chairs could now serve for only six years). In power, Republicans decided they didn't need any more research or analysis; they had their agenda, and just needed to get it enacted. Only a Democratic president stood in their way, and so 100 percent of Republicans' efforts went into attempting to oust or weaken Bill Clinton and, when that failed, elect a Republican president who would do nothing but sign into law bills passed by the GOP Congress.

President George W. Bush didn't realize he was supposed to just be a passive bill-signing machine; he kept insisting that

Republicans enact his priorities, which, often, were not very conservative—No Child Left Behind Act, steel tariffs, a tax cut with few supply-side elements. His worst transgression, for me, was the budget-busting Medicare Part D legislation, which massively expanded the welfare state and the national debt, yet was enthusiastically supported by a great many House conservatives, including Congressman Paul Ryan, who had claimed to hold office for the purpose of abolishing entitlement programs. Republican hypocrisy on the issue caused me to become estranged from my party.

In the 14 years since then, I have watched from the sidelines as Republican policy analysis and research have virtually disappeared altogether, replaced with sound bites and talking points. The Heritage Foundation morphed into Heritage Action for America, ceasing to do any real research and losing all its best policy experts as it transformed from an august center whose focus was the study and development of public policy into one devoted mainly to amplifying political campaign slogans. Talk radio and Fox News, where no idea too complicated for a mind with a sixth-grade education is ever heard, became the tail wagging the conservative dog. Conservative magazines like *National Review*, which once boasted world-class intellectuals such as James Burnham and Russell Kirk among its columnists, jumped on the bandwagon, dumbing itself down to appeal to the common man, who is deemed to be the font of all wisdom. (For example, the magazine abandoned the ecumenical approach to immigration of Reagan, who granted amnesty to undocumented immigrants in 1986, to a rigid anti-immigrant policy largely indistinguishable from the one Trump ran on.)

One real-world result of the lobotomizing of conservative intellectualism is that when forced to produce a replacement for Obamacare—something Republican leaders had sworn they had in their pocket for eight years—there was nothing. Not just no legislation—no workable concept that adhered to the many promises Republicans had made, like coverage for pre-

existing conditions and the assurance that nobody would lose their coverage. You'd think that House Speaker Ryan could have found a staff slot for one person to be working on an actual Obamacare replacement all these years, just in case.

With hindsight, it's no surprise that the glorification of anti-elitism and anti-intellectualism that has been rampant on the right at least since the election of Barack Obama would give rise to someone like Trump. Anyone who ever read Sinclair Lewis' "It Can't Happen Here," which imagined a fascist dictator taking power in 1930s America, recognizes that Trump is the real-life embodiment of Senator Buzz Windrip—a know-nothing populist who becomes president by promising something for everyone, with no clue or concern for how to actually accomplish it. Windrip was "vulgar, almost illiterate, a public liar easily detected, and in his 'ideas' almost idiotic," Lewis wrote. "Certainly there was nothing exhilarating in the actual words of his speeches, nor anything convincing in his philosophy. His political platforms were only the wings of a windmill."

Conservatives are starting to accept that Trump is not the leader they had hoped for and is more of a liability for their agenda than an asset. They are also starting to recognize that their intellectual infrastructure is badly damaged, in need of repair, and that the GOP and intellectual conservatism are not interchangeable. The Heritage Foundation recently fired its president, former Senator Jim DeMint, in part because he had allowed its research capabilities to deteriorate. The journal *National Affairs* aspires to be the serious, conservative policy-oriented journal that *The Public Interest* was. And some leaders, like Bill Kristol, have courageously stood up against the GOP's pervasive Trumpism ("I look forward to the day when American conservatism regains its moral health and political sanity, and the David Horowitz center is back on the fringe, where I'm afraid it belongs," Kristol recently told the).

Trump and Modi share hugs, promise closer ties in White House meeting

No issue on the table may have been more challenging than how the United States treats India like a “major defense partner” — a designation the Obama administration gave the country in 2016 — without angering neighboring Pakistan.

Trump nodded to their possible differences during a meeting in the White House, but struck an optimistic tone.

“We agree on most things and I would say by the end of the day we’ll agree on everything,” Trump said.

Trump and Modi both spoke at length about military cooperation during a Rose Garden ceremony where the two leaders delivered joint

statements.

Trump called the security partnership “incredibly important” and said both nations would work together to “destroy radical Islamic terrorism.”

“Both our nations have been struck by the evils of terrorism and we are both determined to destroy terrorist organizations and the radical ideology that drives them,” Trump said.

Modi, speaking through a translator, emphasized this work and the lengths India has gone to help the United States in Afghanistan.

The Indian leader, who has recently looked to woo companies to India with a “Make In India” campaign, said Monday that his vision could work

with Trump’s campaign pledge to “Make America Great Again,” his 2016 campaign slogan.

“I am sure that converge between my vision for new India and President Trump’s for making America great gain will add new dimensions to our cooperation,” Modi said. “I am very clear about the fact that India’s interests lie in as strong and prosperous and successful America in the same way that India’s development and its growing role in the international level are in the US’ interest.”

Senior administration officials who prepared Trump for Monday’s meeting said Trump was

aware of the delicate balance with India and Pakistan, but would look to treat the 1.3 billion person country like the defense ally it is, including by selling the kind of “technology that the United States provides to its closest allies and partner.”

Experts expect those sales to be of drones and any tightening in relations between India could jeopardize the US-Pakistan relationship.

“I want to make a point here that US relationships with India and Pakistan really stand on their own merits and terms,” a senior administration official said. “We don’t see a zero-sum relationship when it comes to the US

relationship with Pakistan and the US relationship with India.”

While the Trump administration hopes to “deepen” its relationship with India, the official added that they are “also interested in continuing our cooperation with Pakistan” and are “concerned about tensions between Indian and Pakistan.”

Trump thanked Modi for his purchases of military equipment during a meeting in the White House’s Cabinet Room.

“Nobody makes military equipment like we make military equipment, so thank you very much,” Trump said. Modi, likewise, heralded Trump for the “respect” they have shown him and

India. Monday’s meeting brought together the world leaders with the two largest Twitter followings.

Modi has close to 31 million followers. Trump has over 32 million. Trump even highlighted their affinity for social media in the Rose Garden.

“The relationship between India and the United States has never been stronger, has never been better,” Trump said. “I am proud to announce ... that Prime Minister Modi and I are world leaders in social media.” He added: “We are believers, giving citizens of our country to hear directly from the elected leaders and from us to hear directly from there.”

Shame Of Bahawalpur

The area should have been cordoned off and the threat of exposed petroleum contained. Then, in the panic and desperation that followed the blaze, the emergency services were further exposed. Bahawalpur, it has become painfully obvious, has nowhere near the kind of emergency and medical facilities that nine years of PML-N rule should boast and that billions of rupees said to have been pumped into south Punjab ought to have created. How many of the injured could have been saved had better emergency services been available at the site of the incident and in nearby hospitals will perhaps never be known. The chain of flaws — from highways with inadequate safety resources to medical

services that were quickly overwhelmed — is a failure of government.

South Punjab has historically been underserved by all governments at the centre and in Punjab; there can be no quick fixes. But nine consecutive years of PML-N rule in the province do not appear to have set the region on the right trajectory.

Perhaps the most churlish response has been the insinuation in some quarters that the people trapped in the blaze have only themselves to blame. It was not poverty or desperation that caused people to race towards the spilled petroleum; it was a lack of safety awareness — again the state’s failure.

The victims had been unable to recognise the risk that the

exposed petroleum posed to their lives. A broken public school system and a state that does not invest in creating safety awareness on the roads and in homes has meant individuals cannot easily recognise the dangers they may be exposing themselves to.

There is the original failure, too: the road accident that caused the oil tanker to spill its deadly cargo. Was the driver speeding? Does the business that owns the truck give safety training to its drivers? Did Eid-related traffic or driver exhaustion play a role? The Punjab government invests in gimmicky schemes like automated traffic tickets; what it has not done is overhaul the driver training and licensing system.

Fix a timeline to carve out a separate state of Gorkhaland

Third, this is not a particular community based demand. And more seriously, it is not against any community. The demands are exactly on the lines of newly created states like Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Chattisgarh and Telengana. It has acquired the popular term Gorkhaland as it captures the imagination of the hill folk; like what happened when Mizoram, Nagaland, Assam, Telengana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Bihar and even West Bengal were created. It is a geographical demand that based on history, culture, society, and polity of all the communities living in Darjeeling and Dooars. Bengalis, Rajbongshis, Gorkhas, Koche-Meche, Advasis, Bhutias, Lepchas, Marwaris, Biharis, Christians, Muslims, they all have lived together for decades. Given the historical wrongs, protracted discrimination and deprivations, there would be no one in this region who would not opt for a separate state. And finally Darjeeling used to be one of the most prosperous and productive geographies of India. It has produced freedom fighters, national leaders, eight Olympic players, intellectuals and widely recognised professionals in the field of national security, music, arts, technology, media, literature and sports. There has been systematic plunder of all its natural resources and national heritage including forest and water, tea, cinchona and historical institutions and the Jelep la trade route to Tibet. Both the arrangements and experimentations triggered by tripartite agreements viz., Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (1988) and Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (2011) failed miserably causing incalculable harm to two generations of local people. Both the political parties — Gorkha National Liberation Front and Gorkha Janmukti Morcha — have been corrupt and directionless. Other than the total leadership failure in both these autonomous bodies, the core actor in these failed models has been the State Government. Its actions have been too small and thinking too frugal; and that has kept Darjeeling constantly boiling in low intensity conflicts.

Nitish Kumar Teaches Opposition An Important Lesson

After Kovind was announced, Gopal Gandhi gracefully and quietly refused to contest. Meira Kumar’s nomination seems like a tired card to play in what will be a token contest as the NDA has the numbers it needs.

What this shows is opposition unity is as loose as the BJP expected, with Nitish Kumar, one of the

few credible faces in the opposition, publicly playing footsie with the BJP. While Nitish Kumar and Lalu Yadav may both insist that nothing has changed in the alliance in Bihar, the fact is that the Chief Minister’s Kovind move has altered the situation irrevocably. Nitish Kumar is bitter at the price he is paying in Bihar for allying with Lalu.

Sources close to him say that in a month, the Presidential contest will be forgotten by the public but the image of the opposition in shambles will linger. Nitish Kumar is a curious mixture of a very rigid man unwilling to compromise on his image, yet willing to look away for “satta” (power), says a senior JDU leader who is quite peeved at him

for the Kovind decision. With only two years to go for the big 2019 fight, the opposition will need to really roll up its sleeves if it is serious about trying to challenge Amit Shah and Modi. Nitish Kumar has illustrated to the “Mahagatbandhan” that there are no permanent enemies in politics. And also, you snooze, you lose.

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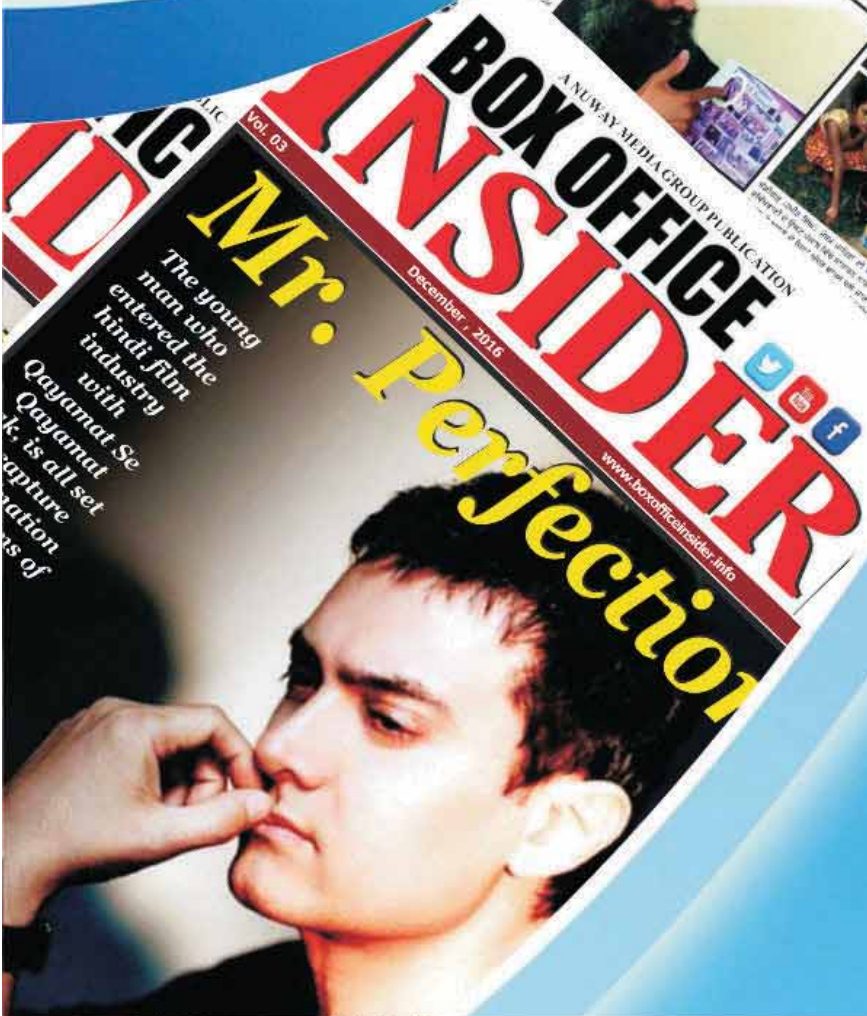
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Bear hugs to stern message for Pakistan: 10 takeaways from Modi, Trump meet



Modi became the first foreign leader to enjoy a White House dinner since Donald Trump came to power and the two leaders discussed a range of issues.

It wasn't that awkward after all. There were bear hugs, promise of things to come and a talk of strong relationship.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with US President Donald Trump on Monday appeared to be between friends, without the awkwardness of a first date.

Modi became the first foreign leader to enjoy a White House dinner since Trump came to power and the two leaders discussed a range of issues.

Here are ten key takeaways from the much-watched meeting:

1) Stern message to Pakistan

India and the US asked Pakistan to ensure its territory was not used for cross-border terror strikes and to "expeditiously" bring to justice the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai and Pathankot attacks.

President Trump and Prime Minister Modi also vowed to strengthen efforts to fight terrorism and eliminate safe havens for terrorists. "Eliminating terrorism is among the topmost priorities for us," Modi told reporters in his joint address with Trump at the White House.

Trump said they were determined to destroy terrorist organisations and the radical ideology that drove them. "We will destroy radical Islamic terrorism," he said.

2) Drones are coming

The US has cleared the sale of predator Guardian drones to India, as the two sides pledged to deepen defence and security cooperation.

"Reflecting the partnership, the US has offered for India's consideration the sale of Sea Guardian Unmanned Aerial Systems, which would enhance India's capabilities and promote shared security interests," said a joint statement released after Modi-Trump meeting.

These unarmed drones will allow New Delhi to keep a closer watch over the strategically important Indian Ocean.

Trump thanked India for purchasing US military equipment. He told Modi "there's nobody makes military equipment like we make military equipment. Nobody even close."

3) Hizbul chief tagged a terrorist

Hours before the two leaders talked about terrorism emanating from Pakistani soil, the US designated Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin a global terrorist.

The state department said in a notification that Salahuddin had committed, or posed a significant risk of committing, acts of terrorism.

The 71-year-old, who also leads the United Jihad Council, an umbrella organisation of militant groups operating in Kashmir, had claimed last year's attack on Pathankot airbase. He is

believed to be close to hardline Kashmiri separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

All of Salahuddin's property and assets subject to the US' jurisdiction will be blocked and American citizens can't do business with him.

4) 'Lower trade barriers'

Trump said he was keen to work with Modi on creating a "fair and



reciprocal" trade relationship between the two nations and called for the removal of "barriers" for the export of US goods into Indian markets. "It is important that that we reduce our trade deficit with your country," he said.

The US was looking forward to increasing energy exports and major long-term contracts for the purchase of natural gas were being negotiated. "...and we will sign them. Trying to get the price up a little bit," Trump said.

5) Thumbs-up for GST

Referring to the goods and services tax (GST), India's new tax regime that kicks in from July 1, Trump said it was "the largest tax overhaul in your country's history".

"We're doing that also, by the way. Creating great new opportunities for your citizens. You have a big

vision for improving infrastructure, and you are fighting government corruption, which is always a grave threat to democracy," he said.

India is the fastest growing economy in the world, Trump said, adding, "We hope we will be catching up you very soon."

6) Joint naval exercise

The two militaries were working together to



enhance cooperation. Talking about the next month's Malabar exercise, Trump said the US and India would join the Japanese navy in the largest maritime wargame ever conducted in the Indian Ocean.

7) Afghanistan on agenda

Both leaders expressed concern over rising instability in Afghanistan and agreed to strengthen coordination for ensuring peace in the war-torn country.

Trump said he wanted to "thank the Indian people" for their contribution in helping development in Afghanistan.

Modi, in turn, said India "would maintain close consultation and communication with the US" to achieve the joint goal of peace and stability.

8) 'North Korea a threat'

Trump and Modi

work together to counter North Korea's "weapons of mass destruction" programme and vowed to hold "all parties" that support the programmes accountable, the statement said.

9) Growth engines

Describing both countries as "global engines of growth", Modi said trade, commerce and investment were key areas of mutual co-operation. "Technology, innovation and knowledge economy are also areas we are actively looking at," he said.

10) BFFs?

The two leaders heaped praise on each other as they underlined the close ties between their countries. "During my campaign, I pledged that if elected, India would have a true friend in the White House. And that is now exactly what you have, a true friend," Trump said at the White House's Rose Garden.

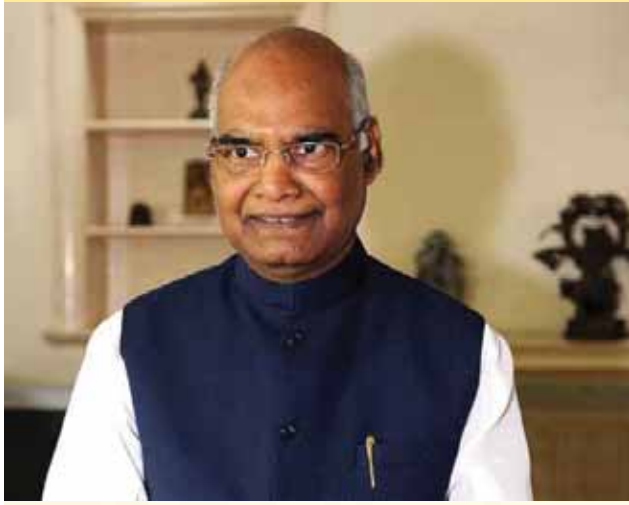
"I am thrilled to salute you, Prime Minister Modi, and the Indian people for all that you are accomplishing together. Your accomplishments have been vast," Trump said.

Modi said he deeply appreciated Trump's strong commitment to the enhancement of bilateral relations and invited the US President and family to India. Trump said his daughter, Ivanka, would travel to India this fall for an entrepreneurship summit.



Race Beyond Raisina

BJP's choice flummoxes Opposition. The party sets out to score more politically.



There goes a second thoughts with Chanakya quote: Prakalp ki safalta uski gopniyata par nirbhar karti hai aur woh gop-niya tab tak rahti hai jab tak chaar kaano tak seemit ho. That is, a project's success depends upon its secrecy and it remains a secret only if it is restricted to four ears (between two persons). This advice from the 4th-century BC philosopher--jurist's Arthashastra is often served to BJP workers by the party's president Amit Shah, even as he himself revels in the art of inscrutability.

This was once again on display in the way the government went about selecting the presidential nominee. The choice of Ram Nath Kovind, a learned but unassuming Dalit leader from Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, stumped everyone, both within the party and outside. In one stroke, the Opposition's unity—whatever little—was decimated and its leaders were left fumbling for a response. After much confusion and confabulation, the Opposition nominated former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar as its candidate against Kovind.

The Opposition hopes the Dalit-woman combine card will ensure a contest and keep the flock together. BSP chief Mayawati had earlier welcomed Kovind's candidature, falling short of extending support yet. Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, who had favoured Kovind, may also have

a done deal before the meeting: Kovind, who is the Bihar governor since August 2015, was informed and his consent taken the previous night. "It was as much a surprise for him, as it was for the others. His family was away to Singapore for a holiday and he asked them to return and be with him," says a senior party leader.

The parliamentary board meeting did not last long. By now familiar with Shah's style of functioning, the members left the final decision to him. Sources say the BJP head stepped aside with Modi for a few minutes and returned to announce Kovind's name. Even as Shah explained to the members the rationale of choosing Kovind, the PM is believed to have spoken to Congress President Sonia Gandhi and ex-PM Manmohan Singh about the candidate — and expressed the hope that they would not insist on a contest. At 2 pm, an hour after the meeting started, Shah came out and announced the name to the media.

Senior BJP leaders got to know of the decision just an hour before everyone else. Despite figuring on the panel that undertook consultations over the presidential candidate with allies and Opposition parties, Rajnath, Jaitley and Venkaiah had no inkling about the final name. Social justice minister Gehlot's name itself had come under speculation among several others that were bandied about as possible NDA nominees in the past few months. Gehlot's name had come in circulation when the party leaders hinted that the top brass were looking for either a Dalit candidate or a tribal like Jharkhand governor Draupadi Murmu. Even at that time, Kovind's name as a possible candidate, never

came up.

The party leaders got another hint: it will be a man from within the party with the requisite stature for the President. Even as Kovind ticked another box, nobody had an inkling. "It is mainly because Kovind always maintained a low profile, like most workers associated with the Sangh Parivaar," says a senior BJP leader. "He is not into self-publicity and is the quintessential organisation man. He has always done whatever work the party has assigned to him, and more, sincerely and quietly."

Even as one of the national spokespersons for the BJP in 2010, Kovind never tried to seek limelight or become the face of the party as is the wont of some others who see the job as a networking opportunity and a step towards mini stardom. Kovind was always available if a mediaperson reached out to him for perspective or breaking down a complex issue. He had knowledge of the party's set-up and the Indian Constitution, while he had been insightful about the evolution of the Dalit movement. Even during his two stints in the Rajya Sabha, Kovind preferred not to be a part of the shouting brigade, but focused on the work of various parliamentary committees in which he was a member: on Welfare of SC and STs and that of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Kovind's modest and self-effacing manner ticked the most important box: Modi's approval. The PM is believed to hold in esteem self-made but grounded people with humble origins. "Shri Ram Nath Kovind, a farmer's son, comes from a humble background. He devoted his life to public service & worked for poor & marginalized... I am sure he will make an exceptional President,"

said Modi's tweet soon after his candidature was announced. Both Modi and Shah carefully avoided identifying Kovind as a Dalit in their social media messages.

A senior party functionary says the choice of Kovind actually should not have come as a surprise, especially to those within the party. "The selection of the candidate started from the premise that the party will go with a Dalit candidate," the leader points out. "Names of tribal candidates were in circulation, but they were not under party's consideration because the tribals have been with the BJP. They have voted for the party in Orissa, Northeast, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Reaching out to Dalits is more important."

Support of Dalits has become crucial for the BJP, seeking a second term in 2019. The party has almost reached its pinnacle in states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat. It needs to tap into the new voter-base to keep its victory margins intact. Uttar Pradesh has always been a challenge.

Kovind, belonging to the Kori community that is the third-largest among Dalits of UP, is expected to bolster the party's chances in the state. Badri Narayan of JNU says that a new political formation is definitely on the anvil in UP. "Dalits of the state are being fostered into a new identity. A new Dalit sammellan (conference) is in the works," the professor at the university's School of Social Sciences tells Outlook.

A senior BJP leader explains the need for forging the new Dalit equation. "Dalits are not natural BJP voters. With the Opposition's sustained campaign painting the BJP as anti-Dalit and pro-upper caste, we had to

shake up things," notes the veteran. "Though a chunk of Dalits has come into the BJP fold, as borne out by 2014 Lok Sabha and now the UP Assembly elections, we need to consolidate further." The party polled nearly two-thirds of non-Jatav votes in the 2017 assembly polls, but a further bolstering is required, especially with the 20 per cent Muslim votes likely to remain outside the party's kitty.

JNU's Sudha Pai, who is an author of several books on Dalits, says that the BJP has been targeting non-Jatav Dalit votes in UP for a long time now, and they have succeeded to a large extent. A new social coalition emerged in the country's most populous state with OBCs and a large number of Dalits going with the BJP. However, she feels the party has to make an extra effort to paper over the cracks that appeared in the form of recent Saharanpur riots, the emergence of a Bhim Sena and the Patidar agitation in the PM's native Gujarat.

In fact, the BJP hopes the Kovind outreach will go beyond the limited Kori identity and help the party in other states too. Pai thinks the ongoing churn among the Dalits will benefit the BJP, especially in Gujarat that goes to polls later this year. The Koris who have an SC status in UP, are known as Kolis in Gujarat and are in the OBC category. Shah wasted no time in claiming the turf in his home-state and presenting Kovind as a Koli. A day after Kovind's candidature, Shah addressed party workers in Saurashtra and said the BJP will win over 150 assembly seats in the state, given the PM's focus on uplifting the oppressed sections of society.

It appears to have been

Losses Flow Downward

Agrarian crisis hits harder the closer one gets to the field from the plate

Vishal Wagh wasn't upset about the losses incurred during the strike when supply of vegetables and milk was blocked from Nashik to Mumbai and other markets. That loss was less than what farmers have incurred over the past decades, he says matter-of-factly. Counted among the relatively better-off ones, Wagh took market risks into account before deciding to grow capsicum on his 15-acre farm, limiting tomatoes to just one acre. "There is really no way to predict and plan for losses," he says. "The losses since



my grandfather's time run into crores if we count all the unseasonal rains, hailstorms and bouts of crashing prices. Before this strike, capsicum was selling for Rs 12-18 per kg, while we would have spent at least Rs 10. Now the rate is Rs 30, but it would have doubled by the time you get it." Capsicum and tomato are getting good price, but onion has crashed. The Mumbai retailer is selling it at Rs 20 per kg, but onion farmer Dharma Deore says, "We need to get at least Rs 1,500 per quintal

(Rs 15 per kg), but are getting less than Rs 500—half the cost of production. Things have been deteriorating over the past year and a half. Government authorities do not plan for procurement, MSP (minimum support price) or control of export-import when they get an idea of how much crop is expected. We are sitting with our produce, hoping for better rates. But fresh produce will come in a month or two and pull the prices further down. The stocks may get spoilt and

we will have to just throw it away." The challenge is an old one. Perishables cannot be stored and there aren't any processing units for dehydrating or making puree. Wastage during transport is pegged by farmers and traders at as high as 20 per cent in some cases. By the time the produce reaches the taluka APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) and deals are struck with the commission agent and the trader, add another

Rs 10 per kg. The trader then transports the produce to big markets in the metros. "If we purchase at Rs 20, we may end up selling the produce at anything between Rs 10 to Rs 30, depending on demand and -supply. That is the risk we incur," says Nilesh Ghuge, a Nashik-based trader who sends the produce he buys from farmers to Gujarat and Raj-asthan. "Nowadays everyone knows prices all over the -region. There's little we

can do when there is a shortage. I am a farmer's son too, so I understand their concerns." He claims he offered to buy from farmers on strike, "to help them out as they would have lost money".

Kisan Gujar, a Nashik-based activist from the All India Kisan Sabha, blames wholesalers collect and then pass it on to retailers, their margins are added. People have to consume what they consume, so it is difficult to control prices during shortage." Kisan Gujar, a Nashik-based activist from the All India Kisan Sabha, blames NAFED (National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation) for planting more of the same crop, resulting in a glut. This happened in the case of toor dal in Maharashtra. Removal of commission agents too hasn't helped the farmer much. "It's been a year or so since traders started buying directly from farmers, but that hasn't improved the situation," says Ghuge. Explaining the possible reason, Ashok Valunj, an onion-potato trader and former director of APMC, says, "It isn't easy for small farmers to take their produce to the major markets. Mumbai gets its supplies from at least 150 km away—Nashik, Baramati or Satara. Traders purchase from talukas and sell it here, adding labour and transport costs to the price. When Wagh asks.

Crash Boom Bang

From a distance, it's difficult to pinpoint the source of the stench amid the rolling green fields in this Sikh-dominated hamlet off Kurukshetra, Haryana. Covered by black tarpaulin sheets and hay, the heaps of rotting potatoes—tonnes of them—are barely visible until farmer Bhupinder Pal Singh points to them. Some of the tuber has melted into thick slush, infested with insects and flies. The spot has become a local tourist attraction of sorts: a mini-mountain of rotting aloo.

Singh's decision to try potatoes instead of wheat last winter was catastrophic. He might take years to recover. He and his three cousins sowed a variety called 'Chips Sona' in 37 acres between them. They got some decent yields (4,400 quintals) in March and hired space in local cold storages, hoping

to sell to exporters at profitable rates. Then came the free fall.

"Look, can you believe this," a distraught Singh says, holding up a sales receipt for our cameras. On May 25, it shows, -Singh sold nearly 40 quintals for Rs 2,306. That works out to Rs 58 a quintal or 0.58 paise a kg! One of his cousins sold his for 11 paise a kg. At those prices, there was no point sinking more money into labour or transport costs for the rest of it. So two-thirds of the harvest has been allowed to go waste. And it needs to be disposed of urgently—before the village raises a stink, leaving little time to lament the loss of Rs 18 lakh. Warnings are pouring in. "We'll all fall sick. Do something fast," a village elder tells the Singh brothers. The rotten dump has already triggered a pest attack on

mango trees nearby.

The condition of farming households like the Singhs' in Bab-ain mirrors a larger crisis across states, especially in horticulture. Plummeting farm-end prices this year have led to a wave of violent, often dramatic, protests by farmers demanding -better prices and debt writeoffs.

The reasons go beyond a singular causative factor, but one came along, out of the blue, early last November: demonetisation. "Traders said they can't give us previously agreed prices due to demonetisation. So we took whatever they gave," says Sukhchain Singh, a farmer protesting in Shahabad mandi, one of the largest in Haryana. Before the cash crunch hit the system like a wrecking ball, the BJP had primed the pitch in a different way. It had

raised expectations with its 2014 manifesto promise that farmers would get 50 per cent profits over 'C2' costs (cost of production plus farm labour). This was followed by the 2016 budget announcement that the Modi government would double farm incomes by 2019.

Post-DeMo, the response to early intimations of the crisis didn't help. A farm loan waiver was a key element of Modi's UP poll campaign. On cue, in April, the new Yogi government wrote off farm loans worth Rs 36,359 crore. That naturally set off demands elsewhere, bringing on agitations across states, the anger peaking with the five farmer deaths in police firing in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur on June 7. A nervous Maharashtra quickly announced a Rs 30,500 crore plan to write off the

debt of about 3.2 million farmers, followed by Punjab.

None of this offers an enduring solution to the essential economic riddle at the heart of it. A range of commodities are trading below the minimum support price (MSP)—the -assured price the government sets for each crop, accounting for farmer profits, so that no one needs to go for distress sales. It's also designed to act as a floor price for private traders. However, MSPs have traditionally worked well only in the case of rice and wheat because the government directly buys these two commodities to stock them in state-run granaries. For commodities not under this procurement system, the MSP is nothing more than an indicative price.

Yes, it exists, and is revised twice a year by the

statutory Commission of Agricultural Costs and Prices, but on the ground, there's ample proof of its failure to govern actual prices. At Punjab's Khanna mandi, reckoned by some as Asia's largest grain-trading wholesale market, corn and sunflower oilseeds—key drivers of farm income—are still pouring in. But they are both trading below MSP. "Today corn is going for Rs 1,200 a quintal and sunflower oilseed for Rs 2,600," says Sukhpal Singh, the auditor at the market committee office. The government-advised MSP for these crops are way higher at Rs 1,365 and Rs 3,950 respectively. Anything below MSP is by definition unprofitable because MSPs are calculated by indexing them to inflation and cost of cultivation.

Farmer protests have been loudest in states with high agricultural growth. What explains the paradox?

As Mob Rule Took Over A Train Compartment, Nobody Helped

Sayara, 46, sits among the mourning women, her hand pressed closely against her chest as if to stop her heart from breaking. Her blue-grey eyes look at you, through you, beyond you. She is the mother of the young men who were lynched on Thursday evening on the train which runs from Delhi to Mathura.

One of her sons, Junaid, just 15 years old, was buried in the local cemetery yesterday in the village of Khandauli in Haryana. Junaid had been beaten and repeatedly stabbed. His bloodied body was thrown out of the train just before it reached Palwal.

Her elder son Shakir is in hospital grievously injured. He has three serious stab injuries. He was not in the group of four young men which had travelled to Delhi to shop for Eid. He had got an urgent call from a cousin who was with the group with the SOS that they were being attacked. Shakir rushed to the Ballabgarh railway station to help but found that his brothers Junaid and Hashim and his cousins were not being allowed to leave the train.

He desperately tried. Instead, he was pulled in and stabbed. He too was thrown out at Palwal. He was soaked in his own blood

and that of his beloved younger brother's whom he had tried to save.

Sayara's third son Hashim escaped with two stab injuries. It was he who cradled his brother Junaid's body on the station platform while a crowd of people stood and stared, until the ambulance called by someone took them away to a local hospital.

Sayara does not know all these details, but she knows her grief and her loss so when she speaks, her voice is clear. She says "He (Junaid) had come home after a year after completing his Madarsa course in Surat, Gujarat. Along with his brother, he was going to celebrate his achievement on the auspicious occasion of Eid. I had given them Rs. 1,500 to buy themselves new clothes. I curse myself. If I had not given them the money, he would have been here.. He was on the Roza fast. All my sons are fasting. I keep thinking, he did not have a sip of water, I was waiting here to feed them, but I could not give him his last morsel. My son, my son..." She is weeping, someone offers her a drink of water. She refuses, she too is fasting.

The group of four young men had got onto the train at Sadar

Bazar, Delhi. Seats were available for all of them. The compartment started filling up. A group of men got on at Okhla station. The harassment began then. Junaid got up to seat an elderly man. But as soon as Junaid stood up, the others in his group who were sitting down were abused and told to stand up as well. Hashim's skull cap was snatched off his head and stamped upon. His beard was pulled. The young man resisted. It was then that the beating started. They were abused in the most derogatory communal language. They were called "filthy beef-eaters who should be killed" Their mothers and sisters were abused.

Shockingly, not a single passenger in that crowded compartment objected. On the contrary, many joined in. One of the group, Mohsin, a cousin, escaped and tried to pull the emergency chain but nothing happened. It was mob rule in that compartment. The stabbing started after the train pulled out of Ballabgarh station and a young man was killed right there, in public, with shouts of abuse ringing in his ears.

It was not an aberration or a one-off incident by drunken louts. It was not a dispute about

seats. There was not even the absurd pretext of beef-eating, they were all fasting. It was a crime completely and totally motivated by communal feelings, a crime of hate.

People in the village of Kandhauli told us of their experiences on local trains passing through these areas. I met them when, along with my colleagues Md. Salim, Member of Parliament, Surinder Malik, Secretary of the Haryana Committee of the CPI(M), Asha Sharma a member of the Delhi Committee, I visited the family of the victims.

They told us that Bhajan mandalis using battery-operated mics have converted many general compartments into religious zones. They spoke of aggressive and abusive comments made by some passengers when Muslim men enter the compartments. They said that harassment has become a common experience and there is fear and apprehension among young Muslim men when travelling this route. Several times, they said, complaints have been made to the police but have been ignored.

Security is non-existent, or else how could these men get on the train armed with big

knives? The Railway Ministry cannot escape its accountability.

Across areas in and around the NCR region, organisations owing allegiance to the toxic communal ideology of the Sangh Parivar are spreading contempt, disrespect, hostility and hatred towards minority communities. The outcome is what happened that dreadful day on a local train travelling in the capital region of India.

Worse, these attackers, it is being established with one tragedy after another, are empowered by the lack of government action against them; they are emboldened by the support and patronage they get. Whether it is the criminal activities of so-called gau-rakshaks, the beef vigilantes, the love jihadis, it is open season for all those who do not conform to the idea of the Hindu rashtra.

Who will be safe when mobs like the one in the train compartment take over our roads, our stations, our buses, our trains? As citizens we would be foolish not to understand the serious implications of the communalisation of public spaces, backed by those in power, which is happening right now, in these times, and before our eyes.

The Bitcoin frenzy

IN 2009, a person (or persons) using the name Satoshi Nakamoto set off an event that continues to ripple through the space-time of global monetary mechanisms with the creation of what is now one of the world's most sought-after investments. So much so that the Federal Board of Revenue recently started taking measures against its use in Pakistan. Nakamoto created an electronic currency called Bitcoin, which is gradually gaining traction in its use and implications.

There are currently about a dozen electronic currencies, or cryptocurrencies, competing with each other, collectively worth \$80 billion. As the most well known, this article focuses on Bitcoin. Wall Street is the latest to latch on to the Bitcoin frenzy, its central clearing house reorienting its software to include Bitcoin transactions. In 2016, the Australian Stock Exchange surprised many

by announcing that it would join the same 'blockchain', thus signalling its intention to accept Bitcoin transactions. Others have already accepted it, or have gradually followed suit.

Unlike conventional currency, Bitcoin is 'mined' on computer networks using complex algorithms. It is a single-person creation, not backed by any government. The record of transactions is kept in an electronic ledger. The combination of these ledgers forms a blockchain. Unlike modern currencies that can be printed without limit, Bitcoin's creator set the limit at 21 million units. Now trading at more than a \$1,000 per Bitcoin, this has revived predictions that cryptocurrencies will become mainstream currencies in the coming years.

But cryptocurrencies have many drawbacks that may prevent this. First, as already stated, Bitcoins are 'mined' through algorithms,

not printed. So for most of the world's population, this currency is out of their reach since few have the skills to run algorithms. If Bitcoin or similar cryptocurrencies were to ever become part of a payment system (like a dollar or a rupee) they would be concentrated in the hands of the very few individuals who have the skills to 'mine' it — potentially disastrous in a world already vexed with record wealth inequalities.

Second, currencies like Bitcoin are in limited supply — ie, the money supply is fixed — which could be problematic, especially in times of economic turmoil, when increasing money supply is a time-tested tool to rein in recessions. The most monumental event of economic history, the Great Depression of the 1930s, was precipitated in part by contraction of the money supply. One of the main reasons for its severity was the failure to expand money supply in the early phases, leading to a prolonged crisis.

Since then, central banks have acted crisply by providing immediate liquidity to the financial sector — ie, they expanded the money supply quickly to offset the danger of a depression-like situation. But with cryptocurrencies, such remedies will become redundant and the severity of economic crises may be prolonged — the socioeconomic fallout of which could be catastrophic.

Another problem is that cryptocurrencies lack stability in value. Put another way, it fails the sound money test — one of the qualities of which is the absence of drastic changes in value (relative to other monies). While relative valuations do change (as in rupee vs dollar), the percentage change is typically minor. Bitcoin, in contrast, has gone through wild swings in valuation.

In 2012, its value was zero per dollar. By mid-2013, its value shot to more than \$1,100 per Bitcoin; by mid-2015 it collapsed to \$300; now it's up again at \$1,000. Such

swings render it as a poor store of value — a risky bet for increasing one's wealth.

Next, the resource cost exerted on a society and the economy could be formidable, with little advantages in return. A few years ago, as Bitcoin's value surged, so much pressure was exerted on the electricity grid in California ('mining' requires substantial computing power) that it tripped. Compare this to the probability that only a tiny fraction of those who 'mine' these currencies actually get them; only a few get to realise its advantages.

Last, but not least, the internet and computers are probably some of the most unsafe places on earth. It takes just one person to create malicious software that can destroy data and wreak havoc on the web. There will never be guarantees against such breaches; the internet's history is awash with such episodes. In 2016, \$81 million were 'stolen' from the account of the Bangladesh government through a cyberattack. The thief's physical presence was not

required — just a computer and a virus. So, on a system running on cryptocurrencies, what if people were to wake one morning to find that they're penniless, all their wealth erased in a cyberattack?

Cryptocurrencies do offer some notable advantages. Till now, the biggest advantage is in the form of Bitcoin's blockchain technology, which holds tremendous promise for ensuring property rights. Transactions like property transfers and ownerships cannot be manipulated or changed easily since these are backed by complex coding. For countries like Pakistan, where records can be easily manipulated (making enforcement of property rights difficult), this has tremendous value. Honduras, in fact, requested a technology firm to help implement blockchain to arrest this very problem, and the US state of Georgia is already using it to digitise its records. The transaction costs of operating cryptocurrencies are also lower than regular payment systems.

Take it easy. Mental stress ups risk of death in heart disease patients

People with persistent mental distress are nearly four times as likely to have died of cardiovascular disease, say researchers.

(News Agencies) If you have a heart disease, you may do well to relax. According to researchers, people with persistent mental distress, including depression and anxiety, were nearly four times as likely to have died of cardiovascular disease and nearly three times as likely to have died from any cause. The team analysed the association between occasional or persistent mental distress and the risk of death in 950 people with stable coronary heart disease, who were between 31 and 74 years old. All the participants were part of the Long Term Intervention with Pravastatin in Ischaemic Disease Trial and had had a

heart attack or been admitted to hospital for unstable severe pain in the chest in the preceding three to 36 months.

They filled in a validated general health questionnaire (GHQ30) at six months, one, two and four years. This was graded according to severity and the length of time it lasted at each of the assessments: never distressed; occasional (of any severity); persistent mild distress on three or more occasions; and persistent moderate distress on three or more occasions. The participants' health and survival were then tracked for an average of 12 years.

They found that 398 people died from all causes and 199 died from

cardiovascular disease.

The questionnaire responses showed that 587 (62%) of participants said they had not been distressed at any of the assessments, while around one in four (27%) said they had experienced occasional distress of any severity. The findings suggested that in patients with stable [coronary heart disease], long term mortality risk is related to the cumulative burden of psychological distress. Dr Gjin Ndrepepa from the Technical University, Munich, Germany, describes the research as an "important and elaborative study which



helps to uncover the intricate relationship between psychological distress and cardiovascular disease. Nevertheless, mental distress activates the sympathetic nervous system and boosts stress hormone levels, which, if persistent, can produce potentially harmful physiological changes, some of which may be permanent, he explained. The study is published online in the journal Heart.

Get off your desk and take a short walk. It lowers blood lipid levels

A brisk walk every half hour can lower blood glucose and insulin levels.



(News Agencies) If you're used to a sedentary lifestyle, or working at your office desk for long hours at a stretch, it's bound to affect your health. It's time to change that. According to a recent study, office workers who take brisk walks for two minutes every half hour can lower their blood glucose and insulin levels. Increased sitting is known to be associated with an increased risk of a cardiovascular disease, diabetes and death from all

causes.

Now, the most recent Otago study shows this sort of activity also reduces triglyceride (lipid) levels when measured in response to a meal consumed around 24 hours after starting the activity. High levels of triglycerides are linked to hardening of the arteries and other cardiovascular conditions. The study's lead author, Dr Meredith Peddie of Otago's Department of Human Nutrition says that earlier international research had overwhelmingly failed to detect evidence that regular walking breaks affect lipid levels, but this is likely due to the effect generally not being immediate.

In what is known as a randomised crossover trial, 36 participants completed four two-day interventions in the Otago study: Prolonged sitting

Prolonged sitting with 30 minutes of continuous walking at the end of the first day

Sitting with two minutes of moderate intensity walking every 30 minutes

- A combination of the continuous walking and regular activity breaks described above.

Blood levels of triglycerides, which are non-esterified fatty acids (otherwise known as free fatty acids), glucose, and insulin responses were measured in the participants over five hours on the second day of the experiment. The scientists found that, overall, short regular walking breaks, 30 minutes of continuous physical activity - and especially the two combined - appear to have good potential to improve people's metabolic health, said Dr Peddie.

Working on the night shift?

It may hinder your body's ability to repair DNA damage

(News Agencies) Beware if you work in late night shifts, as according to a study, working at night may hinder your body's ability to repair damaged DNA caused by normal cellular processes. The findings suggested that night shifts suppress the production of 'sleep hormone' melatonin, which regulates the internal body clock (circadian rhythm). They explained that the night shifts reduced the capacity to repair oxidative DNA damage due to insufficient levels of melatonin and may also result in cells harbouring higher levels of DNA damage. Over time, DNA damage that is not repaired will cause mutations that can lead to cancer. Previous research on 223 night shift workers has showed

that day sleep was associated with lower levels in their urine of a chemical by-product of active DNA tissue repair called 8-OH-dG than night sleep — potentially indicating reduced capacity to repair cellular damage. For the study, the team measured 8-OH-dG levels in the stored urine samples of 50 night shift workers from the previous study. These 50 people had exhibited the widest discrepancies in levels of circulating melatonin between night work and night sleep.

Analysis of the urine samples showed that melatonin levels were much lower when taken during a night shift than when taken during a normal night's sleep. The researchers said explained that a particular pathway

called NER is thought to be involved in the repair of DNA damage caused by oxygen free radicals, which are produced during normal cellular activity. The research has shown that melatonin production boosts the activity of the genes involved in the NER pathway. They noted that relative to night sleep, reduced melatonin production among shift workers during night work is associated with significantly reduced urinary excretion of 8-OH-dG. They added that if such effects are confirmed, melatonin supplementation should be explored as an intervention to reduce the occurrence of potentially carcinogenic DNA damage among shift workers.

Worried about early menopause?

Eat the right foods to protect yourself



(News Agencies) Early menopause is a serious concern. Research as indicated that it may predict heart disease and trigger old-age problems in women. Now, a new study says that high intake of barley, brown rice, oatmeal, soya and tofu over a long-term period may protect you from it.

The findings indicated that the women, who consume approximately 6.5% of their daily calories as vegetable protein had a significant 16% lower risk of early menopause compared to women whose intake was approximately 4% of calories. First author Maegan Boutot and Prof Elizabeth Bertone-Johnson conducted the study. The authors from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health explained that dietary vegetable protein intake is associated with ovarian aging and may identify ways for women to modify their risk of early onset of menopause and associated health conditions. Early menopause, the cessation of ovarian function before age 45, affects about 10% of women and is associated with higher risk of cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and early cognitive decline, the authors note. The team analysed 1,16,000 women aged 25-42 in 1989. The participants were asked to report how often they ate a single serving of 131 foods, beverages and supplements over the previous year, from "never or less than once a month" to "Six+ per day."

Health benefits of different teas : Oolong, black or green



definite time and manner. tea's health benefits but it is aches and pains, aids health benefits different rich in antioxidants, improves digestion, impacts the teas Oolong black green oral health, boosts weight process of detoxification daily post. While we all drink loss and even brings down and, generally, enhances tea as a stress buster, stress levels. the quality of life. Oolong comforter, there are many Green tea is a storehouse tea promotes fat metabolism other hidden benefits that of many antioxidant (pushing the body to burn different types of tea offer if compounds, it's easy to fat for energy), and blocks consumed in a definite time assume that green tea is one the absorption of excess fat and manner. Multiple brands of the healthiest beverages. and cholesterol. Regular have come up with numerous According to traditional consumption of oolong tea teas like , Black tea is rarely Chinese medicine, drinking can actually boost your mentioned in the context of green tea helps relieve body weight loss.

(News Agencies) While we many other hidden benefits all drink tea as a stress that different types of tea buster, comforter, there are offer if consumed in a

Playing video games can change our brains performance



brains perform and its structure. Some of the studies suggested that playing videos games can improve several types of attention, including sustained attention or selective attention, with the brain regions involved in attention appearing to be more efficient in gamers and requiring less activation. However the team also found that playing video games can be addictive in the form of "Internet gaming disorder," with gaming addicts showing functional and structural changes in the brain's neural reward system which are nearly the same as those seen in people with other addictive disorders.

(News Agencies) Playing video games can change brains performance. "Games have sometimes been praised or demonized, often without real data backing up those claims. Moreover, gaming is a popular activity, so everyone seems to have strong opinions on the topic," according to the sources. From their analysis, which included looking at 22 studies on the structural changes in the brain and 100 on changes in brain functionality or behaviour, the team found that playing video games can change both how our

How to be active in Summer Season?



(News Agencies) When the weather changes, many troubles arise for our health. Humans have always been able to adapt themselves to the weather and win the bad influences of the weather. Whenever there is a problem with eating and drinking, there are many problems in health. In summer, we should mainly eat cold products. Even if many cold things invite coughs. This damages the lungs and throat, so we must eat common cold items, it is okay to not eat cold foods.

Things like cold things should be used less during childhood. In the summer, pollution increases, so walking, walking, or exercising in the morning benefits the lungs. Eyes also affect the summer. This requires a lot of sleep and eyes need rest. Morning bath is of prime importance but in the summer season evening bath is also required.

There are also issues related to digestion in summer, so it is important to lighten up the food, do not eat late-baked, fried foods. Try not to drink water with food.

The salivation of the mouth only works a lot in digesting food. Therefore, do not drink water 30 minutes before feeding and after 30 minutes of drinking water.

You can get a dip or a mint for quick cooking. Health problems are also caused by soft dunk, tea, alcohol, etc. If they are accustomed, skip or reduce them.

The clothes are light and cotton, so the best. In this season, light colored cloths are good. They do not absorb the sun's rays.

Few tips to reduce the stretch marks post pregnancy



vitamin E enriched oil. Almond oil is the best available option for the same. Vitamin C: We all are aware of the benefits of vitamin C to our skin. It helps in rejuvenating our skin and keep the body hydrated. Including vitamin C rich fruits or food products in diet would help to keep the skin free from rashes and stretch marks. Vitamin C also blesses us with the healthy growth of the child. Carry adequate zinc in the body: Studies revealed that the appearance of stretch marks are higher in those women who lack zinc in their body.

A proper nutritious diet is required to add zinc to the body. One can also consult their doctor to include supplements in their diet to eradicate this shortfall. Eat gelatin: Gelatin is good to maintain the elasticity of the skin as it contains collagen in it. So consumption of gelatin would help in removing the stretch marks or minimise their appearance on the body. Switch to medicated ointments: Even undertaking all the necessary measures, stretch marks still show up, then switch to the medicated ointments available in the market to get rid of the same.

(News Agencies) Few tips to reduce the stretch marks post pregnancy. Stretch marks appear on woman's body during pregnancy and after the delivery. Given below are some tips to reduce those stretch marks from the body and get a flawless skin back. Moisturizing your body is necessary: Use Coconut oil to moisturize your body . It will reduce the dryness and thus won't let the skin to break out. There are certain types of fatty acids present in coconut oil that would provide proper nourishment to the skin. Drink plenty of water: Water is a solution of almost every problem. Drink a lot of water to keep your body hydrated. Water helps in maintaining the elasticity of the skin, so include more water in your day. Buy a good shea and cocoa butter: A good nourishment is provided to the body with the usage of cocoa and shea butter. They enrich our body with fatty acid and make it soft and healthy. These products provide natural hydration and elasticity by simply massaging the body with the same. Vitamin E: Vitamin E is an essential oil for providing the body with adequate nourishment. Either involve vitamin E in your diet or switch to massaging your body with

Particular memories can be erased, Scientists have found a way



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

Cool beard styles for this hot summer



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

Bald with beard

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

Carved beard

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

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

Rohit Jaiswal from Bombay Shaving Company and Karan Chadha, Founder, Gangs of Beard, point out

that men are not "price sensitive and will spend on products they relate to". They also added that men "are getting more adventurous in expressing themselves – whether it is growing a beard, being covered with tattoos or even sporting a shaved dome".

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



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

Shift workers, healthcare workers and indoor workers in particular are at high risk of vitamin D deficiency, researchers at the University of Alberta, Canada suggest. Understanding the prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in different professions could improve public health interventions and prevention efforts. Dr. Sebastian Straube, the corresponding author said: "Our results suggest that occupation is a major factor that may contribute to suboptimal vitamin D levels. Regular

screening of vitamin D levels in at-risk groups should be considered for future clinical practice guidelines and public health initiatives. Workplace wellness programs could include education about the importance of adequate vitamin D levels. This could help prevent adverse health outcomes linked to vitamin D deficiency, such as metabolic disorders, psychiatric and cardiovascular disorders, and cancer." The researchers found that prevalence of vitamin D deficiency was highest among shift workers (80% of individuals), followed by indoor workers (77%) and healthcare students (72%).

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

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

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

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

Love playing video games?

It might make your brain more efficient

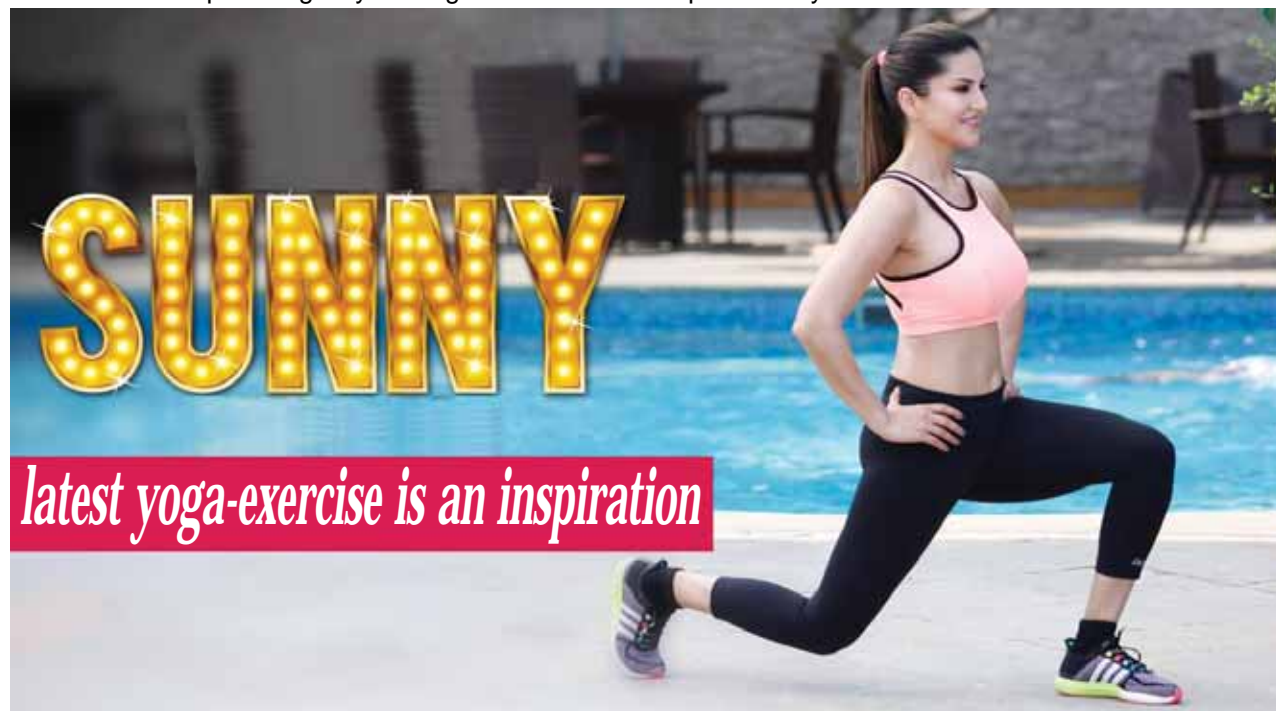
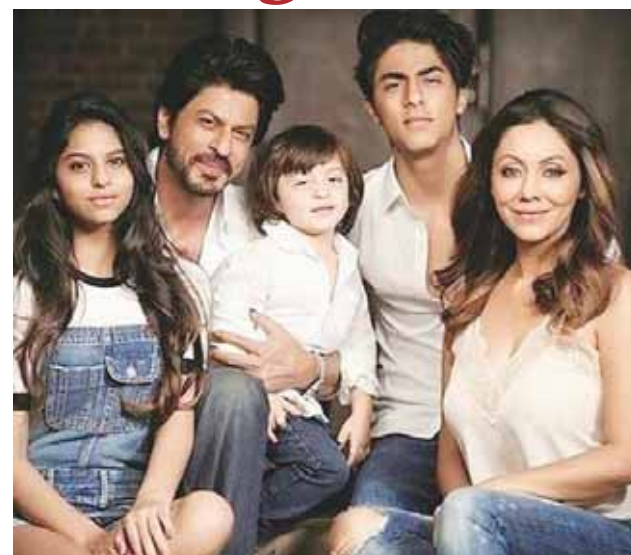


(News Agencies) Carried out by researchers from the Cognitive NeuroLab, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain, and the Laboratory for Neuropsychiatry and Neuromodulation, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, USA, the team looked at 116 scientific studies to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

I want my children to love and respect all religions: SRK

(Insider Bureau) Shah Rukh Khan wishes his three children- Aryan, Suhana and AbRam- should learn and respect all religions. SRK, who greeted the media with an interactive session on Eid, talked about his religious beliefs and said, "I truly believe traditions and religions are all very personal. I think children, grown-ups should be left to learn it themselves." Speaking about his growing-up days, the 'Raees' star said, "My parents introduced me to everything. It was a refugee colony where I lived. So my parents used to be equally happy if I used to go to Ramleela or for Eid celebrations. That ways, you learn and respect and love each other because you learn each other's religion on your own. So, I hope my children do the same. My memories and my thinking is this for them!"

Shah Rukh revealed that he's currently reading the Mahabharata, the stories of which he likes and even shares with AbRam. "Similarly, the stories and anecdotes I know about Islam, I share those with my kids too. But I tell them as stories and I hope they learn and respect all the religions on their own and enjoy the fact that their traditions and their beauty need to be respected." "I request that if you see them publicly two things- first don't assume that they can handle media frenzy because they get awkward too, and also don't assume that they want to be actors. So, no, my children will finish the studies, in my house, the minimum qualification is to graduate, otherwise no entry in my home. If they want to be an actor, they will have to study to be an actor. So there is a long way to go yaar," he added.



(News Agencies)The past one week has seen every other celebrity post yoga videos all thanks to the International Day of Yoga that was celebrated with full fanfare around the world. Now, while there were many who posted videos and pictures just to join in on the trend, there were those like Shilpa Shetty, Bipasha Basu and Malaika Arora who are known for their fitness. These

celebrities keep inspiring us with their photos and videos all through the year. In the same club is actress Sunny Leone as well, whose recent video performing a combination yoga asana has us sweating just at the thought of it. Sunny Leone and hair stylist Rajni Rajpakshe attempt a complicated yoga sequence that's good for toning up one's thigh, core, stomach and arms. Under the

guidance of leading fitness expert and life coach Jillian Michaels, the duo attempt a combination asana that would challenge even regular yoga practitioners. They start off with a variation of a stand split, following it with a smooth motion bringing the left leg under the body and across to perform a hip twist push-up, and then ending the combination with a simple side-plank.

Bad news for Anushka , new Actress express her love for Virat



(News Agencies) Bad news for Anushka , new Actress express her love for Virat. Another Anuska is dating Virat and on the other hand, her competitor has landed in the ground. She has also expressed her love for Virat. This beauty is also from Bollywood. The name of this actress is Riya Chakraborty. Anushka Sharma should also be cautious with what Riya said about Virat Kohli. In fact, Riya recently surprised everyone by expressing her love for Virat Kohli. Riya, who has also work in the movie 'Half Girlfriend' and 'Bank Chor', has also a great hobby of cricket, not only for films but also for cricket. During the Champions Trophy, she fiercely supported Team India. When Riya, who was stepping down in Bollywood after making her act in the Telugu film industry.

Kangana Ranaut said "I started struggling at the age of writing love letters"

(News Agencies) Kangana Ranaut said "I started struggling at the age of writing love letters". Kangana Ranaut, whose struggling life is open to everyone, recently opened up on her struggling days and rebellious life. Shared a bit much about her struggling experience on a talk show of Anupam kher by saying at the age of writing love letters and going on blind dates, she was busy working, with "talented" people like

Mahesh Bhatt. "At the age when girls write love letters or go on blind dates, I used to work for long hours. I used to sit with intellectual people like Mahesh Bhatt and other social thinkers and talented artists and when you sit with people like them as a teenager, you can't actually say anything," she said. Adding, "I never got the time to play around and being a kid. When I was a teenager I already started struggling and I used to be on the

sets. At the age of 17, I was already in a do or die situation. I have always been rebellious and I left my home at an early age, hence I could never get the time to be like a kid." Taking reference of debate she had with karan johar on karan johar's talk show, she said "Honestly, the debate did not affect me at all. I am quite self-sufficient at this point of time in my life as I have also launched my own production house. I want to

propagate my story and there should be nothing wrong about it. When Karan Johar posted a blog on nepotism, I felt it was more of a brainwash than being objective". Adding, "Do these Bollywood kids know that it takes almost 10 years to build an audience and to get a critic. These star kids already start from a point where they have everything and they are not aware of the fact that for an outsider, it can take his entire lifetime to reach the starting point."



Amitabh Bachchan tweeted his complain about facebook



(News Agencies)Amitabh Bachchan tweeted his complain about facebook. Living legend Amitabh Bachchan's facebookaccounts seems to give him a trouble as it doesn't open or load completely as tweeted by the actor on twitter.

Actor is having more than 26 million people follow the 74-year-old actor on the social networking site. "HELLO ! FaceBook ..! Wake up... my page does

not open fully... been like this for days! Had to use this medium to complain, SAD!," Bachchan tweeted. Currently Amitabh is working on his next film with Aamir Khan, Thugs of Hindostan. Directed by Vijay Krishna Acharya, the movie also features Katrina Kaif.

Richa Chadha

Women face discrimination even in small decisions

(News Agencies)Richa Chadha: Women face discrimination even in small decisions. Richa Chada feels discriminated against as a woman in Indian society. Giving the answer when asked if she face any gender discrimination in film industry, Richa said, "No, I do not blame Bollywood. But to be honest, as a woman, you have to take all your discriminations based on what men think, right? You feel discriminated when realising that even small decisions of daily life (are) controlled by

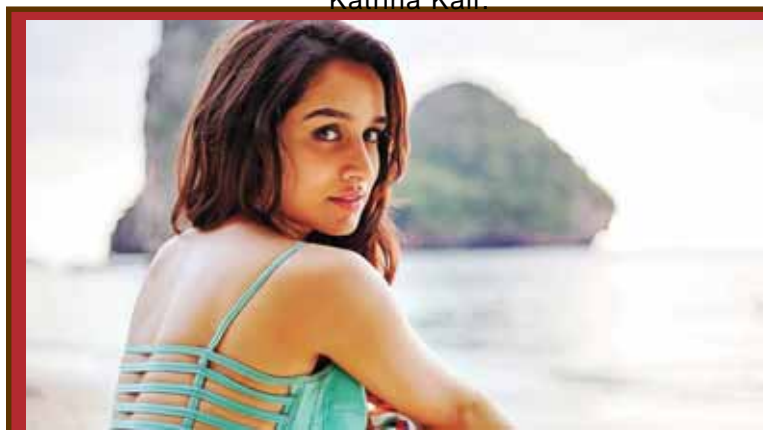
men... for example, as a girl you cannot wear short clothes while travelling by public transport."She added, "So, when you realise that you have to take these small decisions keeping in mind what men think, you know you are in a position of disadvantage. Since Bollywood is in India, where the society limits women's choices like this, why should we blame only the industry?"Actor who is playing a pivotal role in the upcoming web-series Inside Edge, Richa is playing the role of an actor

who owns a cricket team and is trying hard to protect it from corruption and match-fixing. "My character is very interesting and complex because she goes through a lot, but projects herself to the world as a strong woman whereas inside she is vulnerable at times... She does not cry in public as that is a sign of weakness for women," Richa said.



Actress Shraddha Kapoor is in Italy with her best friend

(News Agencies)Actress Shraddha Kapoor is in Italy with her best friend . Now a days Shraddha Kapoor is walking around Italy with his best friend. After the release of Half girlfriend , reverence is continuously celebrating holidays. First she went to visit with her family and now she is walking around with the best friend. Shradaha's Last movie Half Girlfriendhas done fine business at the box office. After this he will be busy shooting for the film Haseena Parkar.



Sonakshi Sinha, Aditya Roy Kapur, Diljit Dosanjh will be seen together in a film



(News Agencies)Sonakshi Sinha Aditya Roy Kapur Diljit Dosanjh will seen together film. Actors Sonakshi Sinha, Aditya Roy Kapur and Diljit Dosanjh will be seen together in a film to be produced by Wiz Films and Vashu Bhagnani. Wizcraft an event management company and organizers of the International Indian Film Awards (IIFA).

They are producing with Sonakshi Sinha, Aditya Roy Kapur and Diljit Dosanjh. The film will have elements of

romance, comedy and drama. It should go on floors this year. "Things are in process as far as the title and

Shah Rukh Khan thanks fans on clocking 25 years in Bollywood

(News Agencies) Superstar Shah Rukh Khan has thanked all his fans and well-wishers for supporting him in his "glorious journey" of over two decades in the Hindi filmdom. Shah Rukh on Monday night shared a 37-second clip on his Twitter handle, where he and his youngest son AbRam were seen addressing a crowd standing in front of his house — Mannat in Bandra.

Thee father-son duo was seen twinning in all-white kurta pyjamas, while they

director of the film is concerned," Founder-Director of Wizcraft, Sabbas Joseph told media.Sabbas says they have joined hands with producer Vashu Bhagnani for this untitled film."This film is being produced by Vashu Bhagnani and Wiz Films. A formal announcement will be made soon.Buzz is lot of big B-town celebrities will do guest

appearance in the film and that some portions of it (film) will be shot at the upcoming IIFA awards to be held next month in New York. Sonakshi will be seen next in the remake version of 1969 film Ittefaq opposite Sidharth Malhotra. The film will be directed by Abhay Chopra and produced by Dharma Productions and Red Chillies Entertainment.

'Tubelight' earns Rs 42.32 crore in two days



(News Agencies) Salman Khan's presence in Tubelight has not been able to light up the box office this year. The film, which had high expectation provided it was a comeback of Bajrangji Bhaijaan duo Kabir Khan and Salman, did not turn out to be as impressive as thought and has received mixed reaction from audience as well as critics. While opening day figures are decent, they hold no candle to Salman's previous blockbusters. The Kabir Khan directorial minted only Rs 21.17 crore on the second day of its release with a total collection of Rs 42.32 crore in India.While it is the lowest in comparison to last a few Salman releases, it is to be considered that Tubelight released on Ramadaan and not on Eid, which falls on Monday (June 26).



'Trump Is What Happens When a Political Party Abandons Ideas'

As surprising as Trump's young presidency has been, it's also the natural outgrowth of 30 years of Republican pandering to the lowest common denominator in American politics.

Nicholas Kamm

Almost two years ago, I wrote an article for Politico endorsing Donald Trump for president. It was a tongue-in-cheek effort—I “supported” Trump only because I thought he would lose to Hillary Clinton, disastrously, and that his defeat would cleanse the Republican Party of the extremism and nuttiness that drove me out of it. I had hoped that post-2016, what remained of the moderate wing of the GOP would reassert itself as it did after the Goldwater debacle in 1964, and exorcise the crazies. Trump was a guaranteed

loser, I thought. In the Virginia presidential primary, I even voted for him, hoping to hasten the party's demise. In the weeks before the November election, I predicted a Clinton presidency would fix much of what ails our country. On November 8, I voted for Clinton and left the ballot booth reasonably sure she would win. Needless to say, I was as dumbfounded by the election results as Max Bialystock was by the success of “Springtime for Hitler.” For two months after Trump won, I couldn't read any news about the election, and considered abandoning political commentary

permanently. It wasn't just that Trump disgusted me; I was disgusted with myself for being so stupid. I no longer trusted my own powers of observation and analysis.

Almost everything that has happened since November 8 has been the inverse of what I'd imagined. Trump didn't lose; he won. The Republican Party isn't undergoing some sort of reckoning over what it believes; his branch of the Republican Party has taken control. Most troubling, perhaps, is that rather than reassert themselves, the moderate Republicans have almost all rolled over entirely. (Contd on page 19)

Major cyberattack sweeps globe, India affected, Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Mumbai hit

A major cyber attack swept through countries across the world, affecting Indian operations of global companies. Operations at one of the terminals of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust in Mumbai had to be shut down following the ransomware attack.



(News Agencies) A major global cyber attack on Tuesday disrupted computers at Russia's biggest oil company, Ukrainian banks and multinational firms with a virus similar to the ransomware that last month infected more than 300,000 computers. India was also among the countries affected by the ransomware with the country's largest port Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust in Mumbai shutting down operations at one of its three terminals. (Contd on page 18)

Shame Of Bahawalpur



(News Agencies) An unspeakable tragedy in Bahawalpur district in the wake of devastating terrorist strikes in Parachinar and Quetta has cast a further pall over the Eid break. At a time of religious commemoration and cultural celebration, far too many families will be mourning their dead or praying for the injured. The country joins them in their grief. The Bahawalpur tragedy is numbing not only because of the vast number of dead and injured, but also because it was totally avoidable. It remains to be determined if the inferno was accidentally started or the work of an arsonist, but a catalogue of errors is already apparent. Whatever the origins of the accident, the poor preparedness of local emergency services has been thoroughly exposed. An oil spill on a busy highway ought to have immediately triggered a response by the local authorities. (Contd on page 20)

Middle Earth Moguls

Good monsoon or bad, glut or drought, boom or bust...it's always fair weather for the range of middlemen who come between the farmer and consumer. An anatomy of the trade.



(News Agencies) One of the facts can be fickle, data pliable, and different things true at the same time. A kilo of potato can be worth both 11 paise and many multiples of that. Of course, you need to look at both extremes of the food chain to see this.

But there's a zone of stable truth in all this, and for that you need to include the middle. Or personify it. We're talking of the Middleman, the one with a 900 per cent mark-up.

That's a bit simplistic, but see it like this. We could be in a raging hyper-inflation, with a kilo of onions going for Rs 150, and consumers getting teary-eyed enough to vote out governments. Or we could be in a crisis such as we see now, where farmers across half of India are so desperate that many consider death by pesticide (and some, by police bullet). But between consumer and producer, there's a vast middle ground that's relatively insulated from these cyclical shocks. This is the zone that soaks in the bulk of the mark-up—which could routinely be, say, a mammoth 900 per cent, as we shall see. (Contd on page 18)

